

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC AUDITORIUM, PORTAGE, IN

November 1, 2012

MINUTES

Members/Guests Present:

Geof Benson, Lee Botts, Richard Morrisroe, Mike Molnar, Mardanna Soto, Herb Read, Charlotte Read, Larry Jensen, Tom Anderson, Bob Daum, Jennifer Gadzala, Kay Nelson, Paul Kysel, Kris Krouse, Lauri Keagle, Deb Backhus, Nicole Barker, Leslie Dorworth, Nick Minich, Maggie Byrne, Susan MiHalo, Michelle Caldwell, Ashley Snyder, Letty Zepeda, Chandra Viswanathan, Rana Segal, Doreen Carey, Jenny Orsburn, Matt Ohl, Eugene Jablonowski, Mark Reshkin

NIPRC Staff:

Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Bill Brown, John Swanson

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of October 4, 2012 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Charlotte Read and second by Richard Morrisroe the October 4, 2012 EMPC minutes were approved.

Presentations:

◆ **Shifting Sands Documentary** – *Lee Botts*

The documentary is a multi-year, not for profit project being produced in anticipation of the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of the National Park Service, the 200th Anniversary of Indiana's Statehood, the 100th Anniversary of the Indiana State Park system, and the 15th Anniversary of Congressional authorization of the National Park. The DVD will be completed in advance of the anniversaries coming up in 2016. Lee spoke about her involvement in the Restoration Inventory project, which is an inventory of the restoration of natural areas underway in Northwest Indiana and was intended to show that restoration is a big movement in this area. She also noted that clean-up of pollution from the past is being accomplished and corporations and industries conducting business in the region increasingly are changing the way they do business in order to prevent ongoing release of pollutants into the environment. She remarked the bottom line for her is to demonstrate and inform people in and out of the region that Indiana is no longer the pollution sink it used to be and there are amazing things underway in the region. Rana Segal, a professional documentary maker who lives in the region, Doreen Carey, and an advisor group have all assisted in the project which was financed by a grant from the Coastal Program and matching grant from The Legacy Foundation. One requirement of the grant is for focus groups to be formed for community consultations and Lee noted the EMPC meeting is being deemed a community consultation and feedback is desired. A small sample of the documentary was shown. Suggestions of places to film were given and it was questioned what other topics would be covered. Lee remarked there has been filming of restoration projects, volunteers, and events such as the Roxana Marsh dedication. The project is in the beginning stages, but the working budget of \$200k may have to be increased to produce the hour long final product. A brief discussion was held and it was noted that comments should be in a positive nature going forward to let people know the region is in great shape. A couple of web fund starters were suggested to Lee as possible resources. Several suggestions were made during the discussion after the brief documentary viewing and Doreen Carey noted this is a two-year project to complete the final product and some of the suggestions require substantial approval. She also mentioned there will be a historic component talking about the geologic and long-term processes that have created the special and unique environment of the region. Geof Benson suggested contacting Porter and LaPorte County for funding opportunities. Lee thanked NIRPC for the opportunity to present a hint of what's to come. Kay Nelson thanked Lee for doing the project.

