



## **CARE Meeting Minutes – December 18, 2018**

**Tuesday, December 18, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST**

**Calumet College of St. Joseph, Room 200**

**In Attendance:** Michael Spinar (IDEM); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Maggie Byrne (IDNR – LMCP); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Jennifer Birchfield (Urban Waters Federal Partnership); Ashley Overton (City of Gary)

**Via phone:** Hala Kuss, Michelle Caldwell, Dav Parry, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Mariya Trenkinshu (ArcelorMittal); Peg Donnelly (U.S. EPA)

**Public Attendees:** No members of the public were in attendance.

### **1. Introductions:**

Michael Spinar called the meeting to order and took attendance from those in-person and calling in.

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

#### **a. Lake George Branch Middle & East**

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) is expected to be signed any day now. The separate agreement between AR/BP and the ECWMD has been signed and the Administrative Order on Consent for remedial investigation of the ECI Parcels and the Statement of Work are in final form.

Once the PA is signed, BP plans to undertake initial work to remove obstructions and construct a sheet pile wall along the canal. EPA's contractor will conduct dredging and capping of the East Portion and capping of the Middle Portion, following that initial work. Dredged material from the Lake George East Project will be placed into the adjacent Confined Disposal Facility (CDF).

As a reminder, the East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago to the CSX railroad bridge, including Reach 12 of the federal navigation channel as designated by the U.S. Army Corps. The Middle Portion extends from the CSX bridge to the BP land bridge.

#### **b. East Branch, Phase II**

EPA has allocated approximately \$570,000 in funding to conduct a 30% Remedial Design for this project. Currently, the project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2019. As a reminder, East Branch Phase II 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.

**c. Junction Reach**

A 70% design of the Junction Reach was completed in 2015, with the report being released in early 2016. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District are still working to identify non-federal cost share for the project. The agreement signed between AR/BP and the ECWMD includes the provision of any non-federal cost share overmatch on the Lake George Branch Middle and East Project to this reach. 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.

**d. Dredging of Navigational Channel**

The contractor conducting the congressionally authorized navigational dredging project in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal on behalf of the US Army Corps has demobilized for the season. Approximately 162,592 cubic yards of sediment within and adjacent to the federal channel have been dredged and placed in the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal Confined Disposal Facility during 2018. Water treatment will continue until the spring. To date, the US Army Corps of Engineers has dredged approximately 1.4 million cubic yards of sediment. The Army Corps estimates one to two additional years of dredging will be necessary to clear the remaining sediment backlog.

The Corps requested a TSCA permit from EPA and IDEM to dispose of sediment with PCB levels above 50 ppm in the CDF. The public requested that EPA and IDEM review alternative disposal options for this material. EPA, IDEM, Arcelor, and the US Army Corps continue to assess an offsite disposal option for sediment in the authorized navigation channel above 50 ppm PCB.

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

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

The IDNR, Nature Conservancy (TNC), and Lake County Parks crews continue to conduct dormant season work at the properties. Crews have focused on cleanup of the properties and cutting/treating of invasive and aggressive native trees and shrubs during the season.

**b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment**

IDEM is working to reach out to the appropriate property owners, and plans to submit a project application once this outreach is complete.



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

IDNR’s contractor, Conservation Land Stewardship, completed invasive control for the 2018 growing season in early October. The company is under contract through March 2020 and will be doing invasive control again in 2019.

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

All entities have received funding to conduct prescribed burns through September 2021. TNC and Lake County Parks have awarded contracts to Pizzo and ENCAP, respectively, to complete prescribed burns. IDNR will conduct bid openings in mid-December. Shirley Heinze is also working through the bidding process. No entities had been able to conduct prescribed burns this fall, due to unsuitable weather conditions to do so; However, IDNR was able to conduct a burn on December 18 at Pine Station.

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

IDNR is working with their contractor to explore restoration options.

**f. Early Detections**

No early detection species have been identified so far.

**4. Eutrophication (BUI #8) Update**

IDEM is currently discussing the existing BUI removal target with EPA and working to clarify the process for assessing the status of the AOC with respect to this BUI.

**5. Beach Closures (BUI #10) Update**

IDEM is still evaluating the impacts on beach water quality from the different best management practices (BMPs) implemented during 2018 (and previous beach seasons). A 12-month, no cost time extension was recently approved by EPA in order to continue studying other BMPs to be implemented for the 2019 beach season. Also, as part of their multi-year project of assessing the effectiveness of beach BMPs at AOC beaches, USGS conducted microbial source tracking during the 2018 beach season to help identify the source of *E. coli* (human and gull contributions) at Whihala West. The findings from this study will help with the development of management actions to remove BUI#10. The results of the USGS study were to be ready by the end of October, but there has been a slight delay, and the data should be available by the end of December.

Several CARE Members asked about the status of the Great Lakes Fishery and Ecosystem Restoration (GLFER) project at Jeorse Park. Michael replied that it was his understanding that the planting work was complete, the rock reef fish habitats were in place, and the contractor



was moving into an establishment phase. Michael informed the group that the Army Corps was working to obtain a contractor to place safety fencing around the plantings on the break wall. In response to a question, Michael said he would check on what type of monitoring was done of the aquatic habitat, if any.

## **6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update**

A preliminary review of photos obtained during aesthetics monitoring conducted in 2018 shows:

- No change from 2017 has been observed in a preliminary review of the photos collected so far at Columbia Avenue and the Alder Street Lift Station monitoring sites.
- A possible slight improvement from 2017 has been observed in a preliminary review of the photos collected so far from the US Steel monitoring site.

## **7. Plankton (BUI #13) Monitoring Update**

Phytoplankton, zooplankton, chlorophyll, nutrient, and general chemistry samples were collected at the 12 sites during two sampling sessions conducted June 4-6 and August 13-15, respectively. Surface water samples for toxicity bioassays were conducted June 25 and August 20. Analyses are currently underway. Most of the plankton taxonomies have been received. IDEM expects to have the toxicity bioassay results this year and the USGS chlorophyll results early next year. IDEM currently expects to conduct a report out on the complete results in early 2019.

## **8. Education and Outreach Activities**

The next Public Learning Session will be held in March. IDEM and the City of Gary are hoping to record the session to provide to residents who have been unable to attend one of the previous events. IDEM is working to procure outreach items under our current Capacity Grant for distribution to area residents. The outreach items will point residents to the IDEM webpages where they can find information about CARE and the RAP Program. Separately, IDEM is investigating several suggestions made by CARE members over the last month for improving community outreach.

## **9. Table Talk**

Urban Waters is holding its Annual Meeting the morning of January 25, 2019. This meeting is important because partners discuss 2018 accomplishments and set 2019 priorities. If you can't make the meeting, please send information on these items to Jennifer Birchfield, the Urban Waters Coordinator. Jennifer also volunteered to look into meeting space at Purdue Northwest for the April Workgroup Meeting.

The IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program is holding its year-end review meeting on December 19 at 10:00 am at the city hall building in Michigan City.



Peg Donnelly from EPA had a question as to where the annual AOC Stewardship Day was being held this year. She was also interested in whether any plans were in place to further improve the aesthetics in the vicinity of the Cline Avenue monitoring site. Michael said that he didn't have any updates, but would look into the issues and get back to the group.

## **10. Public Comment**

No members of the public were in attendance.

**Next Workgroup Meeting:** Tuesday, January 22, 2018, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST  
Gary Sanitary District Office Board Room

**Next Public Learning Session:** Tuesday, March 25, 2018, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM CDT  
Gary Sanitary District Board Room