

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC Auditorium

March 5, 2015

Members/Guests Present: Geof Benson, Bob Daum, Deb Backhus, Jennifer Gadzala, Nicole Barker, Kay Nelson, Candice Smith, Richard Morrisroe, Dan Plath, Jody Melton, Kevin Breizke, Cathy Martin, Charles Morris, Colin Highlands, Lee Botts, Maggie Byrne, Dorreen Carey, Amber Herbovetz, Olivia Medved, Natalie Conlon, Dejan Koch, Ken Purze, Chandra Viswanathan, Daniel Goldfarb

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of January 8, 2015 EMPC Minutes

On a motion by Kevin Breizke and second by Deb Backhus, the February 5, 2015 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Presentations:

a. *Little Calumet River - Draft East Branch Watershed Management Plan –*

Dr. Candice Smith – Water Program Director, Save the Dunes

Dr. Smith explained that a watershed is an area of land where all precipitation that falls on it and drains off it goes to the same place and is an area of land that drains all streams and rainfall to a common outlet. A watershed management plan is a strategy and work plan for achieving water resource goals. As “living documents” they must be reexamined and revised as conditions change over time. Some benefits of watershed management include generating community support and awareness; collaboration and communication; information for land use and other decisions; developing science-based solutions; and identifying projects and funding.

The first step to develop a management plan, is to obtain a 319 grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM). Once the grant is received the plan developer must identify and engage stakeholders; hold meetings; form appropriate committees; engage the public; gather historic and current data; conduct water quality monitoring and desktop/windshield/social surveys. In addition, critical and protection areas must be designated; achievable goals set and activities to meet those goals identified.

Save the Dunes received the 319 grant to develop the East Branch Watershed Management plan in January 2012. The watershed is over 47,000 acres in northern Porter and LaPorte counties. Baseline sampling was done monthly between November 2011 and November 2012 at 48 IDEM sites. In addition 15 Great Lakes Innovative Stewardship Through Education Network (GLISTEN) sites were sampled weekly during the summer of 2012. The sampling period coincided with the historic drought of 2012 and consequently non-point source pollution in the watershed was unusually low due to the lack of rain. The parameters considered most important for the Little Calumet East Branch were temperature; dissolved oxygen; pH; total suspended solids; nitrate; ammonia; total phosphorus; E. coli; and chloride. Land use in the watershed is comprised of 29% forest, 29% agriculture, 18% developed, 16% water/wetland and 8% grass/herbaceous. Most of the watershed area is unsewered yet not suitable for on-site septic which could be a problem. There are a lot of impairments in this watershed and many areas on the IDEM 303d listing.

The three subwatersheds contained within the East Branch Watershed include Reynolds Creek, Kemper Ditch and Coffee Creek. Loads, which are the amount of nutrients that come through the watershed in a year, were calculated using a modeling program that calculates pollutant loading using 30 years of precipitation data combined with land use changes. Empirical data collected in 2012 was unable to be used due to the lack of usable data to calculate loads and an IDEM laboratory issue. The loads, targets calculated using Indiana standards for minimum water quality and the load duration curve method and reductions needed to reach those targets for the three subwatersheds were presented by Dr. Smith. Critical and protection areas were determined and scaled goals for 5, 15 and 25 years set. The implementation part of the plan includes developing BMP education for farmers and rural residents focusing on increasing cover crop acreage, increasing filter strip acreage and developing education for septic systems.

The draft Plan was submitted to IDEM and EPA in January and Save the Dunes just received the plan back. Comments still have to be reviewed and final submittal of the Plan will be in the next couple of months.

NIRPC Business:

a. CMAQ Funding Applications – Kathy Luther, NIRPC

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Notice of Funds Availability 2014-2 contains \$13.4m for Lake and Porter Counties and \$1.5m for La Porte County for highway, non-motorized, transit and fuels & other projects aimed at reducing congestion. These funds are available because this area is considered non-attainment. Only local government can apply, but public/private partnerships can be formed to apply. The funding requires 20% local match. Past examples include round-a-bouts, diesel retrofits, hybrid police cars, etc. Historically, a large group of stakeholders convened to decide how much money would be given to each category before applications were submitted. This time, all of the money was up for grabs and now that all applications have been submitted it now has to be decided how much goes into each pot. Kathy recommended EMPC have a suggestion for when the percentages are decided. \$100k is being taken off the top to transfer to Eastern Lands for Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore bus fuel. This is the last round of funding for fuel, it is off the table after 2017. Suggestion was made regarding the need to build a point system to help prioritize projects and it was stated that an EMPC sub-committee will be formed to rank the fuels and other category projects. There will be more money on the table in two years and it was suggested for EMPC members to attend the March 17th TPC meeting where the funding splits would be discussed. Chairman Benson suggested an even four-way split of 25% of the monies available.

Public Comment: *None*

Announcements:

- Joe Exl reported that with funding from EPA core monitoring sites are being established as part of the volunteer stream monitoring network. County parks departments, municipalities and DNR sites which have public access will be coming on board. Signs have been created and will be posted at the sites and they will be pre-registered on the Hoosier Riverwatch Site. Group trainings will be held.
- Kathy announced that public meetings are going to be held as part of the 2040 CRP update.
- Meeting and event announcements will be forwarded to the EMPC email distribution list.

Meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.