

**Urban Waters NW Indiana Quarterly Partnership Meeting**  
**September 20, 2013**  
**East Chicago Marina**

Attendees: Cherie LeBlanc Fisher, Lynne Westphal, Natalie Johnson, Tom Dilley, Jeremy Peichel, Richard Morrisroe, Liz McCloskey, Gene Fleming, Paul Buszka, Valerie Buszka, Scott Kuchta, Susan MiHalo, Kathy Luther, Cathy Martin, Rubin Ramos, Nelson Vargas, Tim Kingsland, Dorreen Carey, Rick Calpino, Abby Crisostomo, Kathy Brown, Jim Van der Kloot, Jenny Delumo, Stephanie Cwik, Danielle Potts, Courtney Blouzdis, Leslie Dorworth, Mike Milatovic, Adam McAlpine, Diane Banta, Lynda Lancaster, Michelle Caldwell, John Antaramian

June Meeting Recap

- Priority projects led by partners were collected at June meeting
- Ideas raised were discussed by federal agencies at an all federal meeting held September 13<sup>th</sup>

Trail Creek

- Federal partners can offer water sampling
- MI City does have an auto-sampler, but would welcome technical expertise from fed partners
- LIDAR ready by the end of this year, Urban Tree Canopy work would come from that
  - Tree planting may help with flashiness at Cheney Run, for example
- Federal time can be used to match LARE funds
- Federal partners can assist with long term planning for Karwick for public access
- Scott Kuchta: Need additional meetings to discuss options at Cheney Run – Sanitary District is the lead
  - 319 grants have been approved since last quarterly meeting – applications due November 1 -- \$85,000 available with 1:1 match, part of the funding will go to West Branch (agricultural) and part to the Michigan City area (urban)
  - Working with the LaPorte County Convention and Visitors Bureau to brand Trail Creek – seeking resources for branding
    - Brand as cold water fishery (widely known for that among anglers)
    - Economic Development Administration may be a good fit to help with this
    - Local economic development dollars going to projects under 319 funding
    - Porter County Beyond the Beach may be a good fit
- Gene Fleming: Army Corps of Engineers has to work on habitat but water quality improvement can be a side benefit
  - Ambler Flatwoods project – local partner has very limited funds so if funds are available to non-federal sponsor, more pieces of the work can get done (other federal funds can't be used as match here)
  - Also, Army Corps of Engineers cannot work in a location if level of contaminants is too high

East Branch of the Little Calumet and Salt Creek

- Environmental Assessment needed for ecological impacts of woody debris removal – not open to fishing or paddling at this time

- National Park Service has already done the data collection, needs to be turned into an official document
- Coffee Creek (part of East Branch)
  - Susan MiHalo, The Nature Conservancy and partners are doing a project there using extensive GIS work to look at land use and invasives – identify where best to put invasives resources – roads and utility lines cut through the watershed, various invasive plants
    - Pilot project will test IS control – completed maybe Dec 2014
  - Failed GI projects and crumbling trails– National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program or Forest Service trail consultation might be able to identify intermediate solutions
  - Maybe Natural Resources Conservation Services could help with soil sampling – can provide technical assistance on erosion and water quality specifically
- Adam McAlpine (Valparaiso): Stormwater management demonstration projects to help with drainage – trying to naturalize detention basins, have done 3 so far, mostly stopped mowing and creating wet-bottom ponds – now in maintenance mode, trying to prevent invasives – working with local landscapers – trying to keep down maintenance costs – also trying to kick off rain garden program – difficult with soil conditions (clay) – maybe prevent the need to extend storm sewers – Tom Dilley has info on neighborhood rain garden program – Lynne, lots of public education needs to happen – neighborhood rain garden program application last year didn't get funded – they do have a successful rain barrel program – Natalie: UW partners can help with proposal review
- Liz McCloskey: EB Watershed Management plan meeting two days ago – plan finished end of 2014 – applied for 319 grant – Porter County working on trail to the Kanakakee (Coffee Creek would be a logical node) – Salt Creek land owned by DNR being restored (near I94 at County Line Rd), Embridge is paying for it – Porter County Parks also owns 80 acres to the south where they're growing corn and beans (under cash rent) – restoration to something more natural (prairie and wetlands) could be good – even installation of two-stage ditches around farmed area would be good -- Izaak Walton owns some land along one of the waterways – Reynolds Creek comes out of Purdue North Central, cold water, spring fed – help connect the Dunes all the way down to the Kanakakee
- Scott Kuchta: Convention and Visitor Bureau money collected in south part of LaPorte county are mostly spent in the north
- Gene Fleming: Red Mill Pond project completed – monitoring of invasives
- EBLC project at Chesterton Wetlands – 2 invasive plants on the whole area found recently by botanist – it is otherwise pristine

#### Grand Calumet River

- Jeorse Park Beach – Gene Fleming: testing to see if tambolos would improve habitat, also habitat restoration south of the railroad tracks – costs have been brought down – Army Corps of Engineers has determined that there is federal interest – US Geological Survey modeling has been delayed but hope to move forward soon – these projects use FY13 money but it is still available
- Grand Calumet River – habitat restoration proposal just went into Chi-Cal River Fund (will announce awards December) – recent restoration work is still tender, ongoing monitoring for invasives
- Fish and Wildlife Program— Partners for Fish and Wildlife and Coastal programs have funds available
- Michelle Caldwell: new remedial action brochures available
- Gene Fleming: prairie restoration project going well – Ivanhoe south project contract will be awarded later this year

