



## **CARE Meeting Summary – September 23, 2021**

**Thursday, September 23, 2021, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CDT**  
**MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely**

**In Attendance:** Michelle Caldwell, Michael Spinar, Paul McMurray, Anne Remek, Jim Bailey (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Joel Perez-Castaneda (TNC); Caitie Nigrelli (USEPA); Will Tucker (USFWS); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Dave Lampe, Meredith Nevers, Murulee Byappanahalli (USGS); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum), Carl Wodrich, Emily Stork (IDNR); Fernando Treviño (ECWMD)\*

\* Mr. Treviño informed me following the meeting that he had joined via the call-in number.

**Public Attendees: 3**

### **1. Introductions**

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:03 am and took roll of those in attendance.

### **2. BUI #14 Removal Target Proposed Revision**

Michael Spinar provided a presentation to CARE Members regarding the proposed removal target revision for the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment (BUI), commonly designed BUI #14. The presentation began by providing background on the Great Lakes Areas of Concern (AOCs) program, including how targets for restoration of impaired beneficial uses at AOCs are developed. The presentation then focused specifically on the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment (BUI) for the Grand Calumet River AOC, describing how the current removal (restoration) target was developed and utilized in developing a set of five management actions – projects funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) designed to result in BUI removal.

In the course of implementing several of these management actions, IDNR, working with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department (LCP), needed to develop a new monitoring protocol to better assess project progress. The experience implementing the new protocol and the management action projects also led IDEM and the project partners to explore ways in which the removal target could be improved. Michael described how the proposed target focuses on native plant diversity, control of invasive and aggressive native species, and provisions for long-term maintenance of restored areas while allowing for the flexibility to address local conditions.

Finally, Michael described how the fish (in-stream) habitat portion of the removal target was also revised to ensure the habitat quality is generally in line with statewide expectations for warm water aquatic habitats, while allowing for the flexibility to address site-specific



conditions. The proposed target also reflects the important role that remediation of contaminated sediments plays in restoring habitat for aquatic communities.

John Fekete inquired whether a removal target of this type was typical at other AOCs. In response, Michael stated that it is not. From the Stage 1 Remedial Action Plan on, the International Joint Commission, federal, state, and local partners have recognized the importance of the protection and restoration of dune and swale and other rare habitats to AOC restoration. These connected habitats therefore have an outsized importance in this AOC, which is reflected by the target.

No other comments or questions were received from CARE members.

### 3. AOC Updates

Michael provided the following sediment-related updates to CARE members:

- BP and U.S. EPA are working to develop a Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement that would include sampling of the Lake George West project area and treatment of invasive species along the banks.
- The US Army Corps is working through the contracting process for the Lake George Middle project area.
- The East Chicago Waterway Management District and project stakeholders continue to meet monthly to refine the scope for the final remedial design of the Grand Calumet River Junction Reaches.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to develop the scope of work for the 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.
- In response to a question from John Fekete, Michael shared that the Cline Avenue Ditch RCRA remedy has been constructed and that there are no updates on the East Branch Phase II project.

Michael provided the following habitat-related updates to CARE members:

- IDEM has extended the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with IDNR for approximately three months to allow for on-the-ground work for the Dune and Swale project to continue through December 31 of this year. In addition, the agency is also working to extend the contract with Lake County Parks through the same period.
- U.S. EPA has granted permission to IDEM to allow for the purchase of a compact track loader (CTL) by Lake County Parks using the Dune and Swale grant funds. The equipment will allow for additional habitat restoration tasks to be completed in-house, greatly assisting in achieving the habitat-related BUI removal targets.

Finally, Michael provided the following updates on other BUI-related matters:

- IDEM RAP Program staff and partners are working with USGS to analyze the preliminary dissolved oxygen data collected at 13 AOC sites and develop plans for more targeted monitoring in 2022. The ultimate goal is to determine what management



actions may be required to achieve removal of the Eutrophication and Degradation of Plankton BUIs.

There were no other updates from CARE members.

#### **4. Table Talk**

There were no updates shared from CARE members.

#### **5. Public Comment**

No comments were received. Following the meeting, Michael received communications indicating that technical difficulties may have prevented some attendees from sharing comments.

#### **6. Meeting Adjournment**

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:18 am.

**Next Workgroup Meeting:** Thursday, October 28, 2021, 9:00 am – 11:00 am  
Via Microsoft Teams