



CARE Meeting Minutes – July 26, 2018

Thursday, July 26, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Student Union and Library Building, Room SULB 150D
Purdue University Northwest, Hammond Campus

In Attendance: Hala Kuss, Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Paul Labus (TNC); Mariya Trenkinshu (ArcelorMittal); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Leslie Dorworth (IL-IN Sea Grant); Brenda Scott-Henry (City of Gary)

Via phone: Dav Parry, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Dan Sparks (USFWS); Deb Backhus, Maggie Byrne (IDNR – LMCP); Carl Wodrich, Emily Stork (IDNR)

Public Attendees: 8 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. In addition, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is still considering East Chicago's request to place the contaminated sediments from the East portion into the Confined Disposal Facility (CDF). As a reminder, 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 US Army Corps continues to conduct its congressionally authorized navigational dredging project in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. To date, the US Army Corps of Engineers has dredged approximately 1,249,060 cubic yards of sediment, with an additional 155,946 cubic yards expected to be 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 currently at work across all properties. Applied Ecological Services has been contracted by IDNR to treat Phragmites, cattails and purple loosestrife at Pine Station Nature Preserve and the Martin Oil property. Some marsh birds have been seen nesting on both properties; therefore further treatment at the two sites has been postponed until August 1. Lake County Parks also has a few contracts for this year at Gibson Woods and Tolleston Ridges.

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. IDNR believes that the revised protocol should be finalized by the end of 2018.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

IDEM has no updates on the river corridor project at this time. The agency will be working with US Fish and Wildlife Service, IDNR, and TNC to determine the final project scope, with the goal of submitting a final project proposal this fall.

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

Conservation Land Stewardship has the contract for this work and has already completed a couple of rounds of invasive species treatment. Carl plans to inspect the



contractor's work on August 7. The CLS contract is for two growing seasons though March 2020.

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

All parties currently have contracts for the work with the exception of Shirley Heinze Land Trust, which is planning to get its paperwork in the week of July 30. The project has been extended until September 30, 2021, when the Interagency Agreement (IA) between the U.S. EPA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expires. Several of the parties are preparing to conduct burns this fall and winter.

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

IDNR has entered into a contract with TetraTech to assist the agency in determining the best path forward on a restoration plan for these portions of the nature preserve given the limitations the IDNR has on the property with respect to ground disturbance.

f. Early Detections

No early detection species have been identified so far. Last year, two species were identified at Pine Station. Those species have been treated and, so far, no additional sightings have occurred. The list of early detection species used has been agreed upon by the members of the Indiana Cooperative Weed Management Area and is based on a list of species found in nearby states that pose a threat to the AOC.

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)

The Nearshore Bird Management Program has been operating since May. The recreational season, during which beach monitoring traditionally occurs runs from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Six more weeks of the program thus remain. Additional updates will occur once final data from the 2018 beach season is complete.

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. Columbia Avenue in Hammond continues to meet the removal targets, with no objectionable substances or odors noted.



7. Plankton (BUI #13) Monitoring Update

Phytoplankton, zooplankton, chlorophyll, nutrient, and general chemistry samples were collected at the 12 sites during a sampling session conducted June 4-6. Surface water samples for toxicity bioassays were conducted June 25. An initial assessment of the nutrient sampling results from the Indiana State Department of Health indicate fairly unremarkable values on the whole. A fuller accounting of the data will be available and provided to CARE once all the data are in. The second round of sampling is due to take place August 14-16.

8. AOC Outreach/ Draft 2018-2019 Meeting Schedule

IDEM has posted the Introduction to the Grand Calumet River AOC presentation on the RAP website, so it is available for viewing by the public. As you know, IDEM has been working to schedule meeting locations within the AOC. CARE Members were provided with a draft schedule and a list of potential meeting facilities identified so far within the AOC. IDEM is currently working to reach out to all of the listed facilities to see whether they meet the CARE Workgroup's needs for an accessible phone line, public accessibility, etc. IDEM will ensure that a final schedule is drafted and posted to the IDEM website by September 1.

9. Table Talk

Leslie Dorworth from IL-IN Sea Grant provided the CARE Members with information on the Indiana Master Watershed Steward Program. Indiana Master Watershed Stewards are trained volunteers who understand how watersheds work and are willing to help with watershed improvement efforts in their communities. The classroom portion of the program runs from September 8 through November 17. Those interested may contact Leslie Dorworth (ldorwort@pnw.edu) or see <https://indianawatershedprogram.wordpress.com/welcome/> for more information.

Brenda Scott-Henry mentioned during the public comment portion that the Gary Parks Department had implemented a trash reduction program, which encourages visitors to the beaches to carry out any materials they bring to the beach. Gary considers the program very successful and has seen a reduction in *E. coli* bacteria levels at participating beaches.

10. Public Comment

The CARE Workgroup received comments regarding funding for the nearshore bird management program and project locations. The group also received comments regarding the attribution of beach closure causes in the BeachGuard database maintained by IDEM.

11. Adjournment

The next CARE meeting will be a public learning session tentatively set for Tuesday, August 21, 2018 from 5:30-7:30 pm at the East Chicago Marina. The meeting date is tentative and



subject to change. Please check the IDEM RAP Program website at:
<https://in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/rap> for more details as they become available.

Next Workgroup Meeting: September 25, 2018

Next Public Learning Session: August 21, 2018