

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC Auditorium, Portage, IN

March 1, 2012

MINUTES

Members/Guests Present

Geof Benson, Jim Ton, Leslie Dorworth, Susan Mihalo, Sherryl Doerr, Richard Morrisroe, Lauri Keagle, Charlotte Read, Deb Backhus, Kay Nelson, Daniel Goldfarb, Mark Reshkin, Hala Kuss, Ashley Snyder, Mardanna Soto, Kris Krouse, Kevin Breitzke, Jody Melton, Colin Highlands, Richard Morrisroe, Nathan Pavlovic, Michael Kuss, Mary Mulligan, Dorreen Carey, Charlotte Read, George Adey, Maggie Byrne, Leanne Whitesell, Amber Winter, Nick Minich

NIRPC Staff

John Swanson, Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Mitch Barloga, Kathy Dubie, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

◆Approval of February 2, 2012 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Jim Ton and second by Kevin Breitzke, the February 2, 2012 EMPC minutes were approved.

Presentations

◆Green Job Training Program – Daniel Goldfarb, Wildlife Habitat Council & Kris Krouse, Shirley Heinz Land Trust

Daniel noted The Wildlife Habitat Council is a non-profit organization that primarily works with industries focusing on land preservation and stewardship projects within industrial properties and corporate headquarters while also helping facilitate partnerships between the companies with the greater community through open space, ecological restoration, and wildlife habitat programs. The 2008 economic downturn resulted in layoffs of many industry stewards. A proposal was submitted to the US Forest Service to do ecological restoration training in Northwest Indiana. The 10 month to one year program began in 2010 with an US Forest Service American Recovery and Reinvestment Act grant of \$292k which required shovel ready projects, hiring of laid off workers from manufacturing and steel mills, as well as the use of only tools and products made in the United States. Because the program involved the forest service not only were projects identified between industries and municipalities able to be done, but also projects on private lands. Originally 15 people were hired for the training, and it was quickly realized infrastructure was not in place to handle that amount of people so the timeline structure of the grant was rearranged for five people, with the ability to add more, to be trained for a longer period of time in order to better teach them about different ecosystems over the seasons and the different requirements.

As a partner in the WHC Green Jobs Program, Kris Krouse presented information to the group on the Shirley Heinze Land Trust which currently has 15 properties within the southern Lake Michigan watershed throughout Porter, Lake, and LaPorte Counties. Five properties are state dedicated nature preserves and are permanently protected properties. The primary focus is on restoration and most donations and grant dollars are put toward those endeavors. Having no prior experience or knowledge in land management the workers received not only native and invasive plant training, but also herbicide treatment training as well and in 2010 were able to restore and manage more acreage than in past years. In addition to trail improvements, a 40 foot bridge using black locust trees from Deer Park in Portage was constructed over a ditch at the Little Cal wetlands preserve area was installed through the program. Other projects included invasive species management, log jam removal on the Little Calumet River with the NWI Paddling Association, boardwalks, trails, and canopy thinning at several nature preserves.

Daniel concluded the presentation by speaking on three large scale projects completed by the workers in the green job training program one of which was the installation of native landscaping at Franklin Academy Middle School in East Chicago with funding provided by BP Whiting Refinery. Over 5-6 months work was completed with the help of 5th graders from the school to design and plant the garden. It began as a small garden, but the BP Classic stewardship event with over 75 BP employees volunteering allowed for the garden to be tripled in size. The ExxonMobil Hammond Terminal Wetland and Shorebird Habitat Restoration were also projects completed in the program. Three of the five men that were in the program found work in new ecological trades and two went back to their former employers. Over time WHC's stewardship with companies has involved and has positive effects. A symposium was held in November which allowed companies from all over the country to showcase their projects and WHC presented the green jobs program.

