Minutes
Boardman River Dams Committee Meeting
Tuesday, May 27, 2008
Grand Traverse County Civic Center

Statement of purpose: “To engage all interests in assessing and recommending the fate of the dams on the main stem of the Boardman River based upon a thorough analysis of options, including long and short-term economic, social, environmental, aesthetic, transportation and ecological impacts upon the community, individuals and riparian owners.”

Attendance **: Peter Albers, Dennis Aloia, Ronald Alpers, Mark Andres, Robin Beardsley, Susanne Biteman, Bruce Carpenter, Mike Connors, Beverly Cuthbert, Michael Delp, I Dettoner, Michael Donahue, John Dyksterhouse, Ken Gregory, Jim Harvey, Matthew Heiman, Erin Howard, Meral Jackson, Todd Kalish, Joe Kaltenbach, Steve Largent, David Leonhard, Ann Martin, Christine Maxbauer, Jim Pawloski, Carl Platz, Jack Robbins, Bill Scharf, Gabe Schneider, Jim Schramm, Michael Slater, Casey Smith, Sandra Sroonian, Larry Thompson, Donald Tilton, Mark Tonello, Norbert Tutlis, Thomas Wertz, Rick Westerhoff, Sharon Wise, and Michael Zimmerman.

** The list of attendances was developed from the sign-in sheets.

I. ** Introductions
II. Review of Agenda
III. Approve or Amend April Minutes

April minutes approved as written

IV. General Announcements

The BRDC was submitted for the Governor’s Service Award. While the BRDC was not selected as the winner, we did receive a Certificate of Recognition. Todd presented the certificate “in appreciation of outstanding service” to the BRDC volunteers.

V. Presentation on Fish Passage Options and Consideration – Mark Tonello

Mark Tonello presented the DNR slideshow he and Todd have been presenting to area organizations regarding fish passage and the DNR’s opinion on fish passage and the fate of the four dams. Mark is Todd’s counterpart at the Cadillac DNR, and said he and Todd wanted all information in one place, to make informed decisions regarding the dams and the Boardman River with regard to fish passage. They are using the same format as the Jordan River and Manistee River assessments. There will be a public comment session this summer on this. The presentation, titled The Boardman River Watershed: Management Opportunities and Challenges with the Potential Reconnection of 161 River Miles with Lake Michigan, can be downloaded from the website (www.theboardman.org).

Q: If you block most, but not all, sea lamprey migration upstream, what are the consequences? A: Pere Marquette has an electrical lamprey barrier; if lamprey are let through, it would require treatment with some “nasty” chemicals that targets juvenile lamprey. It is selective, and good to control lamprey, but does kill some invertebrates too. There are insect hatch problems after treatment, and some insect species disappear, and do get some fish kills including adult salmon. But the end justifies the means – killing all lampreys. The TFM treatment is also very expensive. The current barrier at Union St. Dam works well, so we recommend keeping Union St. Dam.

Q: Your statement that Chinook fishermen are not as “gracious” as Coho fishermen – what data do you have on this?
A: It’s based on no data, just a generalization I quoted from a CO, based on observations from rivers all around the state.

Q: A self-sustaining salmonid population – I disagree. Smolts won’t go back downstream with the dams. If the dams are left in place, I don’t think the smolts will move downstream to create a self-sustaining salmonid population.

A: With turbines, yes there is a problem with smolts moving downstream. But a top-spill dam, without turbines – that’s OK for smolts.

Comment: Not sure anglers have a need or desire for Coho in this region as a whole; Coho could be removed from the equation to simplify things.

Q: If you let Chinook into the upper sections of the Boardman River, can’t you manage them with river closures? Can the existing harvest weir be used as a lamprey blockade?

A: No.

Q: Steelhead concentrations are twice the “no effects” limit (NOEL). Will this have adverse effects on mink, otters, and other wildlife if they’re allowed up the river?

A: Other rivers where they have been passed have not reported wildlife problems.

Q: No consults are being given on the Bald Eagle take?

A: Consults won’t do it, there are increasing levels for Bald Eagle eggs in the region.

Q: PCB’s are twice the NOEL… No fish in the Boardman River have a PCB advisory, but ones from Lake Michigan do.

