



CARE Meeting Summary – June 25, 2020

Thursday, June 25, 2020, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Microsoft Teams Live Event, Held Remotely

In Attendance: Michelle Caldwell, Michael Spinar, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Paul Labus (TNC); Jenny Orsburn, Carl Wodrich, Emily Stork (IDNR); Kristen Isom (USEPA); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Paul Buszka (USGS); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Amber Sample (ORISE); Jennifer Birchfield (NWI Urban Waters); Leslie Dorworth (IL-IN SeaGrant)

Public Attendees: None

1. Introductions:

Michael Spinar opened the meeting at approximately 1:03 pm and took roll of those in attendance.

2. May 2020 CARE Meeting Summary

- **Is there any discussion regarding, or are any changes needed to, the May 2020 CARE Workgroup Summary?**

There was no discussion from CARE Members regarding the meeting summary.

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

a. Dredging of Navigational Channel

Michael provided CARE members with an update on this reach, reminding those in attendance that 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.

The U.S. Army Corps held a pre-dredge public meeting on June 17, via Zoom. Water treatment at the Indiana Harbor Confined disposal facility has begun. Water treatment for 60 days is required prior to initiating dredging. The contractor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers expects to resume dredging in July 2020 and continue through approximately November. A total of approximately 225,000 cubic yards is anticipated for removal during this dredging season. Dredging is expected to occur in Reach 1 and Reach 13 of the federal channel, with approximately 129,000 cubic yards slated for removal.



In addition to the dredging within the federal channel, dredging is also due to occur adjacent to the LTV dockfaces and within the Lake George Branch of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. Finally, dredging outside the federal channel paid for with ArcelorMittal Supplemental Environmental Project funds is planned for 2020.

The Army Corps estimates that the remaining sediment backlog will be cleared with this year's dredging. Thereafter, a three-year hiatus in dredging activities is planned through 2023 to allow for the CDF's dikes to be raised 11 feet, which will double its capacity to 4.8 million cubic yards from the current 2.7 million cubic yards. The Army Corps has received incremental funding to begin this project and currently expects to award a contract for the construction in September 2020.

Routine maintenance dredging of the federal channel is expected to commence in 2024 following the dike raise. The additional capacity of the CDF will be utilized to store sediments dredged over the next 30 years (through approximately 2053).

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

b. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael then provided an update on the Lake George Branch Middle and East Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment management project. The East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago to the CSX railroad bridge. 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 Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement between EPA and the non-federal sponsors (the East Chicago Waterway Management District, Atlantic Richfield Co., and BP) has been approved and the US Army Corps is currently working to complete the project design for the canal. In the meantime, ARCO/BP has begun source control work on the South and West Tank Farm parcels at the former ECI refinery site and has already removed numerous pipelines from the South Tank Farm.

The 30 percent design completed by ARCO/BP's contractor is currently under review by the project team. The 90 percent design is currently expected to be completed by the end of 2021. A barrier wall system is being designed for the South Tank Farm to minimize migration of contaminants into the canal, while providing bank stabilization to support dredging of the East project area. Construction is currently anticipated for 2023. A bank stabilization system is being designed for the West Tank Farm to tie into the planned cap in the Middle project area. Construction is anticipated to occur from late 2021 through mid-2022.



Because this source control work will not be completed prior to the end of the 2020 dredging season, the Army Corps will not be able to dredge along the South Tank Farm prior to initiating the CDF dike raise. The Army Corps is splitting the dredging into two phases, with the first phase consisting of disposal of the majority of the material (approximately 33,000 cubic yards) into the CDF and the smaller second phase consisting of more costly off-site disposal.

The first phase dredging is anticipated to occur this year, with capping of the middle portion to begin in mid-2021 and continue through the first half of 2022; completion of BP's source control measures at the West and South Tank Farms to conclude in 2022 and 2023, respectively; the CDF dike raise to be completed in late 2023; and the second phase dredging of the East project area to occur in 2023 or 2024.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

c. East Branch, Phase II

Michael next updated the group on the status of the East Branch Phase II Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment management project. The project area 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.