◆ **Brownfield and Green Job Training Program** – Mary Mulligan, City of Gary Brownfields Specialist

The group received a presentation from Mary Mulligan on the City of Gary's free job training program for Gary residents funded by the U.S. EPA and in-kind support from training partners. This program allows participants to receive not only the skills training, but also licenses and certifications those areas. To qualify for the program individuals must be 18 years of age or older, have a GED or High School Diploma, have a valid ID or Driver's License, and must complete an interview and screening process, as well as pass a drug test. Veterans, those with prior related-work experience, and/or higher education receive extra consideration for acceptance into the program. The program trains a maximum of 25 participants over 12 weeks and includes training for life skills, brownfields, environmental justice, natural resource management, green space, energy audits/conservation, green building, worker safety, building trades/apprenticeships, HAZWOPER, asbestos worker, lead worker, and job readiness. The program partners are experienced contractors or skilled professionals with knowledge and expertise in their respective fields. Certifications and licenses that are attainable are the 40 hour HAZWOPER, confined space entry, OSHA safety, lead paint abatement worker (license) and asbestos abatement worker (license). Other training opportunities include home environmentalist training, process safety management for construction, lead clearance/sampling technician, and lead risk assessor. Many types of potential employers utilize this training program, but further information on what a potential entry level employee would need beyond the training, certifications, and licenses obtained in the program is desired. Current needs of the program are participant stipends, paid on-the-job training opportunities, and paid internships. The ultimate goal of the training program is the find companies looking to hire individuals with the training, certifications and licenses of the program graduates. The city of Gary's Brownfields Program serves as a mechanism to aid in the revitalization and redevelopment of commercial, industrial, recreational, residential, and natural areas throughout the city that will provide jobs for local residents, a safer and more secure environment for everyone, and a sustainable community. *A suggestion was made to contact the Gary Sanitary District to be a partner who could be helpful with providing information in obtaining water certifications which can be both industrial and municipal.* Mary stressed that they are looking for what makes certain applicants rise to the top so they can add to and improve their training program. *It was suggested to appeal to the larger screening companies as well as the smaller contractors to aid in obtaining this information. It was also noted that Ivy Tech would be a good partner.*

◆ **TE Funding Update** – Mitch Barloga, NIRPC

Mitch indicated that it has been rumored that the Transportation Enhancement funding will possibly have a call for projects shortly. TE funding has been majorly for trail projects but there are also categories for historical and for other/scenic projects which includes environmental projects on a roadway or having a transportation nexus. With a funding split of 50/50 for the last cycle, there was an attempt to incorporate more environmental projects into the mix, but unfortunately not a lot of quality projects were submitted and therefore they did not score very well when reviewed by the Ped, Pedal, and Paddle Committee. The other/scenic projects are scored against each other, but not against trail projects. The application has a 100 point scoring scale with additional bonus points possible and is currently in the process of being updated for 2012. The first 50 points are scored for all projects submitted, while the second 50 points are category specific. For the application update, Mitch indicated the EMPC should review part VII of the application which is the category for other/scenic and environmental projects and when environmental project applications are submitted the EMPC will be responsible for reviewing these projects. Kathy noted that the current points were what were used on the last round and generally they were not very satisfied with the outcome and this is the point in the process when the questions and point determinations can be changed before the money is on the table. Kathy suggested a small group come together to work through the details and bring the changes to the April EMPC meeting. Joe mentioned adding a list of eligible projects as well. Anyone interested in participating should contact Joe.

Joe Exl reported that projects submitted for the last round were all over the spectrum. Transportation funding is a very low priority and TE funding is a potential stop gap to specifically address water quality impacts from transportation. Joe indicated there needs to be better explanation and education to potential applicants on what types of projects are being looked for. Joe mentioned that the application questions need to be considered to determine if they are still the correct questions to be asked. \$2m is the amount traditional allocated to TE the funding split was discussed since last time it was 50/50, but this round is leaning toward going back to the traditional 80/20 or possibly 70/30 split. Match requirement is no less than 20%. Both the application and funding split need to be discussed. *It was interjected that this funding is available for local public agencies.* Mitch indicated they are hoping to have the application updated and funding split decision by the end of April.

