

URBANWATERS

A Partnership Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities

August 5, 2016 9:30AM-12:00PM Central Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome & Introductions

Participants included: John Beckman (Catalyst Eco Consulting), Rich Underkolfer (Highland Community Foundation), Lara Gonzalez (The Field Museum), Susan MiHalo (The Nature Conservancy), Richard Morrisroe (City of East Chicago), Drew Hart (USDA Forest Service), Elizabeth McCloskey (US Fish & Wildlife Service), Kaitlyn McClain (Lake Michigan Coastal Program), Leanne Whitesell (IDEM), Geof Benson (Dunes Learning Center), Peg Donnelly (US EPA), Matt Meersman (Friends of the St. Joe River), Leslie Dorworth (Purdue Northwest/IL-IN Sea Grant), Gina Darnell (NWIPA), Justin Mount (Office of Senator Donnelly), Lynda Lancaster (National Park Service), Rafael Rosa (SCA), Cherie Fisher (USDA Forest Service), Daniel Goldfarb (Wildlife Habitat Council), Nicole Messacar (LaPorte County SWCD), Natalie Johnson (Urban Waters)

II. Student Conservation Association (SCA): A program to achieve stewardship and watershed education in Northwest Indiana — *Rafael Rosa, SCA*

Rafael Rosa directs SCA's programs and partnerships in a 16-state area ranging from Ohio to Texas to North Dakota. Before joining SCA in 2014, he spent 25 years in Museum Education in Chicago most recently at the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum as Vice President of Education. He currently serves as a member of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Nature Committee, The Navy Pier Environment Working Group, the Hive Chicago Advisory Committee and is Vice President of his local Board of Education. Rafael's presentation consisted of how the SCA can benefit Urban Waters partners. A copy of the presentation is available from Natalie Johnson upon request. Rafael is encouraging partners to reach out to him with project ideas that could be supported by SCA crews. Rafael can be contacted at 312.239.1664 or rrosa@thesca.org.

III. Landscape Level Wetland Functional Assessment & Prioritization: Calculating relative significance of wetlands for water quality and habitat functions in the St. Joseph River Watershed — *Matt Meersman, Friends of the St. Joe River Association*

Matt Meersman works as a Watershed Coordinator for the Van Buren Conservation District in Paw Paw, MI and serves as President of the Friends of the St. Joe River Association. His passion for protecting the water comes from a love of being on and in it. You can find him paddling canoes and kayaks in southwest Michigan and northern Indiana several days a week all year long. Matt's presentation consisted of how the Friends of the St. Joe River Assn pursued and obtained US EPA funding for a project that prioritizes wetland function in the St. Joe River basin. A copy of the presentation is available from Natalie Johnson upon request. Matt is prepared to assist northwest Indiana partners who may be interested in replicating a similar project here. Some believe this was something Chandra of Purdue Northwest may have been working on or considering working on. Natalie will inquire its status. More information on the St. Joe project can be found at www.fotsjr.org/wetlandpartnership or by contacting Matt at paddleheadz@gmail.com.

IV. Other Business/Announcements

Susan MiHalo shared the success of holding recent Great Lakes Early Detection Network (GLEDN) trainings on invasive plant species in Northwest Indiana with additional trainings planned. Natalie also shared that a forest pest training held by Purdue at Purdue Northwest was equally successful. There are opportunities to combine these trainings or make them a series in the future.

Geof Benson and Nicole Messacar shared that Wilderness Inquiry are coming to a location near you! A tentative schedule can be found [here](#). If interested in helping, please contact Geof for Hammond, Hobart and Gary events, and Nicole for Michigan City and LaCrosse events. Help is needed! Stay tuned!

Lara Gonzalez provided an update on the Heritage Initiative. If you're interested in learning more about what a Heritage Area is, visit: https://www.nps.gov/heritageareas/FAQ/InfoSheet_NHAs%20in%20brief.pdf. Lara is also welcoming participation from Urban Waters partners. Partners attending today's Urban Waters meeting will be added to the Calumet Heritage Initiative e-list.

Lynda Lancaster shared that the NPS Dunes Blowout- A Festival of Performance and Ecology will be held Saturday- Sunday Sept. 24 & 25 at West Beach. All are invited.

Leslie Dorworth updated the partnership that curriculum for the Master Watershed Steward Program is underway. The Master Watershed Steward Program is being designed to equip volunteers with the necessary skills to share water resource information with others in their communities; to assist with watershed conservation and restoration activities that reduce urban waterway impairments; and to engage underserved populations within the watershed.

Gina Darnell shared that NWIPA will be partnering with the SCA to modify log jams on the East Branch of the Little Calumet River during the month of September.

Drew Hart provided an update that NIRPC put in a proposal to the US Forest Service in order to fund a tree planting and maintenance crew in the municipalities of East Chicago, Whiting, Hammond, and Gary. Daniel Goldfarb indicated that Wildlife Habitat Council also put in a proposal for tree plantings on industrial properties.

Natalie Johnson and Kaitlyn McClain reminded attendees that Lake Michigan Coastal Program pre-proposals are due Sept 16.

Next Meeting: November 3, 2016

Joint Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) – Urban Waters Partnership Meeting

9:00AM-12:00PM CST

Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (Portage, IN)