



CARE Meeting Summary – September 24, 2020

Thursday, September 24, 2020, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Zoom Event, Held Remotely

In Attendance: John Fekete (CARE); Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Emily Stork (IN DNR); Peg Donnelly, Caitie Nigrelli (U.S. EPA); Dan Sparks (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); Jennifer Birchfield (NW Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership); Fernando Treviño (East Chicago Waterway Management District); Ashley Overton (City of Gary); and Leslie Thompson (IL-IN Sea Grant)

Public Attendees: 2

1. CARE Introductions:

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 1:02 pm and took roll of those in attendance.

2. August 2020 CARE Meeting Summary

There was no discussion regarding, or corrections to, the August 2020 CARE Meeting Summary.

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

a. Dredging of Navigational Channel

Michael Spinar reminded CARE members that this project includes both the work to clear the dredging backlog of the Congressionally authorized federal navigation channel and the dredging of selected berthing areas outside the federal channel at the request of local property owners. All dredged materials will be deposited in the Indiana Harbor Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) in East Chicago.

Michael reported that water treatment at the Indiana Harbor CDF was ongoing and that water treatment for at least 60 days is required prior to initiating dredging. The contractor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers currently expects to resume dredging on September 28, 2020 and continue through approximately November, depending on the weather. Dredging will occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A total of approximately 182,000 cubic yards is anticipated for removal during this dredging season, of which approximately 129,000 cubic yards is slated for removal from the federal channel. Dredging outside the federal channel paid for with ArcelorMittal Supplemental Environmental Project funds is no longer planned for 2020; however, the Army Corps still estimates that the remaining sediment backlog within the federal channel will be cleared this year.



The Army Corps has received incremental funding to begin the dike raise at the CDF and still expects to award a contract for the construction in September 2020, with the project being completed sometime in late 2023. Thereafter the CDF will be utilized to store sediments dredged over the next 30 years (through approximately 2053).

b. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael reminded CARE members that the East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago to the CSX railroad bridge in Hammond. Approximately 40 percent of the Lake George East project area is within the federal navigation channel. The Middle Portion extends from the CSX bridge to the BP land bridge.

Michael reported that the US Army Corps is currently working to complete the project design. In the meantime, ARCO/BP continues source control work on the South and West Tank Farm parcels at the former ECI refinery site.

As reported last month, the 30 percent basis of design report submitted by ARCO/BP's contractor has been completed and EPA has issued a letter of acceptance. The 90 percent design is currently expected to be completed by the end of 2021. The construction schedule is as follows:

- Lake George East, first phase dredging:
 - Approximately 33,000 yards of material to be deposited in the Indiana Harbor CDF
 - Anticipated to occur this year, likely beginning in October or November.
- Lake George Middle, capping:
 - Beginning in early-to-mid 2021 and continuing through the first half of 2022
- Construction of the bank stabilization system at the West Tank Farm:
 - Beginning in mid-2021 and continuing through mid-2022
- Completion of the sheet pile barrier wall at the South Tank Farm:
 - Conducted during most of 2023
- Lake George East, second phase dredging:
 - Will likely utilize offsite disposal in a permitted landfill for materials dredged from the south bank of the IHSC
 - Expected to be conducted during most of 2023 and 2024.

c. East Branch, Phase II

Michael reminded CARE members that East Branch Phase II includes the dredging and capping of 2.5 miles of 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 in Gary.



Michael reported that EPA staff continue to work with the Gary Sanitary District to determine whether additional work may be credited as non-federal match. It is therefore currently unknown whether sufficient nonfederal match will be available to proceed into the project phase.

d. Junction Reach

Michael reminded CARE members that the Junction Reach includes approximately 1.5 miles of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive and approximately 1.4 miles of the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue. It is currently anticipated that only containment will be utilized for the portion of the Grand Calumet River from the Junction to Kennedy Avenue. Both removal and containment are anticipated for the remainder of the project area.

Michael reported that the 70% design of the Junction Reach was completed in 2015, with the report being released in early 2016. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District are still working to identify additional non-federal cost share needed to complete the Grand Calumet River and Indiana Harbor Ship Canal project areas concurrently. If all goes according to plan, the project design would be completed in 2021 and the project itself, would be conducted during most of 2022 and into early 2023.

e. BUI #7 Removal Target Update

Michael reported that IDEM continues to work to revise the removal target for BUI #7: Restrictions on Dredging Activities. Once the draft target has been further refined, it will be vetted through the CARE Committee. IDEM currently plans to complete revision of this BUI removal target in 2020.

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

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

Michael reported that the agreements between IDEM and Lake County Parks and IDNR to allow for the project work to continue through September 30, 2021 were executed August 25 and September 8 respectively. IDNR plans to submit a proposal for additional funding necessary to complete the work early next year.

