

JOINT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE – URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Woodland Park, Sycamore Room

April 7, 2016

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, Susan Mihalo, Stephen McCracken, Natalie Johnson, Tim Kingsland, Dorreen Carey, Kaitlyn McClain, Drew Hart, Jeff Edstrom, Deb Backhus, Lynne Westphal, Cherie Fisher, Lauri Keagle, Ashley Snyder, Meredith Nevers, Murdie Cyappanahalli, George Malis, Derek Schmitt, Beth Jacobson, Stephanie Cwik, Elizabeth McCloskey, Ethan Brown, Arianne Campbell, Diane Trgovichc-Zacok, David Wright, Young Choi, Daniel Goldfarb, Mary Jane Thomas, Nancy Arazon, Diane Banta, Lee Botts, Pat Wisniewski, Sherry Meyer, John Beckman, Maggie Byrne, Brenda Scott-Henry

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Sarah Geinosky, Gabrielle Biciunas, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of March 3, 2016 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Susan MiHalo and second by Dorreen Carey, the March 3, 2016 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Overview of Urban Waters Initiative – *Natalie Johnson, Urban Waters Coordinator*

Designated in 2011, the Urban Waters Partnership has 19 locations across the nation and help people work together to promote clean waterways, especially by being involved with communities to see what can be done to help advance initiatives in water quality, quantity, education and appreciation. In essence Urban Waters is a network that can be used as a toolbox to enhance initiatives being done.

Urban Waters Presentation

Illinois DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup Success Stories – *Stephen McCracken, DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup*

Stephen introduced himself to the group noting that while he works for the Conservation Foundation, an environmental non-profit in DuPage County Illinois, all of his time is spent working for the 501c4 Illinois DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup. The Workgroup is a voluntary organization made up of wastewater agencies; MS4 districts; environmental organizations and engineering firms and is funded out of membership dues. The project area is in Cook and DuPage Counties and involves 360 square miles of watershed with mostly impervious surface; three waterways and 24 wastewater treatment plants. In addition to water quality issues there are many physical problems within this area.

The organization wanted to improve waterways in an efficient way. Originally, chloride and dissolved oxygen total maximum daily loads (TMDLs) were worked on and models created to include more empirical data. In addition, a monitoring network was established to collect the information. The chloride TMDL work is basically salt management with a training system established that involves two workshops every year.

Stephen addressed how the watershed plan was arrived at and how the organization used its own monies to fund the plan. Priorities had to established and multiple, extremely costly regulations on wastewater and stormwater were being introduced. Aquatic life was chosen as the focus since it is the most complete measure of stream resource quality; an outcome the public can understand; the

principal goal of the Clean Water Act and the largest driver of NPDES permit conditions, and in the future, stormwater permits. All of the waterways with wastewater treatment plants discharging into them were found to be lacking in fish and macroinvertebrate diversity. As a result, the wastewater treatment plants had certain permit requirements for reducing their effluence impact on the waterway. Data was collected on fish and macroinvertebrates; habitat; water chemistry and sediment chemistry from about half of the over 120 sample points in a five square mile area. Combined sewer overflows; dams and wastewater treatment plants were also looked at. Most of the areas were found to not be supporting aquatic life designated use. Gathering the data themselves allowed them to see the scores of the macroinvertebrates and fish at each level. In the beginning 200 variables were in play which were whittled down to 40 and were looked at in correlation to fish and insect scores. From that, nine mathematically significant physical and chemical stressors were found. The sites were prioritized by how many of the nine stressors were present; how far away from the thresholds the sites were and the presence of open space. From the results, several projects were identified that if accomplished would lift in those reaches and in many cases in the whole watershed.

The roadblock to the completion of these projects was lack of money. During this period of time the State and Feds were approaching wastewater treatment plants about removing phosphorous in their wastewater efforts. The Workgroup questioned what if they could convince the State and Feds that more progress could be made on biological goals by completing their projects rather than lowering phosphorous 1 mg per Liter. A cost model was developed and it was found to be much more fiscally advantageous for the treatment plants to put a fraction of the money they would save by not removing phosphorous for one year and give it to the workgroup to implement the work plan. Over the ten years of the permit, the plants' costs would be cut in half for maintenance and operation. The amount of money needed to proceed was determined and a cost model developed for each plant. After all of the plants were interested in proceeding with the Workgroup's model the Sierra Club and the Prairie Rivers Network were approached and also agreed that removing phosphorous was not going to be as impactful as the Workgroup's plan. The next steps included negotiating with IEPA and federal government with eventually a special conditions template developed to go into each wastewater permit listing the Workgroup's projects. The final result was the plants putting money into the Workgroup's plan for eight years after which they swap over to doing capital upgrades to meet the new phosphorous standard. Stephen relayed the example of a dam removal project in 2012 on the East Branch DuPage River which resulted in an IBI jump of over 10 points within six months of its removal. While the 303d list indicated the need for phosphorous removal in the area of the dam, it was evident that phosphorous removal alone would not have had the same result as removing the dam. The project cost was less than a year's operating maintenance costs of phosphorous removal for the three plants upstream of the dam. Agency member fees are determined by an algorithm. During the period of time the Workgroup has been around, only one member has dropped out.

NIRPC Business –

Marquette Action Plan Survey – Sarah Geinosky, NIRPC

The Marquette Plan is an idea to create a livable lakefront and is a sustainable and collaborative vision for northwest Indiana's lakefront. The first stage of the Plan, from Illinois to Portage, was completed in 2005 and the second stage from Portage to Michigan completed in 2008. An update to the Plan was completed in 2015 that combined both phases and changes to the original Plan.

