



CARE Meeting Summary – August 27, 2020

Thursday, August 27, 2020, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Zoom Event, Held Remotely

In Attendance: John Fekete, Michael Spinar, Jim Bailey, Kay Nelson, Emily Stork, Carl Wodrich, Jenny Orsburn, Caitie Nigrelli, Paul Labus, Dan Sparks, Will Tucker, Jennifer Birchfield, Michelle Caldwell, Fernando Treviño, Maureen Turman, and Ashley Overton

Public Attendees: (2) Doreen Carey, Carolyn Marsh

1. CARE Introductions:

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

2. July 2020 CARE Meeting Summary

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

3. New EPA TFL Introduction and Presentation

Michael introduced Caitie Nigrelli, who has worked on contaminated sediment outreach and education for Great Lakes AOCs through the Illinois-Indiana SeaGrant since 2011. Caitie is transitioning to a new position with EPA as the Task Force Lead (TFL) for the Grand Calumet River AOC and will be taking over many of these responsibilities from Kristen Isom, who will also be transitioning to a new role focusing more on contaminated sediment projects within the AOC. Caitie discussed her new role and what a TFL does more broadly.

Caitie described several functions of a TFL:

- 1) Communications. The TFL is the federal AOC counterpart to the Grand Calumet River AOC Remedial Action Plan (RAP) Program Coordinator (Michael Spinar) and is responsible for funneling information to management of EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO), attending and providing briefings, etc.
- 2) Funding. The TFL is the route to submitting GLRI funding requests.
- 3) AOC Milestone Coordination. The TFL coordinates with the technical review leads (TRLs) and the GLNPO BUI Coordinator on approval of draft BUI removal targets and requests for BUI removals submitted by the state. The TFL assists with the development of management action lists (MALs), coordinates review of the list submissions by the state, and tracks implementation progress.
- 4) Federal point of contact. In this case, Kristen will serve as the technical contact for AOC sediment projects and issues, while Caitie serves as the federal point of contact for AOC non-sediment projects and issues.

As Caitie transitions into her role over the next year, she requested that she and Kristen be copied on all messages pertaining to TFL responsibilities.



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

a. Dredging of Navigational Channel

As a reminder, this 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.

Water treatment at the Indiana Harbor Confined disposal facility continues. 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 16, 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

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.

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.

Fernando Treviño clarified that the review of the 30 percent basis of design report (BODR) submitted by ARCO/BP's contractor has been completed and EPA has issued a letter of acceptance. The 90 percent project 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

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.

EPA staff continue to work with the Gary Sanitary District to determine whether additional work may be credited as non-federal match. The agency is not currently aware of any additional non-federal sponsors that may be found to support the remedial portion of the project. It is therefore currently unknown whether sufficient nonfederal match will be available to proceed into the project phase.

d. Junction 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. 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.

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 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, conducted during most of 2022 and into early 2023.



Paul Labus asked whether a final plan for the USS Lead Superfund Site. Michael responded that, to his knowledge, the investigation was still being conducted with respect to Operable Unit 2 and no final remedy had yet been developed. However, he would check with IDEM and EPA Superfund Program staff and provide a follow-up to the CARE members.

e. BUI #7 Removal Target Update

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.

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

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

Michael reported that IDEM is in the process of amending the agreements with Lake County Parks and IDNR to allow for the work to continue through September 30, 2021, consistent with the no-cost time extension approved by U.S. EPA May 11. The Lake County Parks Contract has been executed and the IDNR agreement is moving through the electronic signature process. IDNR plans to submit a proposal for additional funding necessary to complete the work early next year. Carl Wodrich added that the funding agreement with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is ready to be entered into the state contracting system as soon as the MOA amendment between IDEM and IDNR is processed.

Emily Stork reported that crews were working well and were now practiced in using social distancing guidelines. Considerable progress was made during the 2020 growing season, which is now drawing to a close.

Michael also reported that partners were revising the project Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and that was expected to be provided to IDEM QA staff for review within the next few weeks.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

Michael reported that IDEM, IDNR, and other CARE Members are evaluating alternative mechanisms for supporting the BUI #3 and #14 removal target in lieu of the River Corridor Establishment project. Michael added that the change is due largely to high Lake Michigan water levels, which have impacted water levels throughout the Grand Calumet River and Indiana Harbor Ship Canal.



John Fekete asked about the impacts of high water levels to the plantings at DuPont and other restored wetland areas. Paul Labus stated that the plantings attempted to use a variety of species to improve resiliency to water level impacts, but many of the planted areas are currently underwater. Land managers do not yet have a good sense for how many plantings have survived this inundation. The ability of surviving plantings to infiltrate currently-inundated areas once water levels recede is also unknown.

