

Little Manistee River Watershed Management Plan Summit Meeting
March 1, 2024 – 1 pm to 3 pm – Elk Township Hall, Irons, Michigan

MINUTES:

Attendees: Tyler Dula-Manistee Cons. District, John Helge-Lower Manistee WS, Teresa Salveta-EGLE, Mark Tonello-DNR Fisheries, Vicki Sawicki-NCCISMA, Josh Shields-Manistee & Mason-Lake Cons. Districts, Jack Epstein-Pine River Asso., LMWCC- Armas Soorus, Dan Sernick, Jim Squier, Tod Nyson

Meeting called to order at 1:00 pm by Armas.

1. Introductions: Welcome and Why We Are Here - Armas

2. Minutes Approval:

Minutes from 2/3/2023 - Jim made a motion to approve, seconded by Dan. Passed unanimously.

3. Monitoring Stations:

Armas reported on the status of 2 stations on the LMR. Both are currently in operation and providing data on depth, conductivity and turbidity. Luther has a good connection and uploads automatically. Bear Track location is more of a challenge. Phone connection is not reliable enough to have it uploading automatically. The data can be accessed at Monitor My Watershed, <https://monitormywatershed.org/>, locations, LMR-N. Wide Water Rd. and Bear Track. New sensor on one unit.

4. Water Quality – Bio/Chem Testing:

Sites for 2024 to be determined. Not performed in 2023. Refer to last report by Abbey Hull's 2022 report on our website. Some concern for areas with elevated E. coli tests from 2022 will be reviewed by Teresa, EGLE, and followed up on in June. Armas will provide information regarding sites.

Macroinvertebrates Surveys

Armas – Water quality indicators, macroinvertebrates, are in good diversity and scores. Tyler Dula at MCD and Symon Cronk at MLCD are leads for the LMR WS, working with volunteers from LMWCC and Conservation District volunteers, usually in May and October. MCD is scheduled for May 11, 2024 and MLCD is not confirmed as yet. Symon will get back to us on that date in early to mid-May. Reports can be accessed at lmwcc.org site and on the MCD and MLCD sites.

5. Water Technician –

Armas mentioned that we had worked with the Conservation Districts to get water technician interns a few years ago and it turned out to be too much for the districts. We would like to help with some money to support water technicians at the districts.

6. Invasive Species Work: NCCISMA – Vicki,

Scheduled for monitoring this year by taking an inventory invasive plant species along the LMR above M-37. Two sections were previously monitored by NCCISMA and NFS, from Bear Track to 9-Mile, and Old Grade CG to Indian Bridge. The focus is on the top 10 species. Once identified and pinpointed via GPS, property owners are identified and then LMWCC can provide information on how to go about eradicating it. It is recommended that LMWCC follow up again with the landowners using the list provided by Zach Peklo. Some matching funds are available. Contact NCCISMA for information.

Little Manistee River Watershed Management Plan Summit Meeting
March 1, 2024 – 1 pm to 3 pm – Elk Township Hall, Irons, Michigan

Vicki also suggested that some other area groups like Lake Co River Property Owners Asso. offer to assist owners with some funding for invasive species work. We might want to consider something similar to for members. NCCISMA offers assistance to landowners at cost for the 10 top invasive species. Mark T. asked if the technicians find invasive species on state land or national forest land, do you contact a forester? She answered him that there are programs used by the NFS to pay NCCISMA to work on the national forest lands but so far she hasn't tried doing that for state land. She will check it out. Tod asked if the top 10 list of plants, if not controlled, will become invasives? Answer, yes but there are different reasons for different species of why they are on the list. They can cause harm to either the environment or human health or the economy. NCCISMA also has a watch list for plants that are not here yet but may be coming. If any of those plants are found, they will divert funds to eradicate it. They also do look for floating aquatic species and emerging aquatic invasive species as well. There is no source in the state to buy aquatic species so no out-of-state species are native to Michigan. Three aquatic species are on the invasive species list but are still being sold commercially because of powerful horticulture lobbyists. Josh Shields stated It is not legal to plant any non-native species plants below the ordinary high-water mark. Teresa has Invasive species signs from EGLE for display at river access areas.

