

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
May 30, 2024

The second quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2024 was held on May 30th, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen.

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself along with Ashley Matthews, Kate Barrett and Shae Medlen from the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG). He briefly reviewed instructions for participation and discussed the purpose and makeup of the SJRBC. Roll call was taken, and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair: Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka
Vice Chair: Jim Hess, Elkhart County
Secretary: Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County
Treasurer: Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange
Phil Barker, Elkhart County
Bob Barnes, Elkhart County
Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend
Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County
Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR

Clint Knauer, Steuben County
Dan Lash, Noble County
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County
Sue McGee, City of Kendallville
Janel Meyer, Steuben County
Jarod Nisely, LaGrange County
Jim Slabaugh, Steuben County
Cory Stewart, LaGrange County
Kris Thomas, City of Angola

OTHERS PRESENT:

Donny Aleo, Elkhart Co. Parks
Jason Armye, Steuben Co. HD
Trevor Hampshire, City of Kendallville
Kristi Johnson, Indiana DNR
Greg Knauer, Steuben Co. Surveyor's Office
Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen Stormwater
Ryan Miller, City of Goshen Stormwater
Charlie Pettibone, Steuben Co. Planning

Angie Plank, Indiana DNR
Jean Thomas, West Lakes Association
Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik
Kate Barrett, MACOG
Ashley Matthews, MACOG
Shae Medlen, MACOG
Matt Meersman, MACOG

CONSENT AGENDA

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair, reminded members that they can request to have any item removed from the consent agenda if they believe it warrants its own separate vote.

Minutes – March 14, 2024

Adam asked the Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes of the March 14, 2024, meeting. Hearing no comments, Adam moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt presented the financial report for the third quarter of FY 2024 (01/01/24 – 03/31/24). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities (Profit & Loss). He explained the Special Project income from Steuben County for the water monitoring cost-share program. He said there

will be additional Special Project income from Angola and Bristol for flow monitoring in those communities as well. He expects increased expenses under Special Projects for the expanded flow monitoring as well as regular biological monitoring. Matt noted most water monitoring expenses are incurred in the fourth quarter. There is an increase under additional MACOG staff for AmeriCorps service site fees for Shae Medlen and three water monitoring members.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt noted the accounts payable was for services provided by MACOG for January, February, and March as well as legal expenses. Total Fund Balance for FY24 Q3 was \$443,118.44.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 03/31/24. Matt noted that the Special Project Revenue is for the expanded flow monitoring cost-share program with Steuben County. The local government appropriation from Steuben County includes the second half of CY 23 and the first half of CY 24. Invoices for the 2024 appropriations have been paid by all members.

Matt asked if there were any questions on the financial report. Hearing no questions, he moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Claims – May 30, 2024

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$63,550.31 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included invoices from MACOG for January, February, and March services, and Thorne Grodnik for quarterly legal services. The claims also included expenses related to the St. Joseph River Basin Symposium, webmap development, and water monitoring.

Matt asked if there were any questions about the claims, or any other items from the consent agenda. Hearing no other questions or comments, Adam called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

DAN LASH MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.

RAY HOOVER SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Monitoring Program

Kate Barrett provided an update on the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program. There are 12 biological monitoring locations which are meant to complement existing efforts by various partners throughout the basin. She explained how sampling devices are deployed and colonized by macroinvertebrates for about a month. The devices are then collected and sent to Midwest Biodiversity Institute to be analyzed. The analysis results in a health score for each site. Kate presented the 2023 data from Midwest Biodiversity Institute. The scores range from 0-60, with 60 being the highest level of stream quality. Kate said the 2023 data shows an increasing or stable trend in overall stream health. She noted the condition of the Prairie River which was 26 in 2021, jumped to 44 in 2022, and climbed to 46 in 2023. Kate noted that it is possible some changes could be due to slight changes in sampling locations or sampling errors. Kate said the Midwest Biodiversity Institute contract was just renewed to continue sampling the same sites in 2024 and samplers will be deployed at the beginning of June.

Kate discussed her support of a strategic water quality sampling program in Steuben County. Through a cooperative agreement with MACOG, two AmeriCorps members based out of Trine University assisted with monitoring for the SJRBC and Steuben County programs. Kate thanked the Steuben County Community Foundation for two grants that supported the water monitoring efforts. She said they are preparing for the 2024 season now and will be increasing the number of sites from 10 to 20. She provided locations for the 2023 monitoring locations in her presentation.

