

URBANWATERS

A Partnership Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities

Thursday, October 3, 2019
9:00 AM -12:00 PM Central
Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)
6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN



Figure 1. 48 partners attended the NWI Urban Waters meeting on October 3, 2019.

- **Introductions**

In attendance: Paul Buszka, USGS; Michael Spinar, Indiana Department of Environmental Management; Joe Exl, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC); Jessica Arnett, City of Michigan City; Tim Kingsland, City of Hobart; Michelle Krueger, Dunes Learning Center; Susan MiHalo, The Nature Conservancy; Amanda Lahners, LaPorte County Health Department; Cathy Martin, Save the Dunes; Bri Ciara, Lake Michigan Coastal Program; Tom Davenport, Citizen; Reggie Korthols, MS4; Milo Milatovic, Michigan City Sanitary District; Kathryn Vallis, Lake Michigan Coastal Program; Gene Fleming, Corps of Engineers; Kevin Breitzke, Porter County Surveyor; Deb Backhus; George Malis, Sierra Club; Arber Himaj, Michigan City Sanitary District; Lauri Keagle, South Shore Clean Cities; Phil Graf, Great Lakes Urban Forestry; Ashley Hodges, Calumet Collaborative; Dalia Zygus, Michigan City Sustainability Commission; Elizabeth McCloskey, USFWS; Daiva Gylys, Student Conservation Association; Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation; Carolyn Saxton, Legacy Foundation; Ashley Overton, City of Gary; Katherine Moore Powell, The Field Museum; Kris Krouse, Shirley Heinze Land Trust; Jennifer Gadzala, Town of Chesterton; Bill Emerson, Lake County Surveyor; Stan Shepherd, Northwest Indiana Paddling Association; Geof Benson, Dunes Learning Center; Lynda Lancaster, National Park Service; Russell Hodge, Hodge Tree Care; Bob Newport, OAI; Cherie Fisher, USFS; Randall Dickson, NRCS; David Ortel, Indiana State Department of Health; Kathy Luther, NIRPC; Jack Eskin, Delta Institute; Mitch Barloga, NIRPC; Jennifer Birchfield, Purdue Northwest/Urban Waters; Daniel Goldfarb, Wildlife Habitat Council; Rhiannon Ulatowski, Arcelor Mittal; Spike Peller, Michigan City Engineer; Tim Sanders, Purdue Northwest

- Urban Waters updates
 - *Jen Birchfield, NWI Urban Waters Coordinator*

Jen provided a brief background on Urban Waters, updated the group on watershed education featuring Canoemobile and CommuniTree, and announced open grant opportunities

- NIRPC's Green Streets and Climate Vulnerability projects
 - *Joe Exl, Senior Water Resource Planner, NIRPC*
- La Porte County Property Transfer Ordinance
 - *Amanda Lahners, REHS/RS, Environmental Health /Food Supervisor, LaPorte County Health Department*

Reggie Korthols invited Amanda to present to the NWI MS4 group. Bri Ciara asked what the biggest challenge is working with realtors. Amanda stated they are independent and David Ortel stated they have been working on outreach. Stan Shephard asked if the county tests for other pollutants, such as pesticides. Amanda said they do not. Geof suggested requiring realtors to take a course on septics. Kathy Luther suggested that the septic inspection form could be a phone app. Michael asked about the minimum requirements for inspection. Amanda said they must find at least the tank and field. Spike Peller asked if an ordinance could be at the City level. David Ortel responded that the City would have to provide personnel. Paul Buszka noted that septic systems are an issue, as source tracking detects human markers in rural areas. Dalia Zygus asked if the county could collect an inspection fee. Maggi Spartz asked if the inspections can be tied to health and disease data. Bri Ciara stated that the septic system coordinated work group is working on source tracking and other septic projects and welcomed anyone to participate. Michael stated that nutrients are an issue in addition to pathogens. Stan asked if there is a protocol for demolition of old homes, and Amanda said old septics must be properly abandoned.

- Green Infrastructure Shared Services
 - *Bob Newport, Stormwater Projects, OAI*

Tom Davenport referenced a Maryland watershed group's homeowner rain garden maintenance checklist and listed John McCoy as the contact. Bob said maintenance lists and schedules are needed for all sites. Reggie said the MS4 partnership could help with training. Spike referenced a WFTEC presentation on green infrastructure maintenance and noted that if green infrastructure is not maintained, people will not like it. Gene noted that an O & M manual is provided for each of their projects and that partners must sign a maintenance agreement. If projects aren't maintained, partners will be charged for the maintenance. People want to maintain projects, but may not know how. There should be a bridge between the project designer and maintainer. Tim Kingsland said it is important to have an experienced staff and clear O & M plan. The design team should provide training and there should be an accountability system. Bri suggested clean marinas as partners. Cherie noted that watering can be problematic but is important. Daiva described SCA's watering trailers. Stan Shepherd suggested that the trailers could be fitted with a pump to make them suitable for watering herbaceous plantings. Participants inquired about the City of Gary's existing maintenance and workforce development projects. Ashley Overton described the City's love your block projects, green infrastructure maintenance workshop series and booklet, rain garden installations, and entrepreneurial training.

- Pertinent partner updates and announcements

Paul Buszka reported on USGS ongoing projects, including the addition of temperature monitoring on the Little Calumet and Trail Creek and a study of the impact of Lake Michigan water levels on dune and swale wetlands.

Michelle Krueger provided additional details on DLC's watershed education with paddling, which included 3rd and 4th graders from Lake Station and is ongoing for the next 2 weeks.

Kathy Luther announced South Shore Clean Cities upcoming events on behalf of Laurie Keagle, including electric vehicle and green fleet workshops.

Katherine Moore Powell announced the Field Museum's state of water exhibit going on through January. They would like to plan an event near Thanksgiving and asked for input on what to address. Bri Ciara asked if Illinois LMCP is on the project team, Catherine replied no, but they are on the list.

Stan Shephard announced NWIPA's Little Calumet East Branch Paddle and Kankakee Sandhill Crane paddle.

Daniel announced WHC's last tree planting of the season at the Port of Indiana.

The contractor is planting an additional 6,000 plugs at the Jeorse Park restoration.

Cherie announced SCA's tree plantings, the CommuniTree pruning workshop, and Chicago Wilderness's 2020 Congress call for proposals.

Randy noted that NRCS works with private landowners and described several projects. He is working with Pete Avis to explore monitoring of projects. NRCS is hiring two biologists, and he will share the position postings with Jen. Bri asked if they are working with the NRCS and Jasper Newton watershed group. Randy said NRCS is.

Gene discussed a Little Calumet West Branch flood control project restoring 385 acres. Seven projects are underway or completed, including the Portage lakefront and Walner preserve. Randy asked if invasive species control is included in the O & M plans, and Gene said yes, it is critical. Joe asked if the waterway near NIRPC is part of the Portage project. Gene said he doesn't think so, because the projects are typically within 1,000 feet of the lakefront. The City of Portage is the local sponsor.

Michael Spinar offered to present on the draft 2020 Lake Michigan Lakewide Action Management Plan at a future urban Waters meeting. Sheryl and Tim offered to present on the City of Hobart's green infrastructure projects.

Next Meeting:

Thursday, January 23, 9:30 am – noon Central

Purdue Northwest Meeting Facility (in the NIRPC building) - [6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN](https://www.purdue.edu/portage)