

Friends of Lower Muskingum River Monthly News Roundup September 18, 2013

The following is a slightly shortened version of this month's board meeting minutes, provided to the FLMR membership to keep you up to date with what is going on in FLMR.

In attendance were board members Marilyn Ortt, Elin Jones, Katy Lustofin, Quincy Robe, Dave Blount and Doug Albaugh, Watershed Coordinator Jesse Daubert, and Young Leaders student Luke Badaczewski.

Membership Report: Quincy reported we now have 81 memberships. He sent 10 letters for third quarter renewals, and has received 3 responses. We have 3 new members.

Watershed Coordinator Report:

Jesse attended the Ohio Watershed Leaders Conference, Sept. 5-6. He learned that there will be no more watershed coordinator funding from 319 grants.

The summer newsletter has been mailed out to members.

Jesse advertised at Marietta College that we have a non-paid internship opportunity. One girl responded, and will be helping Jesse.

ACCT will fund another VISTA, which we will hire in December to begin work in February. The \$6,000 matching funds will be provided by an anonymous donor.

Jesse got comments back on the Watershed Action Plan from both Ohio EPA and U.S. EPA. There are some questions to be answered, but no problem.

Clean Ohio Conservation Fund Projects:

Luke Chute/Cabin Run – Dave reported continuing work on the bridges and trails. The “bird show” (murmuration) has been getting progressively bigger and better as the flock size increases toward the end of summer. Doug mentioned that he continues to find messages from happy users in our comment box, and he read three recent ones to the board – left by visitors from Mt. Vernon OH, Cairo WV, and Somerset NJ.

Dana Island – for the last 3 weeks, Marilyn and Jesse have worked to control tree of heaven and bush honeysuckle, plus Asiatic bittersweet (a major threat, which showed up last year and has already spread) and the first autumn olive to appear on the property. Jesse put up a trail camera yesterday, to see what wildlife are using the area.

Old Business:

Hydroelectric – Marilyn will draft a reply to a letter received from Free Flow Power, and will copy it to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Quincy read to us a letter from the Morgan County Historical Society, printed in today's edition of the Morgan County Herald, which very clearly makes the case for preserving our heritage and opposing Free Flow Power's proposed project.

Electrofishing demonstration – about 50 people attended this demonstration at the Ohio River Levee by Ohio EPA and ODNR, and hosted by FLMR. As in previous years, Kelly Capuzzi did an outstanding job of showing the various species of fish and explaining interesting things about them.

Marietta Natural History Society field trip to Luke Chute to see the blackbird murmuration – Elin reported that 7 people attended and enjoyed it.

Hulls/Diehl Conservation Easement – Doug met with Attorney Curtis Nichols, who is going to add cross-referencing between the property deed and the easement. This was approved by the board by email on September 2.

New Business:

Watershed Management Assoc. of Ohio – the board voted to pay Jesse’s \$65 membership fee.

Devola Waste Water Treatment – Marilyn summarized this situation and brought us up to date: Based in part on a study done by FLNR (by Kristyn Robinson) under a 319 grant, it was determined that high levels of nitrates in the well water in Devola is due to home septic systems. The Ohio EPA ordered that steps be taken to correct the problem, or the wells may have to be shut down. Devola contracted with Marietta to tie in to Marietta’s waste water treatment facility, saving Devola \$3 million compared to building their own treatment plant. The Washington County Commissioners went to OEPA and have gotten a time extension, and they now propose doing their own “scientific” study, based on voluntary participation by homeowners, with a goal of stopping the OEPA order to correct the nitrate problem. The prosecuting attorney has pointed out that the contract with Marietta is binding. Elin moved and Katy seconded that Marilyn draft a letter from FLNR to OEPA (cc to the governor and the Marietta Times), stating that we stand behind the study that was done, and are committed to improving water quality in the Lower Muskingum watershed.

Coalition of Ohio Land Trusts – organized in 2004, COLT is now going to a formal membership structure. Doug moved and Quincy seconded that we pay the \$50 dues to become a member. This will give us better visibility for anyone looking for land trusts in Ohio.

Marcum Conservation Easement – Marilyn reported that the property has been sold to a land company (Country Time Land LLC), which immediately sold it to another land company (Ridgetop Capital). Marilyn contacted Attorney Jon Sowash, who prepared the easement, and he has sent FYI letters to both companies, summarizing the restrictions on land use under the conservation easement.

Future Dates:

Murmuration (bird show) viewing at Luke Chute – Wednesday September 25. Call for time or other info.

FLNR Potluck Picnic – Thursday September 26 at 6:00 p.m., Luke Chute Conservation Area. Bring your own table service and beverage and a dish to share.

Respectfully submitted,
Doug Albaugh, Secretary