The 30% Remedial Design for this project has been completed. USEPA 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.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

d. Junction Reach

Michael then updated the group on the status of the Junction Reach Great Lakes Legacy Act contaminated sediment management project. 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. USEPA, 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.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

e. BUI #7 Removal Target Update

Finally, Michael provided an update on the status of the BUI #7 removal target. 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.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

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

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

Michael began with an update of the administrative aspects of this project. IDEM is in the process of amending the agreements with Lake County Parks and IDNR to allow the project work to continue through September 30, 2021, consistent with the no-cost time extension approved by USEPA on May 11. IDNR plans to submit a proposal for additional funding necessary to complete the work early next year.

Carl Wodrich then discussed that he has informed various parties about the forthcoming amendment so that they are aware a funding extension is in the works. Paul Labus mentioned that the information presented to USEPA in January 2020, which included a projection of the units expected to be at a long-term maintenance status by September 30, 2020, assumed that work planned for the 2019-2020 winter would proceed as scheduled; however, COVID-19 severely restricted work in the late winter/early spring period. Therefore, work at some of those units may need to continue through at least 2020. Carl responded that he believed that affected units were not necessarily excluded from the current Dune and Swale grant, for which the 12-month, no-cost time extension was received in May.

Emily Stork provided an update on the on-the-ground work. The crews are out working, but more proactive collaboration is needed with COVID. For instance, the crews cannot share vehicles and must social distance while conducting their work. Weekly planning



meetings are now used instead of biweekly meetings to coordinate this. TNC will be bringing a contractor online to support activities within the next week or so.

Paul Buszka then described USGS's continuing efforts to monitor water levels at the Pine Station Nature Preserve. The agency is also conducting water quality sampling at selected points within the sampling network.

Paul Buszka went on to explain that the high water levels at Lake Michigan have caused water from the East Branch and, to a lesser extent, Lake Michigan, to be shunted to Illinois. USGS has been seeing record discharges of the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River into Illinois. Specifically, peak flows have increased from previous highs of 50-60 cubic feet per second (cfs) to on the order of 300-400 cfs. Those discharges and high water levels have been the subject of conversations with the US Army Corps of Engineers and various stakeholder groups due to their implications to the Great Lakes Compact, among other matters. The USGS has received inquiries from Gary residents concerned about high water levels in the Marquette Park Lagoons.

Paul Labus then followed up with Paul Buszka about testing for water quality. Paul Buszka stated that USGS would be sampling for trace metals and some volatile organic compounds this year from the western set of shallow groundwater wells. Paul Labus expressed that IDNR, Lake County Parks, and TNC are always concerned about field crew safety as it relates to any contaminants in the wetland areas.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

Michael provided an update on the status of this management action. IDEM, IDNR, and others are wrapping up an evaluation of the feasibility of this management action in light of continued high lake levels. Due to heavy spring precipitation, Lake Michigan is currently forecast to be at or near record water levels for most of 2020 and many of the original project areas are underwater.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

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

Carl provided an update on this management action. Staff from Davey Resource Group, the contractor for the project, were starting to conduct a second pass through the properties for targeted weeds. Project monitoring will occur sometime in July or August. This is the last growing season that will be funded through GLRI.

Paul Labus added that the sedge meadow and west shoreline on the north basin of George Lake looks really great and should be considered a success story. Upon a question from Kristen Isom, he clarified that this area is near the Nature Center



[editor's note: the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District's Environment Education Center].

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

Will Tucker, who oversees this project for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, was not present on the call. Carl Wodrich updated the group that there have been no prescribed burns since the last meeting. Will Tucker is working with Annette Trowbridge, the Acting Regional GLRI Coordinator for the USFWS Midwest Region, to determine whether the Interagency Agreement funding this project can be extended.

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

Carl Wodrich updated CARE members that IDNR now has a contract executed with TetraTech to do the design work, including drafting permit applications and draft specifications for construction. IDNR met onsite with TetraTech two weeks ago to discuss the project. The main item of note is that high water levels at Pine Station have continued to worsen the erosion on the south scrape area, undermining the sand and plants.

f. Early Detections

Emily updated the group that more Japanese honeysuckle has been detected at Gibson Woods Nature Preserve than was previously seen; however, no new early detections have been noted.

