

Friends of the Maple River  
Proposed Minutes of the June 20, 2007,  
Regular Monthly Membership Meeting  
Duplain Township Hall  
145 W. Main Street

PRESENT:

Joe Latoff, President  
Ed Mikula, Vice President  
Joe Smolka, Treasurer  
(vacant) Secretary  
Mick Rabe, Chairperson, Education Committee  
Jack Nutter, Chairperson, Watershed Improvement Committee  
Phil Hanes, Clinton County Drain Commissioner  
Anita Ladouceur, Web Site Coordinator  
Marilyn Thelen, Clinton Co. Conservation District & MSU – Guest Speaker  
John Sweitzer, Clinton Co. Conservation District  
Jeff Wadell  
David Jewison  
Harold Green  
David Smith  
Jody Smith

Joe Latoff, President, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. He asked everyone to introduce themselves. Latoff read the Statement of Purpose: To preserve, improve, and promote through education, the wise use of the Maple River and its watershed.

AGENDA: Ed Mikula moved to approve the agenda as presented. Jody Smith seconded the motion. The motion carried.

MINUTES: Ed Mikula moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2007, Regular Monthly meeting of the Friends of the Maple River, as presented. Jeff Wadell seconded the motion. The motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Joe Smolka, Treasurer reported a balance of \$336.69 in the checking account of the FOTMR. \$127.00 had been spent to purchase hats referencing the 2007 Float Trip.

A 24' Pontoon Boat has been donated to the organization. Jack Nutter moved to accept the 24' Pontoon Boat, Hull Number MCZ472700904, donated by Trenton Bellinger of St. Johns, as property of the FOTMR. Motion supported by Ed Mikula. Latoff advised that he would identify the current value of the subject boat, document it, and include that

documentation with a thank you letter to Trenton Bellinger. In addition he will register the boat as property of the FOTMR. The motion passed. Jeff Wadell suggested that the organization use the Pontoon Boat as the raffle prize to raise funds, and he volunteered to help spruce the boat up.

The group was advised that Mr. Leon Brewbaker, of Allaby & Brewbaker Insurance, 108 Clinton Avenue, St. Johns, has donated a second year of liability insurance in the amount of \$500,000.00, for the year starting 9JUN07. The FOTMR express their appreciation for Mr. Brewbaker's donation and ongoing support.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Anita Ladouceur reported on her progress to rebuild the FOTMR Web Site. She requested and Ed Mikula agreed to provide a digital copy of the art work used in the brochure. David Smith commented that the web site is very important, and that \$30.00 per month to maintain and reserve the web site is well worth it. He offered to help provide funding for the monthly maintenance costs. All agreed that the web site is very important and that work should proceed with haste.

A letter and materials were received from MDEQ, describing a high phosphorus level in Pine Creek. The agencies findings and recommendations were included. The MDEQ invited the FOTMR to participate in a meeting to review the analysis, findings, and recommendations for correction, to be held on 26 JUN. The information was referred to Amy Noren, Chairperson, and Monitoring Committee for consideration and follow up. All agreed that the MDEQ's inclusion of the FOTMR's interest in the matter was greatly appreciated. A report will be made at subsequent meetings.

The President advised that he made a presentation regarding the FOTMR to the Friends of Sleepy Hollow volunteer's organization. Both organizations are willing to cooperate and coordinate activities. He also advised that he had met the Lake Victoria Property Owners Association, and received a good response about cooperation.

**EDUCATION/INFORMATION PROGRAM:** Latoff Introduced Marilyn Thelen, from both the Clinton County Conservation District and the MSU Extension Service. One of Marilyn's major duties is to promote the MAEAP Program. The MAEAP Program is a voluntary effort by farmers to operate their farms in a manner that is environmentally sound. A certification is available to farmers upon attainment of MAEAP status. Marilyn works with farmers to better understand best farming practices and how to meet the MAEAP Program requirements.

