

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

CAF Training Center

September 3, 2015

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, Dorreen Carey, Deb Backhus, Ashley Snyder, Mike Molnar, Michelle Caldwell, Jennifer Gadzala, Nicole Barker, Michael Kuss, Lara Gonzalez

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Stephen Sostaric, Meredith Stilwell

Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

Approval of July 2, 2015 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Nicole Barker and second by Deb Backhus, the July 2, 2015 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

Presentations:

a. Remedial Action Plan (RAP) – Ashley Snyder, IDEM

After many requests for an update on the Remedial Action Plan Ashley Snyder presented the update to the Committee. The Remedial Action Plan was established by the 1987 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the United States and Canada. The agreement identified 43 “Areas of Concern” (AOC) in the Great Lakes Basin needing high levels of remediation and the International Joint Commission (IJC) required the establishment of Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) to be the blueprint for restoring the beneficial uses of an OAC. An AOC is a location that has experienced environmental degradation. There are 43 areas of concern around the Great Lakes but only one, the Grand Calumet River/Indiana Harbor Ship Canal AOC, in Indiana. The northern boundary includes a 1.5 mile buffer out into Lake Michigan and initially this AOC was listed as the most highly impaired in the Great Lakes. It has been plagued by industrial waste, municipal wastewater and invasive species.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) charged IDEM to write the Remedial Action Plan for the Grand Calumet River AOC. Due to the scale of the effort, IDEM appointed and chairs a group of individuals to advise the development of the RAP, The Citizens Advisory for the Remediation of the Environment (CARE). Restoration planning is done in multiple stages. The current update to the RAP state 2.5 outlines the work required to restore each beneficial use and how it can be accomplished. The final stage 3 will be developed once remedial actions have taken place to prove that beneficial uses have been restored. Through the restoration process it was noted by the CARE committee that two of the 14 Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) no longer exist and were most likely listed in error from the beginning. The three areas to address for restoration implementation include river, ship canal and riverine wetlands; dune and swale habitats; and Lake Michigan beaches. Ashley spoke on the various restoration processes. The US Steel 5-mile dredge was the initial dredging project on the River and was initiated by the 1999 Federal Clean Water Act Consent Decree and a 1998 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Corrective Action Order. This dredging removed more the 800,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment from the river by 2007. Through the inception of the Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) and utilization of the Indiana Natural Resource Damages trustees funds more projects have been done on the River and 730,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediments have been remediated.

An overview of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) 2010 grant for restoration actions was given and it was noted that in 2015 \$5 million in direct funding from U.S. EPA is expected to complete management actions by 2020. The GLRI will restore over 900 acres of Dune and Swale habitat and provide seasonal and contractual job opportunities.

Yearly exceedance rates from 2010 to 2014 decreased at most of Indiana's Lake Michigan Beaches in the AOC. A lot of effort has gone toward Jeorse Park Beach in trying to get it up to par with other beaches. A modification to the breakwall has been proposed and modeled to determine bacterial flow away from the beach. Issues found are being worked through. The restructure cost would be upwards of \$9 million. In the meantime best management practices are being implemented some of which include a bird scare program, signage and addition garbage and recycling cans. From the start of the project E Coli counts dropped dramatically.

A Public Outreach seminar is being held in Hammond in October. A RAP brochure is available and a web page. Next steps are to complete management actions by 2020 and continue monitoring. Discussion followed.

b. *Septic System Work Group and SepticSmart Week* – Dorreen Carey – IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program

A fact sheet, brochure and sample support resolution for SepticSmart week which is September 21 – 25, 2015. With an estimated number of 60,000 septic systems many communities in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties rely wholly or partially on septic systems for their wastewater treatment needs. Failing systems can be potential sources of threats to human health and water quality making proper care and maintenance critical to function and long-term performance.

In 2013 the Septic System Coordination Work Group, comprised of federal, state, and local governments/agencies, not-for-profit groups, and interested individuals, began meeting to develop collaborative plans and implementation strategies to address potential impacts of failing systems on local water quality and public health. The Indiana DRN Lake Michigan Coastal Program provides staffing and coordination assistance for the Work Group as part of the Indiana Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program which requires and stipulates management measures for addressing septic systems. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) determine if states have met all the measures in the Coastal Nonpoint Program. Indiana has not yet met the measure for inspections at a frequency adequate to determine if systems are failing.

Some of the Work Group's 2015 efforts are aimed at ongoing research with focus groups; working with county health departments to communicate how ordinances are management for septic management and realtors for point of sale inspections; watershed mapping and monitoring to identify potential impacts on local waterways; coordination and information sharing between programs and projects; outreach and education; and innovative approaches and funding to address failing systems. Many septic owners never see the health department or know that the department oversees the systems. A 2014 study was developed to address do some people in Northwest Indiana fail to properly maintain their septic systems, and if so, what can public agencies do to help overcome these barriers. Most people think that products like RID-X are the answer, but this is not the solution and has little or no effect. Final analysis is to be released later this year.

Participating governments, agencies, organizations and individuals will be distributing EPA SepticSmart outreach materials during SepticSmart Week and provide links to the EPA SepticSmart web page. Discussion followed.

NIRPC Business:

a. *Greenways + Blueways 2020 Plan Update* – Kathy Luther, NIRPC

The attempt of this plan is to integrate trail planning that NIRPC has done with green infrastructure and natural resource planning. Public meetings were held and stakeholder interviews have begun. Kathy indicated if individuals have photos of natural areas that have public access or where they would like public access to send them to Joe Exl at jexl@nirpc.org. They can trail or waterway pictures.

A brief discussion was held regarding where meetings will be held for the next few meetings. Kathy indicated the NIRPC auditorium would most likely not be available for a meeting until December or January of next year.

Public Comment:

Mike Kuss asked if someone from the Calumet Heritage public outreach could be on the agenda for the next EMPC meeting.

Lara Gonzalez announced she is the new communications specialist at the Field Museum for the Calumet Heritage area feasibility study. She indicated they would like to come to the October meeting to give a quick presentation to get input regarding area assets and that everything is being encompassed in the Calumet region. She brought brochures regarding the feasibility study and a save the date flyer for the Calumet Heritage Conference being held in October. Further discussion was held regarding the possibility of having the representatives come to the October NIRPC Commission meeting. Some EMPC meeting attendees might be attending the Great Lakes Conference which will be held at the same time as the October EMPC meeting. Schedules will be looked at to determine the best course of action.

Mike Kuss asked if the EMPC could draft a letter asking for an update on the status of certain communities' long-term control plans. Kathy indicated that IDEM is tracking implementation of all of the long-term control plans. Hammond's draft plan is out for public review. Kathy commented that the SC2 team which reports directly to the White House can't even seem to get information regarding the status. Chairman Benson indicated that they could be invited to present.

Dorreen referred to the resolution she handed out and wondered if the EMPC could support the SepticSmart resolution. Kathy noted EMPC would have to recommend it to the NIRPC Full Commission or Executive Board. **Nicole Barker made motion to support the SepticSmart Week Resolution. With second by Mike Kuss and no opposition the motion passed.**

Announcements:

- Meeting and event announcements will be forwarded to the EMPC email distribution list.

Meeting adjourned at 10:39 a.m.