

# **Chicago Area Waterway System Aquatic Invasive Species Stakeholder Group**

## **October 1, 2019 Meeting Summary**

### **Welcome, Introductions and Review of Agenda**

Kathy Luther, NIRPC welcomed those in attendance. Members and guests introduced themselves and the group reviewed the agenda. She inquired if review and approval of minutes were a normal part of the group's meetings that should be added to the agenda. Josh Ellis referred the group to Page 6 Sec. 5.b of the Operating Principles showing that these are to be sent to the entire group for comment, and then approved by the Steering Committee.

### **How Did We Get Here? 2012 to Today.**

Matt Doss, GLC provided an overview of this group's history and evolving purpose. The group was convened in 2010 by the Great Lakes Commission and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative to ensure stakeholder engagement in their Joyce Foundation funded \$2 million investigation of options to hydrologically separate the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Basins at their Chicago Waterway System nexus. This study was completed in 2012 with three options for separation. The group remained engaged after that report in an advisory capacity to provide input to federal agencies working on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Interbasin Study (GLMRIS). That report was completed in 2014 but no specific option was recommended. The group brought on a facilitator to attempt to reach consensus on a long-term solution that would protect the Great Lakes from Aquatic Invasive Species while maintaining the many beneficial uses of the CAWS. Obtaining consensus on diverse structural, non-structural, and two way solutions remained elusive. After an outside evaluation of this group in 2017, it was decided to remain together as a stakeholder group because of the value of exchanging ideas and perspectives and providing input to federal and state agencies, but they would no longer attempt to focus on taking joint positions or consensus. In April of 2018 the group adopted the **Chicago Area Waterway System Aquatic Invasive Species Stakeholder Group – Goals and Operating Principles**. Current Goals are to contribute to efforts to develop and move forward with implementation of a viable and sustainable plan to prevent the two-way movement of AIS through the CAWS, while maintaining other beneficial functions of the system, by the end of 2020. Currently technical investigation of this issue is focusing on potential impact of contaminated sediments resulting from changes in the Waterway System.

### **Report of NIRPC Activities in 2019**

NIRPC entered into an agreement with the Great Lakes Commission to assume responsibility for staffing the CAWS in early 2019. Kathy Luther, NIRPC Chief of Staff introduced her staff team supporting the CAWS group project including Joe Exl, Sr. Water Resource Planner will be the project manager and technical liaison, and Dominique Edwards, Public Participation Planner will help with meeting coordination and as technology support. Tasks in their work plan include maintaining and updating the membership list, building and maintaining an email distribution list, convening monthly steering committee calls, produce correspondence and business records, plan, prepare and staff at least two In-person meetings per year, and build and maintain a CAWS website moving forward.

**RE: Email distribution list** - NIRPC has a list of 97 individuals on the CAWS list including member organization representatives and alternates, ex-officio members, resource agency representatives, and observers. NIRPC uses Constant Contact as an email management system. Some organizations may have trouble receiving Constant Contact due to firewall issues, others may find our mail going to spam. From our end, bounce-back issues are followed up on immediately, but there remains a high “never opened” rate. NIRPC cannot determine if people are receiving those and just not reading them, or if they are not receiving them at all. Members who may think they, or other colleagues are not receiving messages from CAWS are encouraged to check their spam or contact Kathy directly at 219.254.2513 or Candi Eklund at 219.254.2501. Those mentioned at the meeting included Kay Nelson, Rebecca Mason, and Dave Ulrich. NIRPC has information about Constant Contact work arounds that Candi can provide to your IT people which will resolve many situations. NIRPC will continue to explore improvements in this area. NIRPC requested all to review the member contact information in the packet and return any updates or corrections they find to Kathy.

**RE: Membership-** NIRPC has been reaching out to several member organizations with low participation rates. Great Lakes Sport Fishing Council responded they would like to remain active and Dan Thomas is here today representing them.

At the recommendation of the Steering Committee, NIRPC reached out to the Shedd Aquarium and Illinois-Indiana Sea-Grant regarding interest in CAWS membership. Per the Operating Principals, new member organizations must be approved at an in-person meeting after the administrative agent provides an opportunity to consider them. As the administrative agent, NIRPC provided information about the two organizations in a separate handout and asked the group for a vote or consensus on inviting them to be members. A motion was made by Jason Navota of CMAP and seconded and both organizations were approved for membership by a voice vote. NIRPC will update the member lists and description documents to reflect this. Andrea Densham with Shedd Aquarium was present at the meeting and thanked the group.

**RE: Steering Committee:** - NIRPC reported that 6 Steering Committee calls have been convened prior to October 1 with a standing time scheduled for 8:30 am (Central) on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month. There was extensive discussion regarding the steering including: committee structure, opportunities for new steering committee members, process and procedures for steering committee rotation, steering committee implications for organizations whose CAWS member changes, paucity of business member groups as compared to environmental member groups may make it difficult for them to rotate. Susan Donovan volunteered to be a steering committee member. Discussion of how to implement the operating principles is to be taken up at greater length by the steering committee with recommendations of how to proceed at the next In-Person meeting.

