To all interested parties:

This letter shall serve as a formal notice of the receipt of an application for Section 401 Water Quality Certification by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). The purpose of the notice is to inform the public of active applications submitted for water quality certification under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (33 U.S.C. § 1341) and to solicit comments and information on any impacts to water quality related to the proposed project. IDEM will evaluate whether the project complies with Indiana’s water quality standards as set forth at 327 IAC 2.

1. Applicant: Michael Conner
   5995 S 900 W
   South Whitley, IN 46787

2. Agent: Herb Manifold
   Ecosystem Connections Institute, LLC
   9130 North 600 East
   Denver, IN 46926

3. Project location: Section 8, Township 30 North, Range 8 East, Whitley County. The project is located at the Collamer Dam.

4. Affected waterbody: Eel River

5. Project Description: The purpose of the project is to remove the Collamer Dam from the Eel River. A large hole exists behind and under the dam that is approximately 10 meters in diameter. The gravel supporting the foundation has eroded under the dam, severely compromising the dam’s structural integrity and presenting a human safety hazard. Although IDEM has received an application for this project prior to impacts occurring, IDEM intends to issue an emergency, after-the-fact Section 401 Water Quality Certification to authorize the project. An entry point will be built along the south side of the river to allow hydraulic crane access for the dam removal. All concrete material and temporary fill material for access will be removed from the site and sent to a concrete recycling facility. The project will restore ecological connectivity of the Eel River, and no additional mitigation is proposed. For more information on the project and its plan details visit https://www.in.gov/idem/6397.htm.

Comment period: Any person or entity who wishes to submit comments or information relevant to the aforementioned project may do so by the closing date noted above. Only comments or information related to water quality or potential impacts of the project on water quality can be considered by IDEM in the water quality certification review.

Public Hearing: Any person may submit a written request that a public hearing be held to consider issues related to water quality in connection with the project detailed in this notice. The request for a hearing should be submitted within the comment period to be considered timely. The request should also state the reason for the public hearing as specifically as possible to assist IDEM in determining whether a public hearing is warranted.

Questions? Additional information may be obtained from Wes Hauser, Project Manager, by phone at 317-233-4606 or by e-mail at WHauser@idem.IN.gov. Please address all correspondence to the project manager and reference the IDEM project identification number listed on this notice. Indicate if you wish to receive a copy of IDEM’s final decision. Written comments and inquiries may be forwarded to -

Indiana Department of Environmental Management
100 North Senate Avenue
MC65-42 WQS IGCN 1255
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2251 FAX: 317/232-8406
Maps and photos

Figure 1. Collamer Dam in the Eel River near the village of Collamer in Whitely County, Indiana. Light blue lines indicate property boundaries of dam.
Figure 2. Eel River watershed (521,030 acres) and above Collamer (star) watershed size is 191,881 acres. Removal of the dam at Collamer (star) will reconnect 380 stream miles upstream of the dam and 746 miles downstream of the dam for a total of 1,125 stream miles.
Figure 3. Collamer dam looking north from Eel River Road in Whitley County Indiana. The dam is approximately six feet tall and 170 feet across.
Figure 4. Area behind the Collamer Dam in the Eel River near the village of Collamer in Whitley County, Indiana. This area (upstream of the dam) will be the location for equipment to access the dam for removal. Note the large area where the water now flows under the dam. This site is readily accessible by the public.
Figure 5. Area below the Collamer Dam in the Eel River near the village of Collamer in Whitley County, Indiana. Note the area where the water now flows under the dam. This site is readily accessible by the public.
Figure 5. The Collamer Dam in the Eel River near the village of Collamer in Whitley County, Indiana. Note the area where the water now flows under the dam in two locations and the drained pool behind the dam. This site is readily accessible by the public and is exceptionally dangerous.
Figure 6. View behind the Collamer dam in the Eel River near the village of Collamer in Whitley County, Indiana. This view provides evidence of cobble and gravel available for equipment to access the stream channel to remove the dam.
Figure 7. Pre and post removal of sediment at the low head dam removal in the Eel River at North Manchester, Indiana (October 2012). This site is 10 river miles downstream from the Collamer Dam. The green color represents areas of scour and the oranges and red colors represent depositional areas. Most of the sediment deposition is in the plunge pool on the downstream side of the dam. Map source is United States Geologic Survey.
Ecological Restoration Efforts in the Eel basin

The ecological benefits of removing the Collamer dam include improving fish passage, stream habitat, and fish community structure. These results are substantiated from removal of three other dams in the Eel River since 2012.

While some of the supporting conservation projects are downstream or the proposed dam removal at Collamer, they are no less ecologically relevant. These projects have cultivated a broad-base of partnerships.

Conservation projects: Past and present

1. Indiana Department of Environmental Management 319 grant ($600,000) to examine water quality in the middle Eel basin and provide over $200,000 cost-share for agricultural producers.
2. Indiana Department of Natural Resources black bass survey ($25,000). This project sampled approximately 40 miles of the Eel River to determine the status and trends in black bass population structure.
3. Beargrass creek/Pawpaw Creek paired watershed research. ($110,000) This project is funded by the Indiana State Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts along with the Indiana Corn Marketing Council and Indiana Soybean Alliance. The project examines two critical tributaries to the Eel River. The project goal is to compare the efficacy of upland conservation practices on nutrient and sediment export along with stream biological integrity.
4. Beargrass Creek watershed research. ($75,000). This project is funded by the Environmental Defense Fund and a Conservation Innovation Grant through NRCS. The project objective is to examine the entire 12-digit Beargrass watershed for high priority conservation areas and target those areas for conservation farming technologies. Fish and wildlife monitoring are integrated into this project.
5. Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered with Manchester University to bring an additional $400,000 to the middle Eel River watershed for cost-share conservation dollars through the Mississippi River Basin Initiative.
6. Two dams (North Manchester and Liberty Mills) were successfully removed through a grant from the Fish Passageway Program in 2012. A technical report and DVD were completed.
7. A third dam was removed at the town of Mexico in November 2016. This removal was part of a PBS documentary on safety at dams. “Over, Under, Gone: The killers in our rivers”
8. Construction of a 1,500 natural channel design drainage (2-stage ditch) in upper beargrass creek in partnership with USFWS.
9. A 205-J grant from IDEM to write a WMP and monitor the upper middle portion of the Eel basin ($600,000).
10. Reintroduction of clubshell mussels to the Eel River. A joint partnership with IDNR and USFWS ($10,000).
BRIEF SUMMARY OF WHY THIS PROJECT SHOULD BE COMPLETED:

1. This project will remove a fourth fish passageway barrier in the Eel River since 2012 and connect 1,125 miles of streams or nearly 100% of the Eel River will be reconnected.
2. Removal improves human safety and readily accessible.
3. The dam is severely damaged, and the structural integrity is compromised.
4. There is scientific data from 2015-16 regarding the physical, chemical and biological condition of the Eel in the immediate area of where the dam is located.
5. The ecological benefit to game and nongame species of fish, improved stream habitat, recovering mussel populations and the potential for augmentation of these mussel populations.

Respectfully Submitted,

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