



CARE Meeting Minutes – November 27, 2018

Tuesday, November 27, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Board Room, East Chicago Waterway Management District Office

In Attendance: Michael Spinar (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Joe Exl (NIRPC); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Maggie Byrne (IDNR – LMCP); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Peg Donnelly (U.S. EPA);

Via phone: Hala Kuss, Michelle Caldwell, Dav Parry, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Mariya Trenkinshu (ArcelorMittal); Jennifer Birchfield (Urban Waters Federal Partnership); Victoria Wittig (Save the Dunes); Caitie Nigrelli (Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant)

Public Attendees: No 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

The Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement between EPA and the non-federal sponsors (the East Chicago Waterway Management District, Atlantic Richfield Co., and BP) and other related agreements for remediation of the Middle and East portions of the Lake George Canal Project are working their way through the various approval processes. The agreement between AR/BP and the ECWMD has been executed and the Statement of Work is in final form. There is also an Administrative Order on Consent that needs to be signed for the investigation of the ECI Parcels prior to the PA being signed. The ECWMD is hopeful that everything will be signed within the next week or so.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approved East Chicago's request to place the contaminated sediments dredged from the Lake George East Project into the adjacent 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 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. East Branch Phase II includes dredging and capping of



approximately 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.

c. Junction Reach

A 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 non-federal cost share for the project. The Side Agreement signed between AR/BP and the ECWMD includes the provision of any non-federal cost share overmatch on the Lake George Branch Middle and East Project to this reach. 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.

d. Dredging of Navigational Channel

The contractor conducting the congressionally authorized navigational dredging project in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal on behalf of the US Army Corps completed work on September 21, 2018 and has demobilized for the season. John Fekete pointed out that the length of the dredging season is linked to the terms and conditions of the air permit for the work. Approximately 223,000 cubic yards of sediment within and adjacent to the federal channel have been dredged and placed in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal Confined Disposal Facility during federal fiscal year 2018. Water treatment will continue until the spring. To date, the US Army Corps of Engineers has dredged approximately 1,472,000 cubic yards of sediment. The Army Corps anticipates conducting one or two additional years of legacy dredging before shifting to a maintenance dredging mode.

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 continue to assess 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

The IDNR, Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Lake County Parks crews have transitioned to dormant season work. This typically involves a staffing reduction from the growing season. Crews have focused on cleanup of the properties and cutting/treating invasive and aggressive native trees and shrubs during the season.



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.

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 is in the process of reaching out to the appropriate property owners and still plans to submit a project application this fall.

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

[Update provided by Emily Stork, IDNR, following the meeting]:

IDNR’s contractor, Conservation Land Stewardship, completed invasive control for the 2018 growing season in early October. The company is under contract through March 2020, so will be doing invasive control again in 2019.

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

[Update provided by Emily Stork, IDNR, following the meeting]:

TNC and Lake County Parks have awarded contracts to Pizzo and ENCAP, respectively, to complete prescribed burns. IDNR just got the requisition approval today (November 27) and the bid opening date is in mid-December. IDNR has not had any opportunities to conduct prescribed burns this fall, due to poor weather conditions. If conditions do not improve, the next opportunity to conduct burns will not arrive until spring of 2019. With any luck, favorable conditions may appear as early as February.

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.

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



IDEM is still evaluating the impacts on beach water quality from the different best management practices (BMPs) implemented during 2018 (and previous beach seasons), and a 12-month, no cost time extension is currently being processed by EPA in order to continue studying other BMPs to be implemented for the 2019 beach season. Also, as part of their multi-year project of assessing the effectiveness of beach BMPs at AOC beaches, USGS conducted microbial source tracking during the 2018 beach season to help identify the source of *E. coli* (human and gull contributions) at Whihala West. The findings from this study will help with the development of management actions to remove BUI#10. The results of the USGS study were to be ready by the end of October, but there has been a slight delay, and the data should be available by the end of December.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

IDEM does not yet have the November aesthetics monitoring data. A preliminary review of the photos collected through October show:

- No change from 2017 has been observed in a preliminary review of the photos collected so far at Columbia Avenue and the Alder Street Lift Station monitoring sites.
- A possible slight improvement from 2017 has been observed in a preliminary review of the photos collected so far from the US Steel monitoring site.

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. Most of the plankton taxonomies have been received. IDEM expects to have the toxicity bioassay results this year and the USGS chlorophyll results early next year. IDEM currently expects to conduct a report out on the complete results in early 2019.

8. Education and Outreach Activities

CARE held a Public Learning Session on the evening of October 23, 2018 at the Calumet College of St. Joseph. Approximately five individuals from the public attended and asked a number of questions about the Lake George Branch Wetlands restoration project and the AOC Program more broadly. The next Public Learning Session will be held in late March. IDEM and the City of Gary are hoping to record the session to provide to residents who have been unable to attend one of the previous events.

9. Table Talk

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

10. Public Comment



No members of the public were in attendance.

11. 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, December 18, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
Calumet College of St. Joseph, Room 200

Next Public Learning Session: Tuesday, March 25, 2018, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Gary Sanitary District Board Room