



CARE Meeting Summary – June 23, 2022

Thursday, June 23, 2022, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CDT
MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely

In Attendance:

John Fekete (CARE); Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell, Jim Bailey, Anne Remek, Bob Lugar, Cathy Csatari (IDEM); Joel Perez-Castaneda, Susan MiHalo (TNC); Carl Wodrich, Lynn Riddle, Jenny Orsburn (IDNR); Dan Sparks, Will Tucker (USFWS); Fernando Treviño (ECWMD); Victoria Wittig (NWI Urban Waters); Amber Sample (ORISE); Caitie Nigrelli, Peg Donnelly (USEPA); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Murulee Byappanahali (USGS)

Guest Presenter:

Lee Humberg (USDA-APHIS)

Public Attendees:

There were no members of the public present.

1. Introductions

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:02 am. Michael Spinar took roll of those in attendance at Mr. Fekete's request.

2. USDA Gull Management Program

Mr. Spinar introduced Lee Humberg, the State Director of Wildlife Services at the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and provided a brief overview of his presentation on efforts to identify, and conduct management activities at, large nesting colonies of ring-billed gulls and other species implicated in *E. Coli* exceedances in northwest Indiana. These targeted efforts are expected to stabilize the gull population over time, eventually resulting in a reduction of *E. coli* and other pathogens at AOC beaches

Mr. Humberg described how previous colonial nesting bird censuses have shown large populations of colonial nesting birds at the Cleveland Cliffs Indiana Harbor facility, with the gull population large but stable, and the double-crested cormorant population increasing rapidly. As these large colonies can have adverse impacts on water quality and other native species in the area, USDA identified an opportunity to treat nesting colonies using GLRI funding. The program, which began in 2019, was patterned off a gull management program carried out by the Chicago Park Department. The program has included an aerial survey of colonies along the Lake Michigan shoreline and treated gull and double-crested cormorant eggs over the past few years. Mr. Humberg then took a number of questions from CARE members.

Mr. Fekete requested that the presentation be posted for public view and that photos of the referenced bird species be included, if possible. Mr. Spinar stated that the presentation would be posted to the CARE website (<https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/resources/citizens-advisory-for-remediation-of->



[the-environment/](#)). Murlee Byappanahali offered to share a summary paper with CARE members; Mr. Spinar said he would discuss how best to provide the paper to respect limits on access and distribution. Kay Nelson requested that historical information on the initial development of the Inland Steel gull management program be developed to inform the public and that Mr. Humberg reach out to Tom Barnett of Cleveland Cliffs for additional information.

In response to several questions from CARE members, Mr. Humberg stated that the gulls typically lay around three eggs per nest, but that it ranges from one to five; confirmed that the only large nesting area appears to be on the Cleveland Cliffs Indiana Harbor property; confirmed that USDA uses corn oil, which is applied with a commercial backpack sprayer, for the treatments; confirmed that the work is conducted in accordance with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued permit; and stated that there are anticipated to be no significant environmental impacts due to the work. Mr. Humberg added that USDA staff are only accessing 50 or 60 percent of the site two to three days per year, and broken eggs are already common in the area. Mr. Humberg also stated that previous studies have showed that ring-billed gulls are extremely mobile, moving all over the Great Lakes region but that USDA is not conducting any formal tracking or tagging efforts.

Dan Sparks left several informational comments in the chat. He stated that the steel companies have been managing gulls along the west side of the Indiana Harbor since the early 1990s, with a contractor, Safe Air, conducting work since the late 1990s. Mr. Sparks confirmed that black crown night herons were nesting there in 1994 and offered to locate an Indiana Academy of Science paper from around 2000 describing species found in the Indiana Harbor area.

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

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Mr. Spinar recalled that the East Portion is located near the Confined Disposal Facility in East Chicago. The U.S. Army Corps has received funding to complete design work for the Phase II dredging of Lake George Canal East. Design work is expected to be completed in 2023, with dredging conducted in 2024. The Army Corps recently developed a draft sampling plan as part of the design and is working to respond to stakeholder feedback. A revised sampling plan is expected in early July.

In the meantime, ARCO/BP is expected to finalize the 90 percent design for construction of a sheet pile wall along the northern boundary of the ECI South Tank Farm property within the next few weeks. He also stated that the project fact sheet, presentation, and draft design have been posted to the ECWMD website (<https://www.in.gov/ecwmd/>). The sheet pile work, along with the habitat restoration work is expected to be completed in 2024.

