

# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC AUDITORIUM, PORTAGE, IN

March 6, 2014

**Members/Guests Present:** Sam Lashley, Mark Reshkin, Corbett Miller, Jared O'Brien, Dale Engquist, Geof Benson, Jewel Cody, Deb Backhus, Jennifer Gadzala, Dorreen Carey, Michelle Caldwell, Ashley Snyder, Courtney Blouzdis, Natalie Johnson, Maggie Byrne, Charlotte Read, Leslie Dorworth, Bob Daum, Kevin Breitzke, Rufus Durnell, Charles Morris, Julie Morris, Jim Nowacki, Rafi Wilkinson, Laurie Keagle  
**NIPRC Staff:** Kathy Luther, Mitch Barloga, 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 February 6, 2014 EMPC Minutes**

Upon motion by Charlotte Read and second by Bob Daum and no opposition, the minutes of the February 6, 2014 meeting were approved.

## **Presentation:**

### **a. Meteorological Conditions Conducive to Flooding in Indiana and Using a Volunteer Network of Observers to Monitor Precipitation** – *Sam Lashley, Senior Meteorologist, National Weather Service Northern Indiana Office*

The Northern Indiana Office of the National Weather Service (NWS) covers parts of northern Indiana over to LaPorte County, lower southwest Michigan and northwest Ohio. Due to weather's importance to industry and travel, the National Weather Service part of NOAA operates under the Department of Commerce. The National Weather Service mission is to provide weather water and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the national economy. The Department's vision is a weather-ready nation: Society is prepared for and responds to weather-dependent events.

Floods are the #1 natural disaster in the United States and from 2003 to 2012 total flood insurance claims averaged nearly \$4 billion per year. [floodsafety.noaa.gov](http://floodsafety.noaa.gov) can be visited for more information on flood safety. Soil type, vegetation, land use, slope of terrain/channel depth and width, meteorological and hydrological and antecedent conditions; which includes heavy and/or prolonged rainfall, deep and/or melting snowpack, frozen ground, river and stream levels, saturated ground, drought conditions/dry and hard ground are factors affecting flooding potential. The Flash Flood Potential Index was developed to study the effect of Indiana's diverse geography on flash flood likelihood. Factors that affect flash flood potential include: slope of terrain, soil type, land use, and tree cover. The most common forms of flooding in Indiana are flash floods caused by heavy rain/snow melt, ice jam or dam failure in a short period of time and river/stream flooding, which is an inundation of normally dry areas caused by rising water in an existing waterway. Many record river flood events occur in winter and early spring due to snow melt.

Different types of meteorological events can lead to flooding: slow moving thunderstorms with heavy rainfall, "training" thunderstorms, snow-melt with or without heavy rain, and tropical systems. Some of the tropical systems that cause flooding can also transversely prevent drought conditions. The importance of tropical storms to Indiana precipitation from 1980 to 2012 was briefly. The national weather service website [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov) not only provides weather information but also provides hydrology information for specific rivers as well as area forecast discussions.

Currently the NWS Northern Indiana Office is working with the Indiana State Climate Office and a Purdue student researcher on an Indiana precipitation project studying hourly precipitation observations going back to 1950. The idea is to better understand the climate; how rainfall during periods of the day has been changing. The NWS looks at the current weather and the State

Climate Office looks more at the climate change pattern and how future rainfall will affect it. The four cities being observed are South Bend, Fort Wayne, Indianapolis and Evansville. It is a work in progress with some interesting preliminary findings. A few observations from South Bend were presented to the group.

CoCoRaHS (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail & Snow Network) is made up of over 15,000 trained volunteers who take daily precipitation measurements in their own backyards each morning and was born in response to the 1997 Fort Collins, Colorado flood. It has become the largest national source of daily precipitation measurements in the United States. A four-inch diameter high capacity plastic rain gauge which holds eleven inches and measures to the hundredth of an inch is used. The cost is a little under \$30.00 for the rain gauge. In addition to rainfall measurements, volunteers measure both snowfall depth (new and accumulated), and water content of snow. Volunteers report their daily observations on the interactive Web site, [www.cocorahs.org](http://www.cocorahs.org) and are immediately available for the public to view. A case study from a heavy rainfall even from August 2, 2013 using the CoCoRaHS system and NWS dual polarization radar was shown. 24 hour precipitation data is being used regularly by NOAA's National Weather Service, River Forecast Centers and National Hurricane center as well as other organizations including local municipalities, universities, engineers, etc. Data is archived starting in 2007. Information and training contacts were provided.