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.

No follow-up questions from CARE Members were received regarding this update.

5. Beach Closings (BUI #10) Update

Michelle Caldwell provided an update on the status of BUI #10: Beach Closings. All the AOC beach communities, with the exception of Gary, are now monitoring for *E. coli* as part of the 2020 Beach Season. The BeachGuard database has moved to a new home and may now be found at: <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/beachguard>. This full URL must be used; using beachguard.idem.in.gov alone will generate an error.



IDEM is moving forward with the AOC Beaches video and IDEM's contractor for the project, Asher Agency, plans to begin filming shortly. The video will include interviews, beach footage, and footage of Wild Goose Chase's trained border collies.

Michael was able to confirm with management from the East Chicago Marina that the City is able to conduct regular beach grooming using the existing beach comber. High water levels do appear to have some impact on the ability to groom. Of course, high Lake Michigan water levels have impacted a number of shoreline communities. A number of communities, including East Chicago and Hammond, have needed to remove large quantities of debris. One bright spot was that the mild winter did allow Hammond Marina staff to conduct some routine maintenance work that ordinarily would need to wait until spring.

Jeorse Park is not currently open to the public. There are no active bird deterrence measures occurring at Jeorse Park [*editor's note: the no bird feeding signs are still being displayed*]. IDEM is concerned that the lack of such measures may be contributing to a fairly high number of exceedances observed so far this season.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

Michael reported that IDEM RAP Program staff continue to monitor remedial and Great Lakes Legacy Act Projects anticipated to address aesthetics issues noted during previous rounds of monitoring and anticipate having a robust update for CARE Members during the winter of 2020-2021.

7. BUI #8 and #13 Update

IDEM is currently working with USGS to augment the streamflow gages at the Indiana Harbor Canal near Canal Street and the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River at Columbia Avenue. During the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022, both gages will measure pH, specific conductance, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll and phycocyanin at approximately 15-minute intervals. This will allow for improved tracking of indicators of eutrophication in these locations. USGS Urban Waters funding was utilized for this effort. Paul Buszka added that the water quality sonde at Columbia Avenue is in operation, but the real-time functionality has not yet been brought online. Data is being gathered and calibration is occurring. It is anticipated that the realtime component may be installed within the next six weeks. Dave Lampe of USGS will be overseeing the project.

8. Outreach/Education Activities

Michael provided an update on AOC-related outreach and education activities. Those activities continue to be severely impacted by measures instituted to address the Covid-19 pandemic. IDEM continues to work with Asher to develop the AOC Beaches video and hopes to showcase it for CARE members as soon as the October CARE meeting.



At the last CARE Meeting, Carl suggested that CARE and IDEM reach out to INDR state parks interpretive staff, who are developing a number of remote outreach and education presentations. Michael informed the CARE that he has a meeting planned with Marie Laudeman, the Indiana Dunes State Park Interpretive Naturalist, to go over some ideas for remote and other alternative-format outreach and will report back to the group at the July meeting.

Two grant outputs particularly impacted by COVID-19 include our Day in the Dunes Bus Tour and funding for a Spanish language interpreter for a CARE Public Learning Event. IDEM RAP staff would appreciate any suggestions CARE members have for accomplishing these projects. For instance, Michael has considered working with some of our local land managers, such as IDNR, TNC, Shirley Heinze Land Trust, and Lake County Parks, to offer some type of video log of some highlights of the restoration that we could showcase for area residents online. Jenny Orsburn suggested that one of the other IDNR divisions may have a drone that might be used to get some aerial imagery. Carl agreed to look into whether a photo release would be necessary on the IDNR side and Carl and Jenny will look into whether IDNR has a drone that might be available.

9. Table Talk

- IDNR's Lake Michigan Coastal Program is seeking broad input on the 2021 Grant Priorities. The survey closes July 10.
- IDEM obtained a license for the new version of Zoom and plans to utilize it for the July CARE meeting. It is hoped that the new format will prove easier to use.

10. Public Comment

There were no questions received in the chat.

11. Meeting Adjournment

Michael adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:11 pm.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, July 23, 2020, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Tentatively a Zoom Meeting