**RE: CAWS Website:** -NIRPC indicated to the group that the new CAWS website was available, and in fact was being used as the screen backdrop during this portion of the meeting. Previous meeting materials and documents as well as presentations from meetings will be uploaded to the website as they become available. **New CAWS Website:** <https://www.nirpc.org/invasive-species-and-the-chicago-area-waterway-system/>

An Update on the 2019 Asian Carp Action Plan was provided by Bill Bolen, US EPA. The full presentation is available at : <https://www.nirpc.org/caws-aquatic-invasive-species-stakeholder-group/>

In summary, the Asian Carp Action Plan process is now 10 years old. Efforts now are less focused on Research and more on Control and Monitoring.

There was concern raised that the resources Congress recently allocated for carp control in Kentucky might detract from the Great Lakes efforts. Greg Conover from Region 3 US Fish and Wildlife Service assured the group that this funding was not just for KY but for all carp control on the Mississippi system.

Amy McGovern, US Fish and Wildlife Service presented, via screen share, an update on the status of research testing various types of acoustic deterrence equipment in Kentucky at the Barclay Lock and Dam. Some projects were delayed due to flooding and competing usage needed for the Lock. Her power point is also available on the CAWS AIS Stakeholder Group website.

Andy Cupp followed with a remote presentation on a pilot study of Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) Barriers being tested on the Fox River. This technology is not part of the Brandon Road plan, but based on effectiveness and cost it might be worth considering. Andy's slides are available on the CAWS AIS Stakeholder Group Website.

John Rogner provided an overview of the results of Illinois DNR carp harvesting and monitoring efforts. Since fishing was initiated in 2010, the leading edge does not appear to have moved below the Dam. No small fish have been found upstream of starved rock since 2015, indicating no breeding. Population density has been reduced by 96% with approximately 8.7 Millions lbs per fish harvested, approximately 1 million per year but increasing in recent years. 2019 is over 2 million lbs with 3 months left of the season. The increase is attributed to moving fishing south toward higher fish populations as densities decrease in previously fished areas. The goal is to increase commercial harvest in the Peoria Pool to 4.5 Million per year. Currently IEPA pays fishermen \$0.10 per lb. IEPA does take steps to ensure that the development of the commercial fishery market does not create an economic incentive to grow or maintain the carp population.

Jeff Zuercher provided an update on the Brandon Road and Chief's Report of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is negotiating with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The timeline if the project should proceed will be 8-12 years. Design Phase 4 Years, Construction 6-8 Years. The engineered channel high cost but space for new technologies as they are developed. Any remediation would not go toward federal share. U.S. Army Corps is not responsible for any remediation activities. Real estate, such as the NRG property does not need to be in hand in order for a design agreement to be approved and isn't necessary until construction takes place. Discussion needs to take place on the need to figure out cost and the remediation of land during this phase. This factors into planning along current design concepts or consideration of island construction. Kay Nelson noted that the Confined Disposal Facility for Grand Calumet Area of Concern (AOC) took 5 years to construct. Discussion on federalizing the entire project and if other partners could be written into a federal agreement for local sponsorship. Non-standard agreements take longer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The USACOE did send the Illinois Governor's office a template for an agreement, hoping that by using the template this could allow the project to proceed more quickly.

Right at the moment the meeting progressed to a discussion of the status of the Brandon Road Non-Federal Sponsor Discussions and the July meeting between the States, the conference line was dropped by the carrier. As a result, Tammy Newcomb was unable to speak to the Michigan perspective on this. Kathy Luther relayed that the state had committed \$8M to the Brandon Road project that Illinois could determine when to utilize. Other state staff members present reported that their states were waiting for the PED Scope of Work to be shared before making any monetary commitments and that Illinois had

agreed to share it at the multi-state meeting. As of this meeting neither the USACOE staff present, nor other state representatives present had seen any draft PED Scope or agreement on this project from Illinois.

### **Action Items:**

#### Next Steps:

- Policy and Technology Work Group was suggested to schedule a meeting soon to continue ongoing and in-depth education on the technical matters. Lisa Frede coordinates this work group.
  - Group is meeting on December 3<sup>rd</sup> before CAWS Stakeholder Meeting
- NIRPC to facilitate Two-Way AIS Discussions forming a working group with first call-in prior to the December 3<sup>rd</sup> CAWS Stakeholder Meeting

#### Communications:

- Any members who are not receiving messages about CAWS please contact Candice Eklund at [ceklund@nirpc.org](mailto:ceklund@nirpc.org) or (219) 254-2501 so we can provide some IT tips.
- All members to review contact information provided and provide NIRPC with any corrections or changes they are aware of.

#### Steering Committee:

- Steering Committee to review the Operating Principles guidance regarding the steering committee, member categories, etc and determine if there is a need to solicit new members.

#### Next Meeting Agenda:

- IEPA update on NRG Energy site status
- Status of WRDA Bill (Matt McKenna)
- EPA Region 5 sediment study