



Please mark your calendars! The Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership will meet in-person on Thursday, April 18, 2024

**Northwest Indiana (NWI)
Urban Waters Federal
Partnership (UWFP) Meeting**
Thursday, April 18, 2024
9:30am-12:00pm CST

Portage Lakefront & Riverwalk

100 Riverwalk Dr, Portage, IN 46368

Join the NWI UWFP for an engaging in-person quarterly partnership meeting at Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk to learn more about the work underway across the region. In addition to bringing the NWI UWFP work plan to life, this meeting will offer opportunities for networking, learning, and exploring ongoing or potential new collaborations with partners active in the region.



Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Networking & Engagement Session
4. Partner Updates & Announcements

Would you like your organization's 2023 Accomplishments and 2024 Goals highlighted in the NWI UWFP work plan? Partners are welcome to share their work using the form below and sending via email to the NWI UWFP Ambassador, Victoria Wittig at vwittig@pnw.edu. Partners are also welcome to reach out to Victoria to set up a meeting to learn more.

[NWI UWFP Partner 2023 Accomplishments and 2024 Goals Form](#)

2024 NWI UWFP Meeting Schedule

Thursday, April 18, 9:30-11:30am CDT (in-person meeting)
Thursday, July 18, 9:30-11:30am CDT (hybrid meeting)
Thursday, October 17, 9:30-11:30am CST (hybrid meeting)

Help Plan the Future of CommuniTree in a Stakeholder Engagement Session on March 18, 2024



Above Image Caption: CommuniTree logo

CommuniTree Stakeholder Engagement Session

CommuniTree is a collaborative partnership fostering a more diverse, healthy, and equitable urban forest across Northwest Indiana. As our urban forest continues to grow, CommuniTree depends on the input of our regional stakeholders.

We invite you to join us in a dynamic engagement session to help plan CommuniTree's short-, medium-, and long-term goals. Come provide input on the future of CommuniTree! Open to any group interested in urban forestry in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties.

DATE/TIME: March 18, 2024, 9:30 am-12 noon – come at 9 am for coffee

REGISTER: Space is limited and registration is required. Please complete a [Google form to register](#). If you cannot access Google forms, please register by e-mailing your name and affiliation to Jen Birchfield at jbirchfield@nirpc.org.

LOCATION: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, 6100 Southport Rd, Portage, IN 46368, Lake Michigan Room

More on CommuniTree:

Founded in 2016, CommuniTree is Northwest Indiana's (NWI) flagship urban and community forestry program that brings together nonprofits, communities, government agencies, universities, and industries. As of 2023, CommuniTree has planted over 10,000 trees on public, private, and industrial lands; engaged over 2,500 volunteers; trained more than 40 youth with urban forestry job skills; partnered with more than 40 communities; and held more than 20 urban forestry trainings. Core partners include the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), the Student Conservation Association (SCA), the Wildlife Habitat Council (WHC), the US Forest Service (USFS), the NWI Urban Waters Federal Partnership, and others. The success of CommuniTree has been made possible through strong funding support from federal, state, local and private entities with similarly strong matching investments from municipalities, organizations, and volunteers across the region.

[Register Here](#)

Indiana Arborist Association Receives \$250,000 Grant for a Registered Arborist Apprenticeship Program in NWI