Kathy indicated Red flag Analysis to indicate where environmentally sensitive areas are is being incorporated into the transportation plan and although NIRPC influence is primarily on locally driven projects, John Swanson noted that it is also being discussed at the state level as well and the hope is for INDOT to also incorporate the Red Flag Analysis.

Lastly, Mitch mentioned a recent email directed to stakeholders for restoration inventory project updates on the greenways and blueways website. Codes were included in the emails and there are tutorials on the website for directions on how to update the conservation sites. This is a stakeholder driven process and there are aspirations to bring a workshop to IUN to promote involvement.

NIRPC Business: *Action Item – Resolution 12-07: Watershed Framework Update Recommendation*

During February's NIRPC's EMPC and Executive Board meetings and the Kankakee River Basin Commission meeting a full presentation was given by Joe Exl on the Watershed Framework Update and was well received. Comments have been received and the grant is over. At this point, typically the process would be for the EMPC to recommend the document to the Commission/Executive Board for adoption as an approved NIRPC policy document. A copy of the Resolution was provided for review and Joe briefly reviewed the future activities section of the final report. Kathy noted one typographical error in the Resolution was brought to her attention and in the eighth "whereas" section objects should be changed to objectives and will be corrected before being presented to the NIRPC board. Kevin Breitzke made motion to forward to the NIRPC Commission for their approval with the minor change. Jim Ton seconded the motion and with no discussion, all in favor, no objections, and no abstentions, the motion passed.

Announcements:

There is an eagle nesting on private land along the lakeshore. An article was in the Post Tribune about the National Park Service economic development benefits. Jennifer Birchfield had a baby girl. Nathan Pavlovic the new Land and Advocacy Specialist at Save the Dunes was introduced and spoke briefly of his background and duties in mapping the parcels Save the Dunes owns as well as parcels of interest around the National Lakeshore.

The IDEM and Save the Dunes TMDL public meeting was held on February 29 and the draft TMDL for e coli and impaired biotic communities is out and is to be posted on the IDEM website March 1 for a 30 day comment period. Please review as this will be in part used to update and enhance the Salt Creek Watershed Management Plan.

John Swanson reported on the recent trip Washington Geof Benson and five other NIRPC Commissioners made and highlighted a bill pending before the House of Representatives and one bill before the Senate. Both were being discussed while the Commissioners were there and had face to face meetings with Senators Lugar and Coates and Representatives Donnelly and Visclosky to voice their concerns particularly with the House version of the bill on significant adverse environmental impacts. It would carve out transit funding from fuel tax and would essentially be left to fend with all other things vying for general appropriations from Congress and would also eliminate TE and CMAQ funding. John also discussed the Bloomington Rule which would allow for a state Governor through the Department of Transportation to override an MPO determination against an interstate highway. This would become a new rule nationwide if passed.

Jody Melton reported that under legislation last year the Lake Michigan Marina and Shoreline Development Commission was formed and combines the former Marina Commission with the former Shoreline Development Commission. The Marina Commission dissolved June 30, 2011 and as former Director, Jodi's last duty was to work with Attorney Hollenbeck and arrange for a meeting of the new Commission. Letters have been sent to the board and the first organizational meeting will be held May 17, 2012 in the NIRPC Auditorium following the NIRPC Executive Board Meeting. Geof Benson noted as EMPC members he will be representing Beverly Shores, Dunes Acres and Ogden Dunes and Karen Freeman-Wilson will be representing Gary.

Kathy Luther announced NIRPC received the stakeholder award for outstanding achievements in promoting alternate fuels and diesel emission reductions in Northwest Indiana at the South Shore Clean Cities annual meeting held on February 14. CMAQ dollars have been invested in non-road projects such as fuels and vehicles and retrofitting school buses.

The next EMPC meeting will be April 5, 2012.

Meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

Reasonable Accommodations

Requests for alternate format materials or interpreters may be made 48 hours in advance to Kathy Luther:
(219)763-6060, Ext. 127 or e-mail kluther@nirpc.org

Non-Discrimination

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