



CARE Meeting Minutes – September 25, 2018

Tuesday, September 25, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT

Board Room, Gary Sanitary District Office

In Attendance: Hala Kuss, Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Brenda Scott-Henry (City of Gary); Deb Backhus, Maggie Byrne (IDNR – LMCP); Emily Stork (IDNR)

Via phone: Dav Parry, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Carl Wodrich, Mariya Trenkinshu (ArcelorMittal); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Travis Cole (USGS)

Public Attendees: 3 members of the public were in attendance.

1. Introductions:

John Fekete called the meeting to order and took attendance from those in-person and calling in.

2. Sediment Management Actions (BUIs #1-2, #4-7) Update

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

EPA and the non-federal sponsors (the East Chicago Waterway Management District, Atlantic Richfield Co., and BP) continue work on their efforts to finalize the Project Agreement for remediation of the Middle and East portions of the Lake George Canal Project. Fernando informed the group that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had approved the East Chicago Waterway Management's request to place the contaminated sediments dredged from the East portion into the Confined Disposal Facility (CDF). Once the final PA is in place, the Remedial Design work for the project will be finalized, the non-federal sponsors will conduct their respective portions of the project, and EPA will procure construction contractors. Project work is still expected to be completed in 2019.

b. East Branch, Phase II

EPA has allocated approximately \$570,000 in funding to conduct a 30% Remedial Design for this project. As a reminder, East Branch Phase II includes dredging and capping the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Cline Avenue and the US Steel Reach in Gary, as well as closure of the Ralston Street Lagoon.

c. Junction Reach

A 30% design of the Junction Reach was completed in 2015. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District are still working to identify non-federal cost share for the project. The Junction Reach includes the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south



of Columbus Drive and the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue.

d. Dredging of Navigational Channel

The East Chicago Waterway Management District updated the CARE members that the US Army Corps has completed the 2018 portion of its congressionally authorized navigational dredging project in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. The agency's contractor is now demobilizing. IDEM recounted for the group that, to date, the US Army Corps of Engineers has dredged approximately 1,249,060 cubic yards of sediment, with approximately 155,946 cubic yards dredged during 2018 to ensure the navigability of the Ship Canal. This sediment has been placed in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal Confined Disposal Facility. The Corps requested a TSCA permit from EPA and IDEM to dispose of sediment with PCB levels above 50 ppm in the CDF. The public requested that EPA and IDEM review alternative disposal options for this material. EPA, IDEM, Arcelor, and the US Army Corps are assessing an offsite disposal option for sediment in the authorized navigation channel above 50 ppm PCB.

3. Habitat Management Actions (BUI #3 & BUI #14) Update

a. Management Action #1 – Dune, Swale, and Riverine Restoration

IDNR, TNC, and Lake County Parks (LCP) restoration crews are continuing to make progress across all properties. The crews are currently shifting their focus to treating phragmites, as it's a good time of the year to conduct the treatment. The crews have gotten through the phragmites in only two weeks at Clark and Pine Nature Preserve. IDNR clarified, in response to a question, that treatment is conducted using a wetland-approved formulation of glyphosate. Phragmites is treated by broadcast spraying, dribbling it on the plants, or hand-wicking using a treated glove, depending upon the stand density.

The contracts IDNR has are currently wrapping up and the agency doesn't currently anticipate utilizing any additional contract work, but that assessment is subject to change. For instance, IDNR may choose to utilize contractors, rather than the crews, for some additional winter woody clearing work in some areas. If contractors are used, it would be likely that IDNR would choose to pay for time; for example, contractors might be used to supplement the crews one week per month.

IDNR has contracted with Orbis Environmental Consulting to revise the Rothrock protocol utilized to evaluate the quality of the various habitat units being restored within the AOC. Orbis is currently testing the revised protocol. They have now settled on a field data collection sheet. IDNR will seek to modify the Orbis contract to continue the task and draft the protocol for the 2019 growing season sampling.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment



IDEM has reached out to EPA's Superfund Division regarding the appropriate western boundary for the project. IDEM plans to finalize the project scope by the end of September, with the goal of submitting a project application this fall.

c. Management Action #3 – Lake George Branch Wetlands Restoration

IDNR inspected a portion of the contractor's work the week of September 17 and characterized it as an uphill battle against weeds. However, they are pleased with the contractor's efforts. The contract for Conservation Land Stewardship runs through March 2020.

d. Management Action #4 – Prescribed Fire Plan/Contractual Burns

US Fish and Wildlife Service has all the awards out. Several of the parties are preparing to conduct burns this fall and winter. Lake County Parks had their pre-bid meeting this week and The Nature Conservancy has work out for bid. IDNR is working to initiate the bid process and Shirley Heinze Land Trust will be unable to execute burns this fall, due to the delay in receiving funding.

e. Management Action #5 – Pine Station Ponds and Oxbow

There is no major update on this Management Action. TetraTech is under contract to assist IDNR with determining a path forward.

f. Early Detections

No early detection species have been identified so far. Black swallowwort and the invasive clover, which were detected last year, have been mapped out and treated this year.

