

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

Indiana Dunes Ranger Training Station

January 8, 2015

Members/Guests Present: Geof Benson, Bob Daum, Charlotte Read, Susan Mihalo, Deb Backhus, Maggie Byrne, Jennifer Gadzala, Dorreen Carey, Gia Wagner, Erik Hardin (Via phone) , Eugene Jablonowski, Leslie Dorworth, Nicole Barker, Michelle Caldwell, Ashley Snyder, Charlie Morris, Charlotte Reed, Kay Nelson, Kris Krouse, Jazmin Varela

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Mitch Barloga

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of December 6, 2014 EMPC Minutes

On a motion by Susan Mihalo and second by Deb Backhus, the minutes of the December 4, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

Presentations:

a. **2020 Greenways & Blueways Northwest Indiana Regional Plan** – Mitch Barloga, NIRPC

Mitch presented a brief history of the region's abandoned railroad corridors and how they are now being converted to multi-use trail systems. Of the 300 miles of abandoned rail corridors, roughly 150 miles have been converted to trails. Federal legislation in 1991 specifically programmed funds for trail conversion of former rail lines which created the Rails to Trails movement. In the 1990's NIRPC made the first bikeway plan which identified the locations of those corridors for trail development. The 1994 bikeway plan was a successful model document and NIRPC built on that in 1994 with the Ped & Pedal Plan, which also encompasses pedestrian travel. The creation of the regional priorities trail map aided greatly in determining where to utilize the federal funds. The Ped & Pedal Plan was then updated in 2010, with mapping showing funded or completed trails. The 2007 Greenways & Blueways Plan identified bike, hike and water trails throughout the region and 15 potential corridors between Lake Michigan and the Kankakee River. The many creeks in the three counties are recreational opportunities. The update of the *2020 Greenways & Blueways Plan* will combine the two plans into three major planning initiatives of conservation, recreation and transportation. The target date of completion is December 2015. There will be sessions with the communities to develop information to bring to the public comment period. More information will follow.

b. **Town of Pines EPA Update** – Erik Hardin and Eugene Jablonowski, USEPA

Erik Hardin, Project Manager, participated via phone and Eugene Jablonowski of USEPA gave an update on the NIPSCO coal ash cleanup efforts. The landfill area is known as Yard 520 and was used as a dump for the coal ash and the ash was used in various ways in yards and roads in the 1960s and 1970s. The landfill was capped in the mid-1990s. An additional 15% was capped in 2006 with several feet of compact clay. The town uses well water. IDEM and EPA tested surface samples in the wetland areas and found they were not at a level of concern and were not being monitored. They also tested the wells and found elevated levels of manganese, boron, molybdenum, arsenic and lead. Risk assessments were made based on general analysis assumptions on uncontaminated residential soils, which were used as background samples, soils containing 27% coal combustion by-product (CCB or coal ash) content and soils with 100% CCB content which did not exhibit any risk. About 130 homes were put on Michigan City municipal water and eventually 140 additional homes were added to the system. 77 homes were provided with bottled water service and that service continues. An extensive soil investigation has taken place. Final samples were taken in November and the EPA is awaiting the results of the data. A proposed plan should be out in late spring, after the soil analysis is complete, followed by a public meeting.

Public Comment:

- a) Susan Mihalo commented that the EPA reviewed the high speed rail proposal draft Tier 1 EIS and their comments were in line with many of ours that the EIS did not really go deep enough with regard to the impacts and NEPA and they will further review our comments on the issue.
- b) Kathy Luther announced that information regarding EPA permitting would not be sent out as Meredith Stilwell, the Environmental Administrative Assistant, was out for a couple of weeks with an injury.
- c) Permits should be required for new wells in The Pines.

Announcements:

- Announcements will be forwarded to the EMPC email distribution list.

Meeting adjourned.