



CARE Meeting Notes – January 22, 2019

Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST

Gary Sanitary District Office Board Room

In Attendance: Michael Spinar (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Matthew Shanks (U.S. Army Corps); Brenda Scott-Henry, Ashley Overton (City of Gary); Joe Exl (NIRPC); Paul Labus (TNC)

Via phone: Hala Kuss, Michelle Caldwell, Dav Parry, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Mariya Trenkinshu (ArcelorMittal); Fernando Treviño (City of East Chicago); Jennifer Birchfield (Urban Waters Federal Partnership); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Victoria Wittig (Save The Dunes)

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

1. Introductions:

John Fekete called the meeting to order and took attendance from those in-person and calling in.

2. Jeorse Park Great Lakes Fishery & Ecosystem Restoration Project Update

Matthew Shanks from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Chicago District, gave an overview of, and update on, the work being conducted at Jeorse Park. This includes invasive species control, plantings along the breakwater and near the beach, and the installation of two cobblestone reefs for fish habitat. Foundation Mechanics is the contractor performing the work. The project is moving into the warranty phase, with the plantings being completed. This phase involves watering, replacement of lost plant material, and monitoring. The Army Corps is working to install signage and a barrier to prevent people from accessing the breakwater planting area. Please see the [associated presentation](#) for further details.

Following the presentation, CARE members asked several questions about the project. In response, Matthew shared information on the positioning of the rock reefs (they are located in 12 to 15 foot water depth, with each of the reefs standing 3 to 4 feet tall), the status of the parcels on the east end of the beach, and the extent of the monitoring (the U.S. Army Corps will conduct intensive monitoring for the first 10 years of the project, then conduct periodic inspections of completed work thereafter).

It was also suggested that Matthew contact IDNR regarding the mugwort along the Canadian National Railway easement. Urban Waters was interested in whether the Army Corps was planning to conduct community engagement activities. Save The Dunes has been working with Michigan City and Gary on social trails (informal wilderness paths made by the public) and volunteered to share information with the Corps.



3. 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) has been approved, although, with the lapse in appropriations and resulting furlough of EPA staff, the ECWMD has not received a signed copy.

BP is beginning 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

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.



Per last month's report, 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.

4. 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. It is anticipated that the upcoming cold snap will allow additional winter woody removals to take place at the Gibson Woods and Tolleston Ridges Nature Preserves.

Paul Labus informed the group that TNC would be posting positions for summer field staff in the next few weeks. He also mentioned that, due to invasive removals, he can now see the Kirk Railroad Yard from the south end of Pine Station.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

After consultation with the habitat project partners, IDEM revised the project scope to include an additional 34 acres of wetlands along the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River. This addition is necessary to achieve the project purpose, which is to reduce the threat of encroachment of invasive species into the habitat restoration project sites. IDEM is working to complete access agreements and reach out to the appropriate property owners. The agency plans to submit a project application once this outreach is complete.

CARE members mentioned that IDEM should coordinate with the City of Gary on this project. Through the Buchanan Street Gateway project, the city is conducting outreach to the community on invasive plant species. It is working with Cardno and the U.S. Forest Service on the project. Michael mentioned that coordination with the local communities would be particularly important once the project was approved.

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. IDNR conducted a prescribed burn on December 18, 2018 at Pine Station.

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

IDNR continues to work with its contractor to explore restoration options at the site.

f. Early Detections

No early detection species have been identified so far.

5. 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. At the end of December, IDEM sent materials to the BUI #8 Technical Review Lead for his review and comment. Unfortunately, this effort is unable to proceed further at this time due to the partial federal government shutdown.

6. Beach Closures (BUI #10) Update

IDEM has now completed its evaluation of the water quality impacts of various best management practices implemented during 2018 on beach water quality. IDEM plans to present detailed results of the 2018 beach season at the February CARE Workgroup Meeting.

EPA approved a 12-month, no cost time extension for the Nearshore Bird Management Program Grant on November 23, 2018. This extension will allow IDEM to continue studying other BMPs to be implemented for the 2019 beach season.

In addition, 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 have been made available by the end of December; however, this timetable has been delayed due to the partial federal government shutdown.

In 2018, the City of Gary implemented a new “Carry IN, Carry OUT” policy at public beaches. Trash and recycling receptacles were relocated to the beach entrances and the city’s littering ordinance was strictly enforced. Gary would like to analyze the relationship between *E. coli*



monitoring data and data on the operation of the program in order to assess its effectiveness. IDEM's monitoring data collected through the Beach Monitoring and Notification Program is available on BeachGuard at: <https://beachguard.idem.in.gov/beachguard/>. CARE members also suggested seeing if there is a correlation between numbers of gulls on the beach and implementation of the program, or possibly crowd sourcing bird counts. Urban Waters volunteered to assist with coordinating student involvement, if requested.

7. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

IDEM completed final scoring of the photos and observations collected during the 2018 aesthetics monitoring last week. The data show that the scores all three sites were essentially unchanged from 2017. The US Steel site had the same score as in 2017 and is solely based on fixed and floating trash observed. The Cline Avenue site has been pretty consistent since the monitoring protocol began, with oil sheen observed at site and upstream and trash at the "log jam" being the persistent issues scored. The Columbia Avenue site continued to not exhibit any persistent aesthetics issues.

8. Plankton (BUI #13) Monitoring Update

All of the general and nutrient chemistry data and plankton taxonomies have been received for this project. IDEM expects to have the toxicity bioassay results within the next month and the USGS chlorophyll results were due in January, but release of those data has been delayed by the partial government shutdown. IDEM currently expects to conduct a report out on the complete results in spring of 2019.

9. 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 continues to procure outreach-related items, such as CARE Pens under its current Capacity Grant. These materials are designed to refer residents to the IDEM webpages where they can find information about CARE and the RAP Program. IDEM is also working to improve on its audio-visual capabilities, addressing feedback from the 2017 Annual CARE Seminar.

10. Table Talk

There was no Table Talk. In response to an inquiry from a member, IDEM stated that the agency would be able to provide information pertaining to the investigation of the swan deaths at Lake George as it becomes available.

11. Public Comment

No members of the public were in attendance.



Next Workgroup Meeting: Tuesday, February 26, 2019, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CST
East Chicago Waterway Management District Office Board Room