Emily Stork reported that the IDNR, TNC, and Lake County Parks field crews are continuing operations onsite. Phragmites is the main target of the crews at this late point in the growing season, which will end with the arrival of hard freezes in October. The staff has been short a few crew members and has had some reductions in efficiency due to COVID safety measures, but Emily reported that she has been amazed at how much work the crews have still managed to accomplish.



b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

IDEM, IDNR, and other CARE Members continue to evaluate alternative mechanisms for supporting the BUI #3 and #14 removal target in lieu of the River Corridor Establishment project.

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

This update was initially inadvertently skipped but was provided following a question from Caitie Nigrelli.

Emily reported that contractors are working on the BP Properties along the Lake George Branch of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. High water levels may have drowned out many areas of emergent wetlands and have resulted in areas that are essentially floating mats or ringed by deep water, posing a safety hazard.

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

Emily reported that planning for the prescribed burn season should begin in mid-October. The burn season normally begins in November.

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

Emily reported that TetraTech continues to work on the project design and that IDNR is working with NIPSCO on access to the adjacent property.

f. Early Detections

Emily reported that there were no new early detection species noted during the past month.

g. BUI #3 and BUI #14 Removal Targets

IDEM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and IDNR continue work to revise BUI #14 Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Currently separate fish and wildlife habitat workgroups have convened to draft proposed revisions. It is currently anticipated that the revisions will be vetted before the full CARE Committee in the first quarter of 2021.

5. Beach Closings (BUI #10) Update Presentation

See Michelle Caldwell's [presentation](#). Following the presentation, Michelle addressed questions from CARE members as to whether birds were observed on the beach during the



2020 season. Michelle confirmed that birds were seen, but as there was no dog program, it was difficult to quantify their presence.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

IDEM RAP Program staff continue to track the progress of projects that have the potential to positively impact aesthetics within the AOC.

One such issue involves the Cline Avenue Ditch. As a reminder, the Ditch is located near the northeast corner of the intersection of Gary Avenue and Cline Avenue (Indiana Route 912) in Gary. The Ditch flows to the south parallel to Cline Avenue into a subterranean pipe/culvert for approximately one-half mile and discharges into the Grand Calumet River. Oily discharges have been observed in this area for many years and a responsible party has proposed a remedy that should address the issue.

The public comment period for a proposed remedy under RCRA at the Cline Avenue Ditch site closed August 21. EPA received a total of 10 public comments. A summary of these comments and EPA's responses has been posted to the [EPA project website](#).

After carefully reviewing and considering all public comments submitted during the public comment period, EPA, in consultation with IDEM, determined that the public comments do not require any changes to EPA's evaluation and determination of the proposed remedy for the Site. Therefore, the additional work outlined in the Focus Feasibility Study will be implemented by OXY USA, Inc., under a workplan approved (and overseen) by EPA. Implementation is expected to be completed this calendar year.

7. BUI #8 and #13 Update

As reported previously to CARE Members, during the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022, USGS will measure pH, specific conductance, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll and phycocyanin at approximately 15-minute intervals at two streamflow gauges: the Indiana Harbor Canal near Canal Street and the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River at Columbia Avenue. The water quality data for both sites has now been configured to transmit data live to the USGS National Water Information System, or NWIS.

IDEM is currently working with USGS and other partners to explore additional avenues for assessing dissolved oxygen and algal biomass within the Grand Calumet River AOC to address these BUIs.

8. Outreach/Education Activities

Outreach and education activities continue to be severely impacted by measures instituted to address the Covid-19 pandemic. IDEM's contractor for the AOC Beaches Video project has completed rough cuts of a two-chapter video and is working to incorporate final edits from



IDEM. RAP program staff are looking forward to showcasing the video for the whole CARE Committee once it is completed in October.

9. Table Talk

Michael announced that IDEM is hosting a series of presentations for groups interested in watershed protection and restoration efforts, particularly in the Lake Michigan basin. IDEM has set up a [website](#) with additional information.

10. Public Comment

Ms. Carolyn Marsh described her concerns regarding a fireworks display along the Hammond Lakefront and Bird Sanctuary during the Labor Day weekend and inquired whether IDEM could assist her in determining the owner of the property in question. She also requested a copy of the beach monitoring contract with the Hammond Port Authority.

Ms. Marsh also inquired as to the nature of the habitat management action occurring at George Lake in Hammond. Emily stated that that was all part of habitat management action #3 and that portions of the work were occurring at George Lake and portions along the Lake George Branch of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. Emily also stated that the contractors made a late-season herbicide treatment pass approximately two weeks ago and that she anticipated one more day of work remained in the vicinity of the bike trails around the lake.

11. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:01 pm.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, October 22, 2020, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Tentatively a Zoom Meeting