

# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC AUDITORIUM, PORTAGE, IN

September 4, 2014

**Members/Guests Present:** Mark Reshkin, Jennifer Gadzala, Mike Molnar, Geof Benson, Kay Nelson, Chandra Viswanathan, Deb Backhus, Charlotte Read, Brenda Scott-Henry, Dorreen Carey, Jim Biancotti, Natalie Johnson, Tom Clousier, Therese Davis, David Wright

**NIPRC Staff:** Kathy Luther, Joe Exl, Ty Warner, Meredith Stilwell

## **Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

## **Approval of August 7, 2014 EMPC Minutes**

Upon motion by Charlotte Read and second by Deb Backhus and no opposition, the minutes of the August 7, 2014 meeting were approved.

## **Presentation:**

### **a. National EPA Septic Smart/NWI Septic System Awareness Week – Dorreen Carey, IDNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program**

With approximately 60,000 septic systems, many communities in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties rely wholly or partially on septic systems for their wastewater treatment needs. Since failing systems can be potential sources of threats to human health and water quality, proper care and maintenance is critical to septic system function and long term performance. The NW Indiana Septic System Coordination Work Group, comprised of federal, state and local governments/agencies, not-for-profit groups and interested individuals, has been meeting since early 2013 to develop collaborative plans and implementation strategies to address the potential impacts of failing septic systems on local water quality and public health. The Indiana DNR Lake Michigan Coastal Program provides staffing and coordination assistance for the Work Group as part of the Indiana Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program. Several first steps have been made by the group with one being their agreement to support and promote EPA SepticSmart Week at the state and local level. A number of towns/cities and organizations, including Ogden Dunes, Beverly Shores and the City of Gary, have joined the effort. Urban Waters Ambassador Natalie Johnson will be heading up focus groups on behalf of the NW Indiana Septic System Coordination Work Group to try to help understand why people do not maintain their septic systems. The typical life of a system is about 11-30 years and around half in the US are over 30 years old. This region has a lot of older systems and soil that is considered 80% unsuitable for the systems. It is unclear if the lack of maintenance is a lack of knowledge, resources or values gap and hopefully the report resulting from the focus groups will help the working group discern if there is one barrier over another and a refocused effort can be made for 2015. There will be two, 10-15 person focus groups in each county targeting those within two miles or less from the lakeshore. The State Health Department will be putting out information on alternative systems but for now the focus is on maintaining systems currently in place. Presently LaPorte County septic inspectors, haulers and pumpers have to be registered and certified and a statewide certification process is being looked into. The working group meetings are open and anyone is welcome to come and share information.

*Discussion followed regarding issues with real estate transactions that do not always require inspections for septic systems or specify the location of systems.*

**NIRPC Business:**

*Planning for Update to the 2040 CRP Environmental Section– Kathy Luther, NIRPC Director of Environmental Programs and Joe Exl, NIRPC Senior Water Resources Planner*

As part of the long-range transportation plan, the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan completed in 2011 is required to be updated every five years and is due to updated in the next year. No major additions will be made but the current content will be updated and tweaked and missing items added. The 2040 Environmental goals are managed growth that protects farmland, environmentally sensitive areas and important ecosystems; reduced flooding risks and improved water quality; improved air quality and clean land. The current topic areas include water resources; water supply; green infrastructure; air quality and brownfields. Within each of those topics current status; existing programs; plan and policy recommendations; best management practices/measures; performance measures and Implementation for NIRPC and its partnerships. Meeting attendees reviewed the current content making comments and suggestions on comment cards and as follows:

**TOPIC – Water Resources**

<p><b>Current Status additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ AOC/Dredging</li> <li>▪ ERC for GW</li> <li>▪ Watershed Boundary fix</li> <li>▪ Beef up floodplain section</li> </ul>	<p><b>Existing Programs additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Levee</li> <li>▪ In-lieu Fee</li> <li>▪ Waters of the US</li> <li>▪ Coastal</li> <li>▪ LAMP</li> <li>▪ Include floodplain/protection programs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Septics</li> <li>▪ Woody Debris</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measures additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorporate Dr. Chandra Viswanathan's watershed &amp; climate studies where applicable</li> <li>▪ AOC</li> <li>▪ Model ordinances</li> <li>▪ Communities in flood insurance program</li> <li>▪ Flood loss</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implementation – NIRPC additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Septic</li> </ul>	

**TOPIC – Water Withdrawal, Consumption and Supply**

<p><b>Current Status additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dr. Wittman study</li> </ul>	<p><b>Existing Programs additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DNR efficiency rules</li> </ul>
<p><b>Best Practices additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Water recycling</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measures additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Infrastructure</li> </ul>

**TOPIC – Green Infrastructure**

<p><b>Existing Programs additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MS4 BMPs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Best Practices additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ecosystem services (cost)</li> <li>▪ MS4 construction &amp; post-construction infrastructure requirements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implementation – NIRPC additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Possibly MS4 BMP data</li> </ul>	

**TOPIC – Air Quality**

<p><b>Current Status additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New studies</li> <li>▪ Possible defining of EPA’s unclassifiable designation</li> <li>▪ Illiana</li> </ul>	<p><b>Performance Measures additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ozone, PM2.5 (air quality standards)</li> <li>▪ Health measures (asthma, etc.)</li> <li>▪ Possible addition of air quality action days</li> <li>▪ Carbon emissions</li> </ul>
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**TOPIC – Brownfields**

<p><b>Existing Programs additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revolving Loan Fund</li> <li>▪ ERC and ordinances</li> </ul>	<p><b>Best Practices additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ERC and ordinances</li> </ul>
<p><b>Performance Measures additions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clean ups</li> <li>▪ Economic development resulting from clean ups</li> <li>▪ Number of assessments performed</li> </ul>	

NIRPC Accomplishments were reviewed by Kathy. When asked about additional priorities for update, suggestions were made to add recycling and household hazardous waste days as well as possibly addressing climate change in each chapter by adding clauses that indicate the climate change implications.

Elements of NIRPC’s Climate Change Policy were presented and it was discussed if climate change should be an addition. It was suggested to not add climate change as a priority since NIRPC does not have the resources to drive that category, but weave it into other categories and chapters as an educational point and adding the Michigan City climate resilience as a best practice.

It was asked if energy should be a separate category or remain in the air quality section. It was suggested that in the long-run in probably should be separate, but not now since NIRPC does not have the capacity. It was suggested as possibly a forward-thinking small chapter regarding looking into ways NIRPC could begin moving in that direction or an addition regarding what the region is doing regarding energy.

Other suggestions or comments resulting from the discussion included:

- Incorporate a financial valuation piece for sustainability into each chapter to connect people and environment and how you pay for/the value of things.
- While there might not be room to actually give a paragraph to various information reports, it would be helpful if there is a nice appendix to the CRP that allows for the listing of various reports.
- Possibly a listing of funding streams.

Ty Warner commented that NIRPC's enabling statute directs it toward transportation, environment and economic development and he isn't sure if anyone is looking very carefully at the Economic Development and Human Resources Chapter and with the comments made wonders if there is a way to look at that chapter to see how it might cross-pollinate with the environmental section to make the return investment point since these things are linked and support each other.

Three environmental stakeholder/public meetings will be held with input received at this meeting used to tailor those public meetings.

**Public Comment:**

None.

**Announcements:**

The upcoming Urban Waters Partnership meeting was announced. Details on the meeting, as well as other upcoming regional events and meetings will be emailed to the EMPC.

Meeting adjourned at 10:41 a.m.