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

Carl Wodrich updated CARE Members that Davey Resource Group was continuing work in the area and is under contract through March 2021 for the project. Monitoring of the project area will be taking place by Orbis Environmental Consulting in September.

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

Will Tucker updated the group that no additional prescribed burns would be executed until the burn season returns in the fall.

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

Carl Wodrich updated CARE members that the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the project has been submitted to EPA. The contractor, TetraTech, will be responsible for updating the document as needed. TetraTech was onsite in July to perform a wetland delineation for the project.

f. Early Detections

There were no early detections noted.

g. BUI #3 and BUI #14 Removal Targets

Michael reported that 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.

6. Beach Closings (BUI #10) Update

Michelle Caldwell informed the group that she would be providing a preliminary update of the 2020 beach season, including *E. coli* sample exceedance rates for the AOC beaches, at the September CARE Workgroup Meeting.

7. 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.

The comment period for a proposed remedy under RCRA at the Cline Avenue Ditch site closed last week. 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 ½ miles 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. EPA and IDEM are currently evaluating whether changes to the proposed remedy are required and plan to have the evaluation completed within a few weeks. Assuming no major changes to the remedy are required, the remedy is due to be completed this calendar year.

8. BUI #8 and #13 Update

Last month, Michael reported that, 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 USGS-IDEM Joint Funding Agreement that allocates funding for this work has now been signed. The upgrade to the Columbia Avenue site began in early July and the Indiana Harbor Canal site was upgraded early the week of July 13. 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 and its partners continue to work to determine appropriate reference sites against which to assess BUI status.

9. Outreach/Education Activities

Michael reported that outreach and education activities continued to be severely impacted by measures instituted to address the Covid-19 pandemic. However, IDEM is still moving forward with the AOC Beaches video. IDEM's contractor for the project completed a second round of filming on July 28. IDEM is now working with the contractor on post-production and RAP program staff are looking forward to showcasing the video for the whole CARE Committee once it is completed in October.

As reported last month, Michael met with Marie Laudeman, the Indiana Dunes State Park Interpretive Naturalist, to go over some ideas for remote and other alternative-format outreach on July 10. He reported that he has now reviewed the resources from DNR and is currently working with the agency to determine how best to implement these suggestions.



Finally, IDEM is working with our partners, including our area land managers, to obtain footage of the AOC remediation and restoration efforts. The agency's goal is to incorporate this footage into a separate video highlighting the AOC restoration. The video would be utilized for public outreach and may potentially serve as a tool for Great Lakes Legacy Act partnership recruitment efforts. Michael requested that CARE Members contact him if they are aware of any footage that might be included. DNR has already provided footage of several of the AOC managed lands for this effort.

10. Table Talk

[This was mentioned during the habitat update but is inserted here because of its relevance to this section.] Kay Nelson updated the group on an upcoming presentation on Tuesday, September 1 on the Northwest Indiana Brownfields Opportunity Zone. Kay thought that the presentation, hosted by the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), would be of interest to CARE Members.

11. Public Comment

A member of the public, Dorreen Carey, brought two issues to the attention of the CARE members. First, she mentioned that paddlers have been utilizing makeshift launch sites to access the Grand Calumet River and have been sharing information on paddling the Grand Calumet River on social media. She asked whether IDEM and CARE Members had any type of policy or position on paddling the river. Michael responded that IDEM, not being a property owner, does not have the authority to prohibit people from paddling the river. Thus, the agency defers to local property owners to allow or restrict access to the river. He also mentioned that, although 12 beneficial use impairments (BUIs) still remain, one of the ultimate goals of the RAP program is to restore the river so that it may be used for swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities. IDNR representatives offered that there are no public access sites for boats and/or paddlers owned by IDNR along the Grand Calumet River and that anyone who chooses to paddle the river does so at his or her own risk. IDNR is not promoting the Grand Calumet River as a place for paddling for a variety of reasons that have been discussed in the past.

Dorreen also updated the group about the status of high water levels in the vicinity of the Marquette Park Lagoons. Dorreen expressed concern that the water levels were impacting restored areas of the lagoons and causing flooding problems for local residents. She also stated that some residents of the Miller neighborhood in Gary approached US Steel and requested that they clean the culvert leading into the Grand Calumet River. Residents noticed that water levels in the lagoons dropped once this occurred.

12. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:30 pm.



Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, September 24, 2020, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Tentatively a Zoom Meeting