*During discussion it was noted that while social media is being used referencing past events, there is currently not a database format that shows consequence from the data collected. The network is a great education tool and just beginning to be presented to schools. 85-90% of volunteers are retired or home-schooled children. It was commented that the websites are easy to navigate and are great resources. There is a very high level of concern for flooding with the amount of snow on the ground. When it starts melting later in March or early April if there is rainfall, there could be significant problems and with higher river levels it could be a long-term level of flooding. Kevin Breitzke thanked Sam for coming and presenting. He commented it is a great program and encouraged people to sign-up. Sam also noted that CoCoRaHS is also used by FEMA to declare if an area can get money back for snow removal.*

## **NIRPC Business:**

### ***TAP Funding Update***– Mitch Barloga, NIRPC Nonmotorized Transportation and Greenways Planner

The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) will have changes to it beginning this year (2014). NIRPC currently administers the STP and CMAQ funding programs on a multi-year basis and will now do the same with TAP. Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties are all eligible. Some of the new aspects of the program for 2014 include: A minimum of five years' worth of money will now be available at one time; new funding targets will be established, the application will be revised (if necessary) and the projects will be programmed by engineering, right of way and construction/construction enhancement phases. There will be a call for projects every two years. Per federal regulations, TAP for stormwater includes retrofitting an existing highway by creating a wetland to filter highway runoff based on the impacts from the road in terms of water pollution; improving streams and drainage channels through landscaping to promote filtering and improve the overall water quality conditions of receiving channels and providing payment in-kind for existing highway water quality impacts that warrant mitigation to regional or watershed-based planned improvement projects. TAP for wildlife includes projects designated as wildlife underpasses or overpasses; measures at areas identified as crossings for wildlife, which include the necessary fencing and other markings and mitigation techniques associated with movement of wildlife across transportation corridors and bridge extensions to provide or improve wildlife passage and wildlife habitat connectivity as well as monitoring and data collection on habitat fragmentation and vehicle-related wildlife mortality. There is a National Transportation Alternatives Clearinghouse (NTAC) site at [www.enhancements.org](http://www.enhancements.org) that has a multitude of environmentally based projects and can be searched through for examples. The application schedule was presented to group with the handout provided in the meeting packet. Total funding could be \$5-

\$7m with \$500-700k in environmental if funding targets stayed as they are now. The Safe Routes to School Program was briefly discussed. The TAP funding is an 80/20 program now as where it used to be 100%. There are bonus points awarded for overmatch and it is a hard cash match with no in-kind match. Mitch noted that planning is important to move forward with infrastructure.

### ***2014 EMPC Membership List– Kathy Luther***

Kathy announced to the group that NIRPC's new Chair, Mayor Snedecor, made new city and town appointments to the EMPC, appointing Geof Benson as the EMPC Chair. The updated 2014 EMPC membership list was provided in the meeting packet for review by the group.

### **Public Comment:**

Jim Nowacky commented that he attended the EMPC meeting by accident and was glad to have the opportunity to see the wonderful presentations. Since the group is talking about environmental management, he remarked he doesn't believe it goes unnoticed that the city of Gary is probably one of the largest locations for brownfields and other environmental hazards and might be considered an issue of environmental injustice in the City. He urged the Board to look carefully at making sure there is enough money to mitigate all of the environmental hazards that have been created over the last two decades in the city. He commented that one of the issues he has brought up time and time before the Full Board is that a lot of time is spent planning in the city without a lot of execution. The NIRPC policy includes complete streets but major projects come through the city which are not complete streets; such as the re-doing of Route 12 and Route 20. He feels that it seems like the city of Gary always gets shorted. Nuclear waste, chemical waste and tire recyclers and homeless shelters all get generated to the city. He stated that everyone comes to Gary to bring in undesirable things but there are nice clean, well-managed cities surrounding Gary with no tire, nuclear waste or chemical recyclers and they all end up as hazardous, spoiled system in Gary. He stated there is a lot of corruption in the city and feels that someone needs to stand up say that these are people that live in this City and make sure Gary gets complete streets and sidewalks along Route 20 along Clay and Lake Streets where there are hundreds of people walking along the highway every day. Instead the City just gets plans. Many people have complained and a petition with 500 signatures was created asking for sidewalks between 12 and 20, but NIRPC is perfectly happy to pass on these plans where anyone would look on it and say, you can't do it that way you have to have a sidewalk. He feels that when the Mayor of Gary states that sidewalks aren't part of the program, someone should tap her on the shoulder and let her know she is kind of new on this job and yes it is part of it. He stated there are a lot or problems in Gary and a lot of it is the responsibility of the EMPC to share some of the blame and take some of the responsibility and make Gary a little bit cleaner in spite of the representatives they continue to rely on.

### **Announcements:**

Upcoming meetings, workshops, trainings and events were announced.

Kathy mentioned to the group that Chicago Wilderness Congress, at which she is presenting, is being held at the same day as the April EMPC meeting and considered cancelling the meeting. With no objections, the April EMPC meeting was cancelled.

Mitch announced the March Ped, Pedal and Paddle meeting on March 27<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. will be a TAP workshop.

On Motion by Kevin Breitzke and second by Bob Daum the meeting was adjourned.