In addition to the update, a three purpose Marquette Action Plan is being created to point out concrete ways to improve access to the lakeshore. The first purpose is to try to achieve the goal to make 75% of the lakeshore accessible by pointing out areas which are not currently, but possibly could be open to the public. The second is to improve recreation and transportation to what is already accessible making sure individuals can get to desired areas and be able to do desired activities when they reach their

destinations. The third is to encourage and support improved connections and quality in the Marquette communities.

A survey has been released to find out what is important to the public and the results of the survey will impact the Action Plan. There are currently already over 200 responses, but the hope is to get a lot more. The survey will close the beginning of May.

****EMPC Action Item****

Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Management Plan Adoption Recommendation – Joe Exl, NIRPC

The 30 day public comment period has ended on the Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Restoration Plan. One comment was received regarding invasive species. IDEM has given their comments and those edits are currently being made to the Plan. Comments from EPA are expected within the next week or two and as with IDEM will be mostly technical. Kathy Luther informed the group that procedurally a motion is being requested for recommendation to the NIRPC Full Commission at their April meeting to adopt the Watershed Restoration Plan pending state and federal approval. A draft resolution was included in the meeting packet. Discussion was held regarding the Plan title including Restoration instead of Management and the difference between the two terms. After discussion, Susan MiHalo motioned to change the title of the Plan to the Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway Watershed Restoration and Management Plan and to recommend the Plan for adoption by the NIRPC Board at their April meeting pending state and federal approval. With second by Daniel Goldfarb, one abstention by Tim Kingsland from the City of Hobart and no opposition votes the motion passed.

Public Comment: None.

During a break in the meeting Lee Botts invited the group to attend the Shifting Sands: Pathway to Sustainability documentary premier at Indiana University April 21st. The film will also be broadcast on Channel 56, Lakeshore Public Television, on April 22 and shown on May 7th at the Field Museum. The Field Museum will also have a special exhibit with items scientists have collected in the Indiana Dunes since the 1890s. The film is about the history of the south-end region of Lake Michigan from an environmental perspective and the reason why the region is known as the birthplace of ecological science in North American and remains one of the most of greatest interest from scientists all over.

Urban Waters Presentation

a. Urban Forestry Regional Master Plan for NW Indiana – Drew Hart, US Forest Service

At the January Urban Waters Meeting it was suggested that the region needed a regional urban forestry plan to address issues that are regional and individual in nature. At the last Urban Waters meeting the idea was brought forward with a few individuals agreeing to work on a plan.

Urban forests is a system of trees, other vegetation, and water within and urban area and provide cities and municipalities with environmental, economic, and social benefits. Urban forests can be forest preserves/natural areas; buffer trees; street trees; trees in parks and trees on private property. They provide environmental, economic and social benefit which lead to enhanced quality of life.

The Urban Forestry Regional Plan for Northwest Indiana reinforces the ideas that trees provide multiple benefits; partnerships make us stronger; resources can be shared; similar challenges are faced and the regions urban forest provides connectivity. Components of the Plan include urban tree canopy data; canopy goals for region and for cities; field based inventories and assessments; urban forest management plan, which includes BMPs; natural areas management plans; regional plans/watershed

management plans; urban forestry budget and staff; and private property tree programs. As many participant/stakeholders as possible are desired. More details will be forthcoming regarding how to be more engaged in the process.

b. Pertinent Partner Updates:

- David Wright from GPTC noted they are working on new bus stations on Broadway. They are currently putting together specs to send to INDOT and would like to include pervious concrete as the base for the bus shelters. He asked for recommendations on the type they should include in the specs.
- Arianne Campbell from the Indiana Dunes relayed that she visited the artisan well at Chase Street and noted her disappointment with the condition around it. She is attempting to establish a clean-up effort and eventually would like to see a long-term maintenance program.
- Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC) has been working with their Indiana DNR Coastal grant and Donnelley Foundation funding to reach out to industries in the northwest Indiana coastal areas to develop invasive species programs. They have helped several industries with different programs which really took off when WHC teamed up with the Cooperative Weed Management Group on cooperative work days. Once every couple of months the members of the Group go to work on each other's properties. WHC hosted a work day at the 80 acre Exxon Mobil Hammond terminal wildlife area and since then there has been a lot of interest expressed by others. Praxair in Burns Harbor will be having a work day on Earth Day.
- The Nature Conservancy is getting ready to launch the Indiana Coastal Invasive Plant Network. TNC developed a focus list of around 17 species. There is a Great Lakes Early Detection Network smart phone App and there will be training for EDDMapS, the PC based system for reporting invasive species, on June 11 at the Douglas Environmental Center. On September 17 there will be training on EDDMapS and the smartphone app with the Northwest Indiana Paddling Association (NWIPA) at their Trail Creek cleanup. The event will also feature training on how to clean invasive species from paddling vessels.
- DNR and Urban Forestry group are partnering with Purdue to put on a training workshop to identify forest pests using the Great Lakes Early Detection Network on July 21st at Purdue Northwest Calumet. There will be afternoon training for municipality staff and early evening training for community members.
- Wilderness Inquiry is coming in May. There will be two days of cognitive, disabled adult canoeing and camping. They will be back in the area beginning September 19th for at least three solid weeks. Help will be needed for land based activities.
- The Coastal Program is in the process of changing their priority setting process for the grant program to be more robust and strategic. A public input meeting will be held on April 20 seeking public input for the 2017 funding cycle grant program priorities. Final decisions will be made during the June public meeting. The public will have a month to send their input to Maggie Byrne.
- The Dunes Learning Center will be hosting their National Get Outdoors Day Open House on Saturday, June 11.
- Save the Date! Urban Waters National Training Workshop July 26-28, 2016 in Arlington, VA.

Meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m.