- DuPont Natural Area could be part of future field trip for this group
- Kathy Luther: some of these projects are not making full use of Donnelley project that looked at area around the airport

### Deep River

- Army Corps of Engineers hazardous dam project between Lake Station and Gary – moving forward with interagency agreement – concerns brought up by Fish and Wildlife Service about lamprey but that did not turn out to be a problem – stair step for fish migration is a possibility instead of dam removal to maintain upstream water levels – prairie restoration on both sides of the river – Dorreen Carey: paddling access would be great – Army Corps of Engineers cannot do specific recreation work but if it could be designed for habitat with recreation side benefits, can fund it
- Public access point by the dam could connect with water trail
- NIRPC just got a grant for the Deep River management plan – public meetings will come first, eventual design of plans to address various issues – NRCS will be involved with the watershed plan
- Susan MiHalo: kudzu has been found in this watershed – keep an eye out for other kudzu infestations – also Japanese knotweed – need to control these invasives before waterway work is done to keep them from spreading down the river – some treatment has been done this year

### USGS Mapping project

- May be possible to map where septics could be
- USGS slag fill maps from late 1900's – available as antiquated GIS files which are being overlaid and updated – time of fill, thickness, and fill composition are available – ready in the next two months (hopefully)
- LIDAR: current date for release Dec-Jan, currently doing data quality assurance
- USGS has various stream flow gages in the region – Canal Street and Portage Burns have had continuous water quality data for the last 3 years – Canal Street gaging will continue for 2 years, Congress willing – need local partner with \$30,000 per year to keep Portage Burns monitoring going – could someone local be trained to clean the probes? No – maybe USGS could collect the samples and ship them to USEPA for analysis
- Cherie Fisher: transfer STEW-MAP NW Indiana stewardship polygons to USGS map

### Septics

- Army Corps of Engineers program to rebuild sewers – funding has to come straight from Congress – maybe Army Corps of Engineers could attend a septic meeting

### Emerald Ash Borer

- iTree Hydro has complex inputs and Indiana has not used iTree
- 3 separate Urban Waters projects through Urban & Community Forestry projects related to EAB
- May be interest in having community workshops for mapping and addressing EAB

### Funding proposals

- National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council (NUCFAC) funding is in question

- If Chi-Cal Rivers proposals are not successful, federal partners would be happy to help strengthen future proposals
- Sometimes feds can have info the scope or priorities for an RFP ahead of time
- \*\*Community Forest and Open Space Conservation funding may be a good fit for NW Indiana
- January Sustain Our Great Lakes funding opportunity

#### Backgrounder + Table Topper

- Needs feedback from partners, especially about how projects are represented
- Table toppers for special events are here

#### East Chicago presentation by Greg

- Lots of planning, need some action
- Engaging stakeholders
- Harborworks (ArcelorMittal) industrialized waterfront – looking at industry and infrastructure, lakefront, and ground routes
- Hopefully ground routes will be revitalized when toll is put into Cline Ave bridge
- Lakefront looks closed for business, infrastructure is outdated
- RDA is the leveraging agency, don't always have all their own funds
- Goals: identify positives – including big employers and lots of traffic
- Big philanthropic companies can help with compelling local projects
- Learning from peer communities up and down the lakeshore
- Looking for redevelopment areas – greening redevelopment
- Eco-industry – big industry has complex supply chain, trying to find places to help industry be more efficient
- Industrial lands → green space not a goal of this plan – more like lighter industrial use
- Transportation routing is confusing and trucks, cars, bikes, all share the same roadscape
- Port feasibility study in process
- Goals for waterfront including revitalizing public use, development that leverages the location
- Need better land access around the beach so there are other things to do if the beach is closed
- Old water plant is flexible area
- Phase 1 is Jeorse Beach – improve the land piece of the park – Phase 2 expand beach closer to historic size, maybe improve ecological resources
- \$39 million proposal to RDA to get all this rolling
- Street resign for the community to accommodate multiple uses and attract people
- Business district is very close to the lakefront but cut off by Cline Ave
- Port feasibility study – there is funding already for this – infill on map is industrial land not in use – Mittal land is what would be used for port
- Q: Is there competition with Michigan City over lakefront revitalization? No, increasing public access and use could go forward everywhere – RDA is Lake and Porter County, not LaPorte so Michigan City doesn't have access to those funds

#### Next partnership meeting

- Dec 13 – looking for place to meet, tour ideas, agenda items

#### Announcements

- Diane Banta: Rivers, Trails and Greenways Conference Matteson Illinois in October
- Abby Crisostomo: Millennium Reserve – final steering committee meeting end of September, will identify the key projects to start with, also what they need to do to connect with Indiana
- Natalie Johnson: think about how you can use Urban Waters to move your projects forward, what fed agencies you could use an introduction to