A: Yes, there are lots of other fish passages, and people eat those fish… we have increased PCB consumption in Steelhead trout from Lake Michigan.

Q: FishMichigan – states 91% of the salmonid population are juveniles, whereas it was 32% 20 years ago.

A: That was back in the early ’90’s/late ’80’s. Brown trout data from Pere Marquette is pretty good, so I’d disagree with that.

Q: The section of the river from Brown Bridge to the Boardman is the most populated. How do you propose to keep people out of it? There’s phosphate loads on habitat (from people), not to mention trespassing on private areas.

A: Habitat improvement projects are often on private property, and landowners are generally very cooperative. We would not do any habitat work on property where the owner does not want it.

Q: If the dams were removed and fish allowed to migrate, where do the bodies go after they die (spawning)?

A: Other fish feed off dead fish – it’s one reason why there is such a good trout population – eggs and carcass feeding. Fry go crazy eating them. During the time of year when the carcasses are rotting, there can be odor issues. But we’re not recommending salmon passing, and steelhead usually don’t die after spawning.

Q: Why still stock the streams if the fish are well on the Pere Marquette?

A: On Pere Marquette, From Bowmans bridge downstream, it’s warmer water, so decreases natural reproduction. Upstream is cooler, but not stocked.

Q: When stocking Big Manistee, why aren’t they travelling up Little Manistee? They must be, so the number of “wild” fish there is inflated.

A: It’s still great natural stocking, a good steelhead run anyway.

Q: The Lansing-based EPA contaminants study: what contaminant damage can be caused if the fish are allowed upriver?

A: We didn’t look at that study. We feel that despite those issues, it is best to pass fish upstream.

Q: I think you’re underestimating the social issues regarding fish passage. I think it’s about money. You don’t know the effects on trout species; you’re saying you won’t know till it happens.

A: We won’t know the effects until we do it. I spoke with CO’s and they expect a few law enforcement issues, and we do not want to pass salmon.
Comment: Landowners vs. fishermen – the banks of the Platte River are in bad condition from all the fishermen, and there’s no conservation efforts to enforce.
Comment: I think you’re jumping the gun on this: we need to evaluate fish passage after the dams come out.
A: It is a money issue, and money does make sense. I am a steelhead fisherman and the thought of fishing steelhead on the Boardman River is, to me, very exciting. Wild steelhead is a high demand, valued fish, so we should look at that as a benefit from money from new fisheries, it has socioeconomic advantages.
Comment: These are recommendations, they will be filtered by management? The DNR recommends but has no authority to enforce? The BRDC is recommending, too, but the decision is up to the stakeholders (the city and the county).
Q: I feel there as much or more impact on brook trout from brown trout than steelheads. Steelhead needs to be put in the upper river based on the Platte River and Pere Marquette results. Isn’t there a large negative impact to brook trout populations?
A: An example is Bear Creek. Brown trout outcompete brook trout except on the coldest streams. But the exception is Bear Creek – it’s the best brook trout stream in the state, but it has high brown trout populations too.
Q: So it boils down to what habitat is available?
A: Yes.
Q: Have you accessed the 1985 data on the fish weir? Where is all that information? It addresses these issues. You said you have all the historical data – do you have it all? Can we get that file?
A: Yes, come in and get it.
Q: What’s the process? City and County officials, we need a process that this is analyzed with some thought. We need a fisheries subcommittee of BRDC to address this.
A: This has been two years and the EFS in the making. This has been going on a long time, and was all planned by the BRDC over two years ago. The EFS looks at all the options and information, and then the BRDC makes a recommendation to stakeholders.
Q: For today’s talk, who makes that recommendation?
A: That recommendation is done by the DNR with limitations in place from the city and county. Once the decision is made to keep/modify/remove the dams, the city and county will make their decision based on finances, etc. A draft BRDC assessment will be out to the public, and there will be two hearings and two comment periods. This is only the start of this process. Then the BRDC can use the DNR recommendation to make their decisions.
Q: Isn’t this recommendation (dams, fish ladder, etc) a recommendation by the BRDC?
A: The DNR will make their recommendation as a guide. The BRDC can make a different recommendation.
Q: The toxins above the dams needs to be addressed.
A: The fate of the dams influences sediment fate – the sediments, if exposed, can be capped. Not all of it is landfilled. It depends upon the fate of the dams.
Q: Salmon anglers – how do we know they tend to be more destructive?
A: Canoe down the Pere Marquette river, you see No Trespassing billboards, barbed wire; you see it in action.

