

CHAPTER ONE THE REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN PROCESS AND STAGE II GOALS

I. An Overview of the Remedial Action Plan Process

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1978 (Agreement) between the United States and Canada identified forty-three Areas of Concern in the Great Lakes Basin. Each Area of Concern has specific impairments to one or more of the fourteen identified beneficial uses of the Great Lakes ecosystem. The Agreement directed that a Remedial Action Plan be developed for each Area of Concern in order to restore the impaired beneficial uses. The International Joint Commission is responsible for the review and approval of each Remedial Action Plan, and has provided guidance on Remedial Action Plan implementation. The Grand Calumet River and the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal in Northwest Indiana were designated an Area of Concern by the International Joint Commission in the mid 1980s.

In order to more specifically address the environmental problems plaguing Northwest Indiana, former Governor Evan Bayh directed former IDEM Commissioner, Kathy Prosser, to create a Northwest Indiana Regional Office. This office has allowed IDEM to work closely with local governments, interest groups, industry, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), and other state and federal regulatory agencies.

Former IDEM Commissioner Kathy Prosser appointed the CARE Committee. The CARE Committee meets publicly every month to provide input to the Remedial Action Plan. Members of the public, industry, and local government attend the public meetings of the CARE Committee and also provide input into the Remedial Action Plan process. The CARE Committee meetings offer the first opportunity for public involvement. IDEM will continue to seek additional opportunities for public outreach throughout the implementation of the Remedial Action Plan.

The Stage I Remedial Action Plan for Northwest Indiana's Area of Concern was published in January 1991 and defined all fourteen beneficial uses as impaired. It also described in detail the environmental problems found in the Area of Concern. IDEM submitted the Stage I Remedial Action Plan to the International Joint Commission in January 1991. The International Joint Commission approved the Stage I Remedial Action Plan in 1994 with reservations. The Stage II document addresses the International Joint Commission's reservations in the Stage I document by detailing the ecological process in the Area of Concern; describing habitat found in the area; and discussing the state of the water, ground water, sediment, soil and air and also by outlining an ecosystem approach to restoration.

Stage II of the Remedial Action Plan includes remedial and regulatory measures to restore the Area of Concern. Stage III will include a monitoring strategy and will indicate the degree of restoration of the impaired beneficial uses. The Remedial Action Plan process is a learning process. It is dynamic and evolving. There are no clear lines between the different stages. The CARE committee and IDEM will also provide updates throughout the process.

II. Stage II Remedial Action Plan Goals

The vision of the Remedial Action Plan is one of ecological integrity. The goal is to restore the fourteen beneficial uses by addressing the stressors that impair the key ecological processes and result in use impairments in the Area of Concern. The combined impact of the stressors has created such extensive environmental degradation that it is imperative to take an ecosystem approach in designing remedial measures that address beneficial use impairments in the Area of Concern. The Stage II Remedial Action Plan builds a framework for ecosystem restoration that provides continuity and cohesiveness to the myriad of actions that are underway and that will be undertaken in the future.

The Remedial Action Plan seeks to balance land use with ecological restoration to achieve delisting while maintaining the economic vitality of the region. Ecosystem integrity is measured both in terms of biological integrity and in terms of human health. For development to be ecologically sustainable, the knowledge gained from the accumulation of ecological insights concerning the impacts of human activities on health and biological integrity must feed back into economic development and planning processes and must be used to adjust those activities to protect the integrity of the ecosystem. The depletion of non-renewable resources and expenditures of ecological capital through the destruction of unique habitats and biodiversity cannot continue.

The Stage II Remedial Action Plan provides a framework for addressing the fourteen beneficial use impairments in an ecosystem context and presents the current environmental conditions in the Area of Concern. While the Stage II document provides a draft matrix of actions underway and beneficial use impairments, an analysis of the matrix has yet to be completed. IDEM and the CARE Committee will complete the matrix and associated definitions in an addendum. The addendum will be submitted to the International Joint Commission in the fall of 1998.

III. Public Involvement in Development of the Stage II Remedial Action Plan

Through the Remedial Action Plan process, IDEM forged relationships with local governments, environmental and community groups, and industry to address the long-term remediation and restoration challenges in the Area of Concern. The CARE Committee and IDEM staff have supported and guided the activities of Remedial Action Plan participants. Public involvement in the Remedial Action Plan process has evolved with recruitment of

individuals and institutions for specific projects and subgroups. Participating institutions have provided personal and financial resources to foster this public involvement. To facilitate public input into the Stage II document, the CARE Committee designated members to serve as "champions" for each technical area. CARE Champions contributed to the formation of the document and provided IDEM's technical teams with detailed reviews. The document also reflects the efforts of the three CARE subcommittees: the Northwest Indiana Pollution Reduction Workgroup; the Habitat Subcommittee; and the Grand Calumet Lagoon Subcommittee.

During the development of the Stage II document, a Remedial Action Plan Coordinating Committee, largely staffed by IDEM program managers, coordinated the work of the technical teams. These technical teams obtained guidance from other governmental agencies such as the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), U.S. EPA, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. FWS). A new Remedial Action Plan Coordinating Committee has been selected to foster an ongoing collaborative approach among key institutions during Remedial Action Plan implementation. A responsible program manager for each remedial action has also been selected. The Northwest Indiana Coordinator from IDEM's Indianapolis Office will coordinate the implementation of Stage III.

IV. Conclusion

The Stage II goals deal specifically with restoring the fourteen impaired beneficial uses by taking an ecosystem approach in designing remedial measures. The Stage II Remedial Action Plan is aimed at balancing the ecosystem restoration processes and the pertinent land uses in the ecosystem. Public involvement has been instrumental in its construction and coordination. Institutions and individuals have contributed their time and financial support in order to plan and fulfill the Remedial Action Plan which will help restore this ecosystem.