There were no questions from CARE members regarding the Lake George Branch East project.



Mr. Spinar stated that construction on the Lake George Middle project, overseen by the U.S. Army Corps, began in March 2022 and is expected to continue through 2023. The project consists of placement of an engineered cap within the canal, pipeline decommissioning and placement of active mats at the ECI West Tank Farm property, ecosystem restoration along the northern bank and the wetland shelf along the southern bank near Lake Mary, and repair of a tide gate structure at the BP land bridge. Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that BP has completed the pipeline decommissioning and tide gate work. He also updated members that the Army Corps' contractor is nearing completion of the West Tank Farm bank stabilization work, which consists of placement of active mats to adsorb contaminants, bank regrading, and revegetation with native plants. The contractor is currently placing the sand stabilization layer in the canal, which is required to support the cap.

There were no questions from CARE members regarding the Lake George Branch Middle project.

b. Lake George Branch West

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that the Lake George Branch West project area extends from the BP land bridge to Calumet Avenue in Hammond. Mr. Spinar stated that there were no significant updates to this project; BP continues to validate sampling data collected in October 2021, with the goal of completing feasibility study work by the end of this year. Project implementation is currently projected to begin in 2024.

c. Junction Reaches

Mr. Spinar described how the Junction Reaches project is divided into three 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), and the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal and Kennedy Avenue (known as Junction East).

As Mr. Spinar previously reported, the project will take a phased approach. Phase 1, which will consist of dredging and capping the Junction West area and dredging select portions of the Junction North, will likely be constructed in 2023. Phase 2, which will likely consist of capping the Junction North and Junction East areas, is currently planned for construction in 2024. In addition, the project team is evaluating the feasibility of incorporating habitat restoration activities on adjacent wetlands as part of both project phases.

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 by mid-summer. The District is working to respond to comments from U.S. EPA's Technical Review Committee on the project design and expects that to be completed by mid-July. Once any issues are addressed to GLNPO's satisfaction, a project agreement between EPA and the District will be developed.

d. East Branch Phase II

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that the East Branch Phase II 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 stated that there were no significant updates on this project; 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.

e. Orphan Areas Site Characterization

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members 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 Street 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.

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 early July.

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

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

Carl Wodrich stated that there were no significant updates on the Dune and Swale, Phase 2 project from an IDNR management perspective. Joel Perez-Castaneda stated that TNC crews were out working. Due to the recent heat wave, crews have been starting work early. Mr. Perez-Castaneda reported that high water levels continue to facilitate the spread of cattails and phragmites which, complicates the management of the sites.

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



Will Tucker stated that there were no significant project updates, as the spring burn season has ended and any burns will need to wait until fall.

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

Mr. Wodrich informed CARE members that USEPA has approved the QAPP (quality assurance project plan) for the Phase I implementation of the project. IDNR is working to draft the workplan for implementation of the remaining portions of the project, with the goal of providing it to USEPA for review next week. IDNR hopes to receive funds this federal fiscal year. The agency plans to award a contract later this summer for the initial invasive control work. Lynn Riddle added that IDNR has completed the Historic Preservation Act review and has obtained the appropriate IDEM permit for the work. The agency is still awaiting issuance of the permit from the U.S. Army Corps.

5. Eutrophication BUI Report

Mr. Spinar reported that USGS is conducting additional monitoring in 2022 to assist in developing a path forward for addressing the *Eutrophication and Undesirable Algae* BUI. Specifically, this consists of the collection of continuous water-quality data at six sites, regular visual inspections of site conditions, collection and analysis of monthly and storm event water quality samples for various nutrient-related parameters, and analysis work. The monitoring equipment was installed at six sites during the first week of May and USGS collected water quality samples from four of the sites for analysis on May 17 and June 14. The agency is anticipating collecting samples during one storm event in July. The USGS project webpage may be found at https://www.usgs.gov/centers/ohio-kentucky-indiana-water-science-center/science/water-quality-monitoring-and-algal?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects.

6. Table Talk

Mr. Spinar reported that U.S. Army Corps staff have agreed to provide a presentation on the Lake George Middle and East Project at the July CARE Workgroup Meeting. No other items were brought forth by CARE members.

7. Public Comment

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

8. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:09 am.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, July 28, 2022 at 9:00 AM Central Time Via Microsoft Teams