



## **CARE Meeting Summary– July 28, 2022**

**Thursday, July 28, 2022, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CDT**  
**MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely**

**In Attendance:** John Fekete (CARE); Jim Bailey, Michelle Caldwell, Cathy Csatari, Rahim Evans, Halee Griffey, Robert Lugar, Paul McMurray, Anne Remek, Michael Spinar (IDEM); Ben O’Neil, Natalie Mills, Sam Belcik (USACE); Betsy Maher, Harshini Ratnayaka (Save the Dunes), Fernando Treviño (ECWMD); Cherie Fisher (USFS); Jennifer Birchfield (NIRPC); Joel Perez-Castanada (TNC); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Dave Lampe (USGS); Leslie Dorworth (IL-IN Sea Grant); Jenny Orsburn, Lynn Riddle, Ashley Sharkey, Emily Stork, Carl Wodrich (IDNR); Victoria Wittig (NWI Urban Waters Federal Partnership)

**Public Attendees:** 4

### **1. Introductions**

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:02 am and took roll of those in attendance. Due to conflicts impacting certain CARE members, the presentation on the Lake George Canal Middle and East Great Lakes Legacy Act Project followed other updates. This summary follows the actual meeting order.

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

#### **a. Lake George Branch West**

Michael Spinar reported that the Lake George Branch West Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) project area extends from the BP land bridge to Calumet Avenue in Hammond. BP continues to validate sampling data collected in October 2021, with the goal of completing feasibility study work by the end of this year and beginning implementation in 2024.

#### **b. Junction Reaches**

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that the Junction Reaches project is divided into four sections: the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive (otherwise known as Junction North), the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal (known as Junction West), the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal and Kennedy Avenue (known as Junction East), and the GCR Junction Marsh south of the confluence of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal and Grand Calumet River.

Mr. Spinar stated that the project will take a phased approach. Phase 1 is scheduled to be constructed in 2023 and will consist of dredging and capping the Junction



West branch and dredging select portions of the Junction North branch. The GCR Junction Marsh will be contracted as an option to the Phase I project and will be constructed during the winter 2023 into spring 2024, contingent on negotiations with the property owners. Phase 2, which will likely consist of capping the Junction North and Junction East areas, is expected to commence following the Phase 1 work.

Mr. Spinar reported that the East Chicago Waterway Management District's contractor, TetraTech, is working to finalize the design, based on stakeholder input. The contractor is also working to finalize permit applications and legal agreements with various property owners for access and plans to have those in place prior to the start of construction. The District has responded to comments from U.S. EPA's Technical Review Committee on the project design and made updates as appropriate. U.S. EPA and the District are currently negotiating a project agreement necessary to proceed into implementation.

**c. East Branch Phase II**

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that the East Branch Phase II GLLA Project includes the dredging and capping of the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River in the vicinity of the Gary Airport, as well as closure of the Ralston Street Lagoon.

Mr. Spinar reported that EPA staff continue to work with the Gary Sanitary District to identify potential nonfederal Great Lakes Legacy Act cost share required to complete the project. The goal is to implement the project in 2024.

**d. Orphan Areas Site Characterization**

Mr. Spinar stated that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is conducting this site characterization of areas which lie outside, but adjacent to, Reaches 8 and 9 of the Congressionally authorized channel of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. This area is between Canal Steet and Dickey Road in East Chicago. These areas have not been well studied, nor have sediment remediation activities occurred. The site characterization seeks to evaluate the risk of recontamination these so-called "Orphan Areas" might pose to the federal channel.

Mr. Spinar informed CARE members that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a draft scope of work and sampling plan for the site characterization in late March and is currently responding to feedback from the project team. A revised scope of work is currently expected in August.



### **3. Habitat Management Actions (BUI #3 & BUI #14) Report**

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

Emily Stork informed CARE members that the project partners were having staffing issues and both ground crews and contractors were understaffed. However, the partners were working hard to maintain areas that have received restoration work. The restoration has been complicated by weeds such as cattails, phragmites, and purple loosestrife that have sprung up along the river with lower water levels.

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

Mr. Spinar provided this update, as US Fish and Wildlife staff were not in attendance. This project ends December 31, 2022, and there has been no burn activity as the next burn season starts in the fall.

#### **c. Management Action #5 – Pine Station Ponds and Oxbow**

Lynn Riddle and Carl Wodrich updated CARE members on this project. They related that the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has been working to get a contract executed to do the initial herbicide treatment of the bank area and potentially mow this winter. Only Davey Resource Group submitted a bid for the project and IDNR hopes to get the contract executed in August. Sand capping around the ponds will occur in 2023.

Ms. Riddle added that IDNR submitted the grant application for the remainder of the project to GLNPO, bringing the total project funding to approximately \$10 million. IDNR has been developing specifications required to retain a contractor to initiate the remaining work next spring and has submitted the wetland permit to the U.S. Army Corps for all construction phases.

### **4. Eutrophication BUI Report**

Dave Lampe updated CARE members that USGS is conducting additional monitoring in 2022 to assist in developing a path forward for addressing the *Eutrophication and Undesirable Algae* Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI). A project conducted last year collected dissolved oxygen and chlorophyll data at a number of sites within AOC waters. This year, USGS is collecting continuous water-quality data at six sites, conducting regular visual inspections of site conditions, collecting and analyzing monthly and storm event water quality samples for various nutrient-related parameters, and analyzing the results.

Mr. Lampe updated CARE members that the monitoring equipment is operational and USGS collected water quality samples from three of the sites for analysis on four dates between May and July. The agency currently anticipates collecting samples during one storm event in early August. The analyses



include a number of nutrient parameters. USGS will be developing a compilation report next year, but preliminary reports should be available prior to that.

## **5. Lake George Canal Middle and East Great Lakes Legacy Act Project**

Mr. Spinar introduced Fernando Treviño, the Executive Director of the East Chicago Waterway Management District. Mr. Treviño then introduced Natalie Mills and Ben O’Neil, project managers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Chicago District. They provided a presentation on the Lake George Middle and East Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment remediation project, currently underway. Mr. Spinar noted that, due to a request from a CARE member at the June CARE Workgroup meeting, this presentation will be recorded. Both the presentation and recording are available on the IDEM [CARE website](#).

Following the presentation, the speakers took questions and comments from attendees. A number of questions and comments focused on the outreach conducted to residents of Hammond and East Chicago.

## **6. Table Talk**

Leslie Dorworth suggested that IDNR and other project partners reach out to Purdue University NW to assist with recruitment of employees. Partners can provide the job information to Ms. Dorworth and to the PNW Career Center.

## **7. Public Comment**

Public comments were only received during the Lake George Canal presentation.

## **8. Meeting Adjournment**

Mr. Spinar adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:31 am.

**Next Workgroup Meeting:** Thursday, August 25, 2022 at 9:00 AM Central Time Via Microsoft Teams