◆ **The Pines Group** – *Paul Kysel and Larry Jensen*

Mr. Kysel is the current president of the PINES (People in Need of Environment Safety) Group and is the community liaison group which operates as a monitoring entity between EPA and potentially responsible parties for the Pines Indiana Alternative Superfund site. The Pines site includes a former landfill permitted by IDEM that holds fly ash generated by NIPSCO's electricity creation and became a superfund site due to community concern about the quality of their drinking water. Prior to the superfund site declaration, the Pines residents were dependent upon small, shallow, domestic drinking water wells. The Pines Yard 520 landfill site sits south of the Town of Pines and there was concern the deposit of fly ash was potentially poisoning the well water. EPA took emergency action steps and most of the houses affected are receiving bottled water or are now on municipal water, but the steps mostly only addressed water quality issues. Mr. Kysel noted that he was contacted by Larry Jensen who indicated a potential radiation component that had yet to be addressed. Mr. Jensen, a former EPA employee and a physicist with a Master's degree in radiation public health gave a brief background on himself and his qualifications as a radiation specialist. During the presentation it was pointed out that not only does burning coal not destroy its natural radioactivity but its waste products are also radioactive; and concerns are from radiums, uranium, and from radon gasses. A map noting areas EPA visually said were coal ash was shown and was used as a starting point for the PINES group to know where to investigate materials for radioactivity. A 2009 survey of edges of streets and empty streets was conducted using a hand-held meter that detects gamma radiation from radioactive materials. The meter didn't identify what the radionuclides were, but the size of the response indicated the strength of the materials being assessed. Chairman Benson asked to revisit the map indicating areas of coal ash to identify location and a brief discussion was held regarding movement of underground water and the depth of water being received by homes not receiving bottled water and not on municipal water. It was asked that the discussion be held off until a later time so the presentation could be finished. A graph of the 2009 survey results was displayed and reflected levels above twice natural background radiation averages. Questions were raised regarding the background radiation levels and if the radiation testing conducted met quality assurance, quality protocol for radiation surveys Mr. Kysel answered yes, it is a reputable way. EPA representative Eugene Jablonowski remarked it is not the way things are done now and since around 2000 a multi-agency site investigation manual which lays out the approved process for background determinations has been used. Mr. Kysel mentioned the PINES group does not have the money to do an extensive study and is why spot tests were done. It was indicated that a report was submitted to the EPA in 2009 noting the survey results and asking for verification of what had been done but to the PINES Group's knowledge EPA has never come out to check the data using their own meters and in their own way to see if the findings were the same. In 2012 EPA responded by sending a review rejecting the PINES Group's report and no site investigation was conducted. Another survey has been conducted on residential, private and municipality properties, as well as more street testing. This survey also indicated levels statistically above twice background. Videos of the information gathering process were shown. The PINES Group would like EPA or state agencies to do site visits to verify the data and complete the lab analysis that the Town of Pines cannot afford. Their purpose in coming to NIRPC to speak is to encourage more extensive testing to help determine if there is a problem and if there is a human or environmental risk. After the presentation a brief question and answer session was held and an open conversation took place between Mr. Kysel, Mr. Jensen and EPA representative Matthew Ohl. During the conversation Mr. Ohl was asked if EPA would come out to do further testing and Mr. Ohl stated that the levels reported are very similar to background and do not justify further testing. Chairman Benson remarked that Michigan City is considering expanding their sewer sanitation system and are looking at possibly including the Pines. Since this would require water testing and could ultimately lead to digging up roads this might be a good time to see what is out there. Cost of further testing was briefly discussed. **Charlotte Read made a motion that the EMPC contact the head of EPA Region 5 to ask that the EPA do follow-up confirmation or testing of radiation levels in the Town of Pines as proposed by the PINES Group.** Tom Anderson seconded the motion. Kathy Luther stated that as the NIRPC staff member who would most likely be composing the letter to EPA Region 5, she was very uncomfortable to write a letter between different scientific opinions without more knowledge, but would do so if the Committee and NIRPC Board requested. After discussion on how those not in favor of further testing would be represented in a letter, and developing a more informal EMPC sub-committee process instead of a formal letter, Chairman Benson called for a vote. With five votes for the motion, four against, and one abstention, the motion passed. Since the NIRPC Commission does not meet again until December, a draft letter will be composed and presented for review at the next EMPC meeting.

Announcements:

Geof Benson announced that NIRPC's Board unanimously hired new Executive Director Tysen Warner to replace Retiring Director John Swanson. He will begin January 2, 2013.

Everglades of the North will be broadcast on Monday, November 12 on channels 17 and 56.

Comments on the Shifting Sands video may be turned in at the end of the meeting or be sent.

Mike Molnar announced the latest poster in the Ecosystem of the Coastal Region series was unveiled and is available for pick-up after the meeting.

The next EMPC meeting will be December 6, 2012.

Meeting adjourned.