Kate stated she has also been helping with a similar water quality sampling program in LaGrange County. She is currently working with the partners in LaGrange County to prepare the launch of their program in early June. She will provide an update at the next meeting.

In addition to water monitoring, Kate highlighted several outreach and education efforts she has been involved in. She reported that Matt participated in the 30th anniversary of AmeriCorps Service Day on behalf of the SJRBC, which was hosted in South Bend on March 15. Kate assisted a Notre Dame sustainability student with independent research comparing lab based water sampling results for Nitrate and Phosphate to results using the Hoosier River Watch method. She also discussed the Bowman Creek Watershed Study that will be conducted in collaboration with the Notre Dame Tech Ethics Lab and Lucy Civic Innovation Lab. The goal is to develop a pilot hydrologic model to characterize water quality.

Kate encouraged the Commission to visit the interactive web map. The web map can be used to compare water quality variables over time and will eventually have the option to select subwatersheds, sites, and rivers.

Matt said in addition to support of the USGS gauge on Waldron Lake and the sensors on Phillips Ditch, there are now real-time water level monitoring devices at three sites in the North Branch of the Elkhart River (NBER) watershed and one site on the Fawn River. Tritium has completed five field measurements at each of those sites in order to develop stage-discharge curves, which allows the estimate of the volume/discharge at each site. Matt said since the last meeting, another real-time water level monitoring device has been installed on the Little Elkhart River at SR 120. He said reimbursement invoices have been sent to the Town of Bristol and the City of Angola as part of the cost-share opportunity using funds from the Monsanto PCB settlement.

Watershed Study

Matt said he would like to solicit proposals for a study focused on watershed factors such as land management practices, soil conditions, vegetation, and drainage improvement. Ideally the study could be used to develop a model for predicting the impact of changes in watershed conditions and used to make informed water management decisions such as creating financial incentives for private landowners and identifying where to hold or manage water on public lands. Since the last meeting, Matt has had discussions with Intera and Northwater about a similar study which could be supported by the Indiana Finance Authority. He noted the Notre Dame collaboration project on Bowman Creek has similar goals but on a smaller scale. Several Commission members discussed how development could affect municipal water in the future. Matt mentioned that the Great Lakes Compact may offer some protections that do not exist in other river basins.

24th Annual Symposium

Matt said the St. Joseph River Basin Symposium was held on Friday, May 10, at the Covered Bridge Farm Park in Centreville, Michigan. The Symposium was held in coordination with a

Watershed Celebration hosted by the Friends of the St. Joe River Association. Matt said the venue and weather worked out great. The presentation by Jack Wittman of Intera focused on water availability and the role of measurement, modeling and scale in water management. There was also discussion of the benefits of forming a Watershed Development Commission.

NEW BUSINESS

FY 25 Work Plan and Budget Adoption

Matt stated the FY 25 work plan and budget was included in the meeting packet. There were no significant changes from FY 24. He said the appropriation request table was updated with the new budget numbers from FY 24 and the 2020 census population data was incorporated last year. Matt stated the primary changes to the budget include the expected revenue from the water monitoring cost-share program, increased SJRBC Director expenses, expenses for the expected audit, an increase in total operating expenses by 3%, and increased additional staff support.

BOB BARNES MOVED TO APPROVE THE FY 25 WORK PLAN AND BUDGET. KIERAN FAHEY SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Other Business/Updates

Jim Slabaugh raised the topic of Senate Bill 140, which provides certain guidelines for cutting, relocating, or removing logs that are corssways in a channel and authorizes a person to remove debris from a stream under certain conditions without needing a permit from the department. The Bill also states that removal of dislodged logs from the floodplain is not required if the logs are dried and burned so completely as to eliminate the potential for a new logjam. Matt Horsley noted that DNR does not want every logjam removed due to providing important trout habitat.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt reported on several administrative tasks he has been working on this past quarter. He also hosted a meeting of the Juday Creek Task Force, worked with the Steuben County Plan Commission regarding their stormwater ordinance, assisted with a project for watershed signs on the Indiana toll road, and supported LaGrange County with drain apportionment.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Adam asked if there were any items from the floor. Hearing none, he moved on to the next item on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Adam Bowden called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

DAN LASH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. RAY HOOVER SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Jim Hess, SJRBC Vice Chair