Marilyn also teaches a "Soils Class", and presented a past, present and future overview of the soils in the Maple River watershed. Some of the major factors in the soils are: parent type, plant and animal life, climate and topography. Our area was primarily influenced by the Wisconsin Glacial Period. Because our early vegetation was deciduous forests, we have less top soil than other areas. Climate impacts the soil color, dark soils are from west and cool climates, light soils are from warm and dry climates. The Maple River area has a lot of Capac soils that are poorly drained, so we have created drainage in order to farm the land. Farming in the watershed began in the Maple Rapids area in 1826. The

land in our area is 80% farm land, 12% forest, 5% wetland. There are increases in corn and soy bean production taking place. And, there is a decrease in hay and small grain production. The MAEAP Program promotes the best farming practices available. And, includes the use of such techniques as; filter strips, better tillage practices, crop rotation, cover crops, permanent vegetative strips, and buffer strips. Many farmers are committed to the use of “Best Farming Practices”, and are working for MAEAP Certification.

**WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE:** Jack Nutter, committee chairperson reported on the April river clean-up project that took place. Much was accomplished, and much was learned about how to do it better next time. The group expressed its appreciation for the significant effort that Jack has made with watershed improvement projects.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE:** Mick Rabe, committee chairperson reported on the Annual Spring Float Trip held in June. Jim Ellison and Fred Olmstead were the two project coordinators for the float trip. The entire event was very well planned, and operated. All who participated enjoyed themselves. The Village of Maple Rapids mowed the property owned by Mr. Underwood, so that it could be use as a safe landing point, and a location for food and beverages. The turn out was limited, and disappointing. One possible factor that may have influenced turn out was timing. There were a lot of social activities going on associated with graduation time. This factor will be considered next year. In addition, it was suggested that direct communication with regional/state kayaking groups be included next time. The group was very appreciative of all of the hard work contributed by Mick Rabe, Jim Ellison and Fred Olmstead.

**MONITORING COMMITTEE:** Amy Noren, committee chairperson was unable to attend due to unexpected guests. Mick Rabe, Jeff Wadell and Joe Latoff contributed to the report in her absence. Jeff Wadell described the ongoing committee education activities including the recent monitoring education meeting held on the river with Lois Wolfson of the Michigan Water Research Institute. The reviewed the capabilities and operating procedures of several different pieces of water testing equipment. The committee is a few weeks away from finalizing the equipment & supplies requirements for phase I of the watershed monitoring plan. Once the list of equipment and supplies is completed a budget to obtain the needed supplies will be created, and funding for their purchase will be pursued. At this time the initiation of Phase I of the watershed monitoring plan appears to be a few months away. The monitoring committee has made great strides and their work is very much appreciated by the group.

John Switzer described his involvement in the effort to validate a computerized soil erosion model, and his activities.

Phil Hanses talked about a recent manure spill. It appears that the farmer did everything right, called the correct authorities, erected a temporary impoundment to contain the spill. Specialist from the MDEQ were quick to arrive and deal with the clean-up. Phil observed that it was unfortunate that the spill occurred, but that the response by all involved was excellent.

Latoff reported that the Muskrat Lake Project had hit a much unanticipated snag. It appears that all of the project requirements established by the MDEQ had been met, engineering studies, documentation, etc. But, that the MDNR had imposed new additional requirements that could derail the effort for years. There is an investigation and response underway by many individuals, organizations and government agencies to understand the origin of the new additional requirements imposed by MDNR. More to come on this issue.

**PUBLIC EDUCATION ARTICLE:** The entire group engaged in a thorough discussion of the difficulties involved in trying to write an article that can accurately describe situations that the public can recognize as potential improper discharges to the waters of the Maple River Watershed. There are written specific documents such as "Best Farming Practices" that are voluntary for farmers. Some deviations from best farming practices are reasonable due to the practical matters associated with farming, weather, etc. The Right To Farm Laws do not protect anyone if they cause an improper discharge to the surface waters. Such issues are legally investigated and enforced by MDEQ. There is no activity allowed by law that allows an improper discharge to surface waters.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Motion by Jack Nutter to adjourn. Supported by Ed Mikula. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00PM.

**NEXT MEETING:** The next Regular Monthly Meeting will be held on July 18, 2007, at the Maple Rapids Community Center, 209 W. Union Street, Maple Rapids. A social time will take place from 6:30PM to 7:00PM.

These Meeting Minutes were written by J. Latoff, based upon notes of the meeting by Jack Nutter. Currently the FOTMR is looking for a Secretary to fill the vacancy created when Kris Foight, the former Secretary, completed her term, and did not run again due to changing employment location.

Please direct any/all corrections/suggested changes to Joe Latoff, 989-224-2085.