4. Eutrophication (BUI #8) Update

IDEM is currently discussing the existing BUI removal target with EPA and working to clarify the process for assessing the status of the AOC with respect to this BUI.

5. Beach Closures (BUI #10) Update

Michelle Caldwell, IDEM's Beach Program Coordinator, provided a short PowerPoint presentation and update on activities related to BUI #10. The preliminary results from the 2018 beach season indicate almost across-the-board increases in *E. coli* exceedance rates at monitored beaches relative to 2017; the one exception to this is at Whihala East beach. Increases were seen at both AOC and reference site beaches.



Post-season *E. coli* monitoring and morning gull counts are currently occurring at East Chicago, Whiting, and Hammond beaches under the Nearshore Bird Management Program. IDEM is working to analyze the data from the 2018 beach season to determine any factors that may have contributed to the increase in *E. coli* exceedances.

Brenda from the City of Gary asked if IDEM had any information on the beach cleanups organized and/or tracked by the Alliance For the Great Lakes, most often in September. She reported that Gary's was reported to be very successful. IDEM replied that they do not track the beach cleanups conducted.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update (Michelle)

Staff from IDEM's Office of Water Quality have continued to observe static conditions at the two sites (i.e. U.S. Steel and Cline Avenue) that failed to meet the aesthetics BUI removal target in 2017. The former site is monitored by IDEM's Fixed Station Monitoring Program staff and the latter, by IDEM Wastewater Compliance Program and Lake Michigan Programs staff. IDEM staff have also continued to monitor Columbia Avenue in Hammond, which continues to show no significant aesthetics issues.

In response to a question from CARE members, IDEM clarified that the aesthetics BUI and resultant monitoring are evaluated utilizing Indiana's Narrative State Water Quality Standards. Persistent observations (those typically occurring three or more times during a season) are scored.

7. Plankton (BUI #13) Monitoring Update

Phytoplankton, zooplankton, chlorophyll, nutrient, and general chemistry samples were collected at the 12 sites during two sampling sessions conducted June 4-6 and August 13-15, respectively. Surface water samples for toxicity bioassays were conducted June 25 and August 20. Analyses are currently underway and IDEM expects to report out on the complete results in early 2019.

8. August 2018 Public Learning Session Recap

CARE held the second of the scheduled Public Learning Sessions on the evening of August 21, 2018 at the East Chicago Marina. For those who didn't attend, we had a few members of the general public, including a reporter and a photographer from the Post-Tribune. I gave the AOC 101 Presentation. Then Natalie Mills from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers presented an update on the dredging project within the Federal Navigation Channel of the Harbor Canal. Finally, Michelle Caldwell and Wild Goose Chase, Inc. gave a pair of presentations on the Nearshore Bird Management Program. An opportunity was provided after the meeting to observe the technique used by the dog-handler pairs to deter nuisance shorebirds. An article focusing on the Nearshore Bird Management Program was published in the Post-Tribune that week, providing the public with information on that program and the AOC Program more broadly.



9. CARE Meeting Schedule

IDEM has been working to schedule meeting locations within the AOC. The agency has currently scheduled all CARE meetings and Public Learning Sessions through April 23, 2019 and is working to schedule meetings beyond that time. Public Learning Sessions will be held in October, March, and June in Whiting, Gary, and East Chicago respectively. Members were then provided with the current meeting schedule and referred to the CARE webpage on IDEM's Lake Michigan Programs portal for more information. IDEM requests the assistance of CARE Members in publicizing the CARE Public Learning Sessions widely through their social networks and other communications channels.

Brenda Scott-Henry, Gary's representative, mentioned that the city was working to televise the March 2019 Public Learning Session and was looking to stream it over Facebook Live. CARE members agreed that this would be very helpful to reach out to those not able to make it to the event in person. Peg Donnelly from U.S. EPA suggested that CARE explore attending community meetings and Earth Day events to conduct outreach. Michael responded that IDEM is looking into presenting the AOC 101 presentation at additional venues.

10. Table Talk

No comments from members were brought up during the table talk portion of the meeting.

11. Public Comment

John Fekete provided additional clarification on the U.S. Army Corps approval for disposal of material dredged from the East Portion of the Lake George Branch of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. This was in response to a question from a member of the public.

12. Adjournment

CARE Members were reminded to check the IDEM RAP Program website at: <https://in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/rap> for meeting agendas and summaries as they become available.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Tuesday, November 27, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
East Chicago Waterway Management District Board Room

Next Public Learning Session: Tuesday, October 23, 2018, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Calumet College of St. Joseph