

## ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC- Lake Michigan Room

July 7, 2016

**Members/Guests:** Geof Benson, Brenda Scott Henry, Deb Backhus, Kaitlyn McClain, Mike Molnar, Maggie Byrne, Michelle Caldwell, Beth Jacobson, George Malis, Kevin Breitzke, Kay Nelson, Tim Kingsland, Reggie Korhals, Jan Bapst, Michael Kuss, Leslie Dorworth, Nicole Barker, Lynda Lancaster, Will Farrellbegg

**NIRPC Staff:** Kathy Luther, Sarah Geinosky, Steve Strains, 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 May 5, 2016 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Will Farrellbegg and second by Tim Kingsland, the May 5, 2016 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

### Presentations:

#### a. Coastal Training Program Development Status – *Kaitlyn McClain, IDNR Coastal Program*

To clearly explain work products and partner products for better planning outcomes and better inform decision makers IDNR is developing a coastal training program to enhance education and outreach. There are currently 28 coastal sites with unique training programs for each. NOAA's NERRS was used as a model. The contract process will take place from July through December of 2016. A consultant will be obtained to put together a strategy for education and outreach and staff will begin implementation in 2017.

An assessment process is needed. An advisory planning team consisting of 4 individuals with expertise and regional knowledge has been meeting since April. An online survey was sent out at the end of May regarding characteristics, planning activities, pressing issues and training needs to gauge the current state of affairs. Most respondents were local county or regional government employees. While the majority reported having a comprehensive plan and watershed plan, around half had no certified planners. Many also indicated having economic development plans and current parks and recreation plans. When asked what ecological resilience concepts are of interest, green infrastructure, urban forestry and habitat protection and restoration ranked high. Results regarding planning management and regulatory concepts showed individuals would be receptive to training on a broad range of planning topics and tools.

The next step will be to put together the RFQ for a consultant. The needs assessment will guide forward moving efforts on what training efforts to offer, who to partner with, and planning tools to highlight in the outreach efforts. Work is being done on development and release of technical guidance documents. Coastal hazards planning guidance for coastal communities is complete and should be available shortly. Also, guidance regarding flooding and model ordinances and updates to the Technical Assistance Planning Application.

## **NIRPC Business:**

### **a. Greenways and Blueways 2020 Priority Conservation Corridors Exercise – Kathy Luther & Sarah Geinosky, NIRPC**

NIRPC has been working on the Greenways and Blueways 2020 Plan, which is combining the former Ped and Pedal plan with the conservation piece. The Plan is a reference document and is not intended to be parcel by parcel and is not a green infrastructure plan. Those efforts are being done in other places. Results from over 800 trail surveys and online surveys for each jurisdiction are still being analyzed. NWIPA provided paddling input. A draft of the plan will hopefully be available in August. The surveys had a poor representation from minority populations and low income jurisdictions. The public Survey results indicated the greenway piece is definitely important to the public. While ease of access and water quality were ranked as important factors where activities were performed, quality of scenery and views were ranked low. Most visit places about 15 minutes from home and drive to get there.

Key pad polling was done during the meeting to assist in determining methodology for prioritizing and presenting Greenway opportunities in the planning document. The Ped, Pedal and Paddle Committee have developed a priority regional trails and corridors map that assists in funding decisions. Kathy would like to take the Green Infrastructure Vision map and develop a map focusing more on connections that could resemble the priority trails and corridors map and allow for prioritization of things that can be prioritized or scored.

The categories presented to the Committee during polling included possible scoring or prioritization groups; location/geographic setting factors; ownership; ecological impacts; public access; community support and feasibility and sustainability of funding. Most of the respondents during polling indicated a desire to add an option for combining options given or adding an option to choose all of the choices provided for each category. Next steps include weighing polling results and coming back with potential corridors for prioritization.

**Public Comment:** None

## **Announcements:**

- The updated Greenways & Blueways maps are in and available for pick up.
- Nicole Barker's last day with Save the Dunes is July 14.
- Kathy announced NIRPC now has two electric vehicle charging stations.
- The Army Corps will be presenting their plan for the 270 acre Hobart Marsh Mitigation/Restoration project at the August 4<sup>th</sup> EMPC meeting.
- Mike Molnar announced two openings on the Coastal Board. One for a Porter County Planner, Municipal County or university and the other for a LaPorte County city or town.
- Kevin Breitze announced the first meeting of the new Technical Policy Committee (TPC), which is the former Transportation Policy Committee and the 2040 Committee combined, will be Tuesday July 12 at 9:00 am. Kathy announced the EMPC will have a standing agenda item on the new TPC Committee, which is overseeing all aspects of the 2040 Plan, to report out what is being done. All NIRPC meetings are open to the public.
- Additional meeting, event and funding announcements will be forwarded to the Committee by email.

Meeting adjourned at 10:37 a.m.