7. Natural Rivers Report:

Armas – Survey results were offered at two recent public meetings, 2/12 and 2/22, at Elk Twp. Hall, Irons. Reports are online at Grand Valley, www.gvsu.edu and lmwcc.org. LMWCC is also asking for letters of support from private and public organizations that support the adoption of an NRP for LMR. Meetings about the NRP were held in June into October. The results of the survey came out in late January and show about 25% against, 44% for and 30% undecided. Looking at township Stronach and Manistee townships did not want it, Elk was in the 44% for and 30% undecided group. As the meetings progressed, it was clear that people do want to protect the natural character of the river and the fishery. As they talked about the townships doing it, it became clear that we don't really have the resources to do it. Mark T. commented that when you have an NRP you give up some freedoms to do what they want on their property. But the trade off is you are protecting the river for the greater good and protecting yourself from the people upstream from you that may not have the same river values that you do. So you work through it and in today's society we are not used to doing that face to face anymore. Dana has done some more work since then from our perspective we have to make sure that our superiors are supported. So Dana shared the survey with fish division folks and we got very strong support from fisheries division and the next step is the director and if they support it, we will probably move forward. Mark gave encouragement and noted that we have done it the right way to connect with and push it forward from our level to the state to get the support. That's how it needs to be done. He hugely appreciates everything we have done.

8. Bank Remediation and Woody Debris Projects:

Armas - Trout Unlimited surveyed the river from Fox Bridge to near Bear Track in 2023. Potential sites for projects were identified. Wayne Anderson is Project Manager now. He is following up with a list of projects for the upcoming two years. At least two are near completion. Permits are being worked on for additional sites. Trout Unlimited, CRA, NFS and DNR work with LMWCC to accomplish projects. Armas stated that we are finally figuring out how work with the NFS Section 7 things and getting through it. It does seem to take twice as long and costs are probably twice as much. The Trout Unlimited survey from Fox Bridge down to near Bear Track last year and we may have some woody debris projects with them. They sound really positive about getting some work done there. Mark highly supports wood in the river.

Little Manistee River Watershed Management Plan Summit Meeting
March 1, 2024 – 1 pm to 3 pm – Elk Township Hall, Irons, Michigan

9. eDNA work on the Pine River and Cool Creek:

Jack Epstein led an effort this past summer/fall, in areas along the Pine River and the Little Manistee River using eDNA techniques to collect Hemlock Woolly Adelgid DNA. Traps made by 3D printers (thank you friends of Armas) were assembled and installed at four sites. Specially prepared slides were provided by GVSU Water Studies Charlyn Partridge, sent to Jack for distribution at the various sites. Joyce Durdel assisted with collection at the LMR sites and sent the samples back to Charlyn for assessment. Reported outcomes are that they did not find anything so that is a good outcome for the property owners. Jack is waiting to see if we will be able to participate again. He suggests we can also think about going after lantern fly or invasive plants.

10. Educational Outreach:

A Riparian Landowners' Guide with a focus on best-management practices for river properties and septic system maintenance features handouts and a watershed map with useful information. It is being given out by our board to local landowners and at public gatherings. It has been well received by members and the public.

11. Open Discussion/Announcements:

John Helge – Wants to get a watershed movement for the lower Manistee going. He is interested in collaborating with us. He is the co-chair of the Great Lakes Environmental Festival. It takes place at the commons area Manistee High School April 20th, 2024. Earth Day, 10-5. He would like to have our display set up there. There may be up to 40 other organizations. Headliner is Dr. Joan Rose, MSU, Water Sustainability expert. 3rd Annual. Teresa would be happy to work with John and Tyler on getting going for lower Manistee River. John also asked a number of questions about how LMWCC got started and funds itself.

Jim commented on difficulties we have had in obtaining grants for projects. Teresa offered several approaches we can consider. Do more projects NOT in the river. Collaborate with other area huc10's and maybe conservation districts can work on it with us. Call her for ideas and to know if we can be competitive for certain grants.

Tyler is working on putting together a list of grant opportunities.

Muskegon River Watershed Assembly – Marty Holgrin wrote grants for them.

Jim asked Teresa about Brian Wier who looked after the Johnson Bridge where mounds of dirt are threatening the river. Teresa said Brian moved to another division. She will get back to Jim about it and update on who is in charge of enforcement in our area.

12. Priority Items for 2024:

Capacity Raising Power, Capacity Building – Teresa

Continue with projects identified.

Josh Shields goes out to properties – riverside tree planting to reduce autumn olive.

Tyler – Farm/Private programs where funds CDs have can be applied.

13. Adjourn 3:00 pm