VI. Army Corps of Engineers Update – Carl Platz
Carl gave an update on the existing conditions model and proposed alternatives model. USGS came out with their peak spring flow sediment measurement, and currently the Corp is out on the river collecting their lab samples for physical properties and gradation measurements. Sediment-related properties now includes a sediment budget. ACE will hold off on their coordination with NEPA for analyses until the final BRDC recommendation regarding the fate of the dams, since
removal would require an EIS (Environmental Impact Statement). The EIS is a lengthy process, whereas modification/retention would not need an EIS.

Q: You’re holding off on NEPA ‘til when?
A: Until the BRDC makes it’s recommendation to the city and county. We’re not sure regarding the city and county’s decision, because it depends on October’s funding cycle.
Q: ACE does the EIS?
A: Yes, we would do it. But it must be done on the selected alternative. One dam removal is not equivalent to a 3-dam removal.
Q: Contaminated sediments – where are they? Do you know the locations?
A: They are all up and down the river. Our primary reason for gradation measurements is for physical properties, not chemical properties. It’s just a hydraulic model. ECT is addressing sediment chemical properties.
Q: Does your modeling allow for removal of three dams with Union Street remaining during flood conditions?
A: We have a complete model now for existing conditions, but it’s not done yet for the alternatives. We would model with the computer for flood conditions once the alternatives are identified. For now, it’s just the base model.
Q: You’ll be modeling for all those alternative situations?
A: Yes.
Q: I have one regarding funding, from an ACE standpoint: with removal of the dams, there’s no flood control, so there’s no money available for repairs to the dams for flood control. If they are deemed for flood control, is federal money available?
A: Our authority is aquatic ecosystems, we are not looking at flood control options.

VII. ECT Update — Don Tilton

Don reported good progress on the cost analysis of modification and removal, they are halfway through the fact sheets covered at the last BRDC meeting. The historical properties evaluation report is available (available online at www.theboardman.org) and no dam structures (Sabin, Brown Bridge, Union Street) qualified for Historical Property designation; the Boardman dam has already been evaluated and it, too did not qualify for historical property designation. So when evaluating the alternatives, the BRDC does not have to take into account the structures as historical properties.

Q: Do the options include removal of contaminated sediments?
A: Yes, we will deal with exposed sediments. The Sediment Plan will address this. We are just evaluating what it means to move arsenic contaminated sediments. Yes, the sediments are contaminated, all four dams, and we will have to deal with it.
Q: What’s the process for a democratic decision on this?
A: There is a process for making the recommendation on sediments, made by the scoping team. The scoping team meets once a month, please join it.
Q: Boardman Pond and the cost analysis to retain or remove the dam: does it address the Cass Road crossing?
A: Yes, the transportation issue will be rolled into the modification option. The plan is to maintain current road conditions with a modified structure. The Land Use Transportation Study is looking into it, too. The county board has no stand on the issue, and the road commission wants to keep the Cass Road crossing.
Q: The “Draft” form of the Historical Value report – when do these draft reports get finalized out of draft form?
A: There is a 30 day comment period, and we work with the scoping team on it.
Q: There are a lot of questions and comments about these draft reports, and there are a lot of draft reports. Are any of these finalized yet?
A: No. We will try to take all subcategories and attach to the final document, so the final documents will have all of this.
Q: The Cass road bridge – is it based on the dam staying?
A: No.
Q: The engineer’s report said the Cass Road Bridge has to go, too. So the cost of the dam removal must include bridge replacement?
A: We’re working on costs and evaluation, it’s just starting. In concept, the removal of the dam includes the Cass Road crossing staying, and if that changes, the BRDC will be the first to know.
Comment: The ACE study was very preliminary; the cost estimate done was just to address the road. The decision is to come later, but we had to generate a cost estimate. It’s on the website (Draft 2005).
Q: At the end of the meeting, fish passage will have a direction. Is there a grass roots committee to address the Scoping Team? Since they will make the decision.
A: Tom said he’ll address that during the Scoping Team update.

VIII. Scoping Team Update – Tom Wertz
Tom reported they want to get all the data from all sources consolidated. They wanted to develop the two fact sheets agreed upon last BRDC meeting into a comprehensive, easy to understand format; it’s done and in review. The remaining five alternative fact sheets have yet to be done. The goal is to get these on the website to increase community interest on these issues, and provide more information. Next month’s meeting will disseminate the information and hopefully have more attendees. The ST agreed upon the schedule for the Special Topics presentations: June will be on Hydroelectric Power Generation, followed in July by a Sediment presentation, and then Socioeconomic Issues in Aug. After that, topics are TBD. The deadline is to have the decision/recommendation by the BRDC to the city/county in December, and the clock is ticking. The plan is to have BRDC members disseminate the information out to the community and bring back comments and information to the BRDC to be considered in the final recommendation. The ST wants the recommendation boiled down to one presentation to stakeholders.

Comment: I want to make sure the minority opinion is noted and recorded. We as a group think you should look at this in addition to the ST recommendations.
Comment: I don’t see that the ST recommendation has any bearing on fish passage – we’re recommending options, engineering, and dams disposition.
Comment: If the ST recommends keeping the four dams, we won’t just dump this on the city/county’s lap. We will also address the factors concerning the dams, not just the dams themselves.
Q: How is someone like me (an individual) going to influence the ST?
A: You’ll find out with the sedimentation meeting all the information.
Comment: The ST is putting together a task/activity timeline, and the ST is the facilitator. We consolidate the information, analyze the results, and package it. It’s not a lobbying thing. Our summary will help inform people of all the facts.
Comment: Fish passage needed to be addressed, and so it is, with today’s presentation.

IX. Bottomlands Management/Property Owners Issues Team Update – Steve Largent
Steve reported there were three issues to follow up. The Bottomlands team discussed the erosion of Boardman Pond banks. Steve walked around it and concluded some banks are beyond the angle of repose. Without reshaping or deep-rooted vegetation, the number one factor affecting the reservoir is fluctuating water levels. A decision is needed to discuss using the second
penstock to help stabilize water levels. The Bottomlands Management/Property Owners Issues Team asked the BRDC to request permission for higher water levels to stabilize fluctuating water levels. Dennis suggested that the request, coming from the BRDC, might have more weight than coming from the city/county, but the owners of the dam are the ones who have to make the request. The BRDC approved requesting the City to request to Peterson permission to use the second penstock to control fluctuating water levels. Dennis asked for the BRDC to present their request at the Wednesday 5/28 meeting, and approval could be granted as early as Thursday 5/29. Comment: The angle of repose, with fluctuating water levels or not, is a great danger to people. If you fall in, you can’t get out. Don’t let a disaster be the reason this issue gets addressed – do something about it before an accident happens.

Q: With wind/water erosion, and the lack of vegetation, are we getting any natural revegetation? A: ECT is monitoring it, but some of the mud flats have fluctuating water levels. If seedlings are getting established, the next high water event floods and kills them. We need to stabilize water levels, and then it should be OK. Red maple seedlings are getting established on the banks, but are not as verdant as hoped.

X. Communications Team Update – Susanne Biteman
Susanne reported that Sandra has stepped down as the chair of the Communications and Outreach Team, since beginning as Project Coordinator. Susanne announced that she and Meral Jackson will co-chair the Communications team. Posters are available, please take some and post them. Erin will also be posting, and distributing newsletters – the latest newsletter is also available, please distribute to any interested persons. Susanne thanked the CT contributors who made the newsletter happen. Interest in a potluck social before the June BRDC meeting was approved by the BRDC, it will begin at 5pm please bring a dish to share or just show up. The CT meets 5-6 pm the second Wednesday of each month, please join, we always need new members.

XI. Finance and Fund Development Team Update – Todd Kalish
Todd reported on the finance team meeting. They submitted a request to the Great Lakes Fisheries Trust to reallocate $150k that was earmarked for the Sustainability project to the EFS; they expect to hear later in the week if approved. A grant proposal was submitted to Rotary Charities for $35k for process and the EFS, and Sandra submitted a proposal to the Tribal 2% fund. NMC’s accounting division will present a review of BRDC finances at the next BRDC meeting.

Comment: We would all like to thank Rick Westerhoff for being so instrumental in seeking funding and helping with the process.

XII. General Questions and Answers – ALL
Comment: How can the DNR make a recommendation when the EFS isn’t done? Is the ECT data included? A: Yes, the ECT data is included.
Comment: Do panfishers (warm water fisheries) have to be sacrificed for cold water fisheries? We have heard from cold water fisheries, we’d like to be represented, too. Q: I am concerned what the BRDC recognizes as the federal endangered list. Michigan Natural Features is more stringent – can we use that and not just federal? A: ECT recognizes both the federal and state regulations, and the EFS will cover it all.

XIII. Call for agenda items for June meeting and meeting evaluation – ALL
Comment: I want to see fluctuating water levels addressed.
Q: Are tonight’s questions answered on the web page or at the next meeting? A: Some were answered tonight, some will require answers from the DNR.
Q: Are we going to ask the county to do something about the pond dangers? Fourteen foot banks with undercuts is an accident waiting to happen. Are we going to wait for an accident? There is not enough signage.
A: That is a question for the county.
Q: What degree is the angle of repose? A few places on my property have slumped.
A: It depends on the material. Steve will look at the banks again, and re-evaluate. The county isn’t going to spend money to reshape banks when there remains the possibility of water levels being restored.
Q: Is there a pull out?
A: Yes, there is a dock there.

XIV. Meeting adjourned at 8 pm.

The following is a summary of all questions recorded on the white paper during the May 27, 2008 Meeting.

1. What is the process/timeline for finalization of reports in DRAFT form?
2. How can DNR make a recommendation when EFS is not yet complete, and was ECT data included when forming this recommendation?
3. Do people need to surrender their warm water fishery to trout? “Pan Fishermen Incorporated”
4. What is BRDC recognizing: Michigan Natural Features List vs. Natural Endangered Species List? (Answer: both are considered)
5. Is GT County going to do something about dangerous 14’ banks with undercuts?
6. How will these questions get answered?
7. Angle of Repose: what is this for different sediment types?
8. Is there a dock in Boardman Pond right now? (Answer: yes)
10. Who recommends fish passage as part of the Dams disposition? (Answer: BRDC can include DNR recommendation, but don’t have to follow it. Fairly unclear.)
11. Mercury, PCB’s, and other contaminants in fish and sediment needs to be addressed.
12. FERC License: Issuance means NO FISH PASSAGE.
13. Comment on salmonids (Chinook salmon) in Pere Marquette River leading to increased damage and trespassing=barbed wire and billboards.
14. Sea Lamprey: block most? All?
15. What is the data source for statement that Chinook salmon bring out the “worst in people”? Salmonid species with dams in place-what effects? Question/Discussion/Disagreement.
16. Statement made that coho salmon is a minor species and that it could be removed.
17. Weir as is can not be modified to allow other non-salmonid species to pass but not lamprey.
18. PCB’s in steelhead higher than salmon.
19. Statement made that the levels of PCB’s in fish and the river above the level of egg lethality for bald eagles.
20. Should MDNR issue advisory re: contaminants in fish?
21. Fish Michigan data shows that steelhead effect juvenile trout. Is this current data, what does it state?
22. How was the MDNR Creel Count conducted? (Answer: creel counter floated river. Most populated area was surveyed by creel count.)
23. How do you access private property for the creel count? Was the private property area surveyed?
25. Issue raised of dead fish and rotting carcass issue if salmonids passed. (Answer: That is part of the reason for not passing the salmon.)
26. What fish are stocked where on the Pere Marquette River. (This question was raised to draw attention to the idea that if a wild run of fish is created, would we need to stock the river and if not, why is the PM still stocked if it is at all in certain stretches?)
27. Stocking in the Big Manistee vs. Little Manistee (steelhead) (Issue raised to compare effects of passing/stocking Boardman.)
29. Social impact of passing steelhead:
   • Enforcement-not enough (Answer: Cons. Officers thought there would be enough)
   • Economic value
   • Not sure what implications are to trout population? Needs to be answered.
30. Consider “staging” removals and fish passage to see implications of “just” dam removals.
31. These are DNR recommendations-BRDC does not have to follow/listen to them.
32. Are brown trout detrimental to brook trout?--more so than steelhead

Submitted by: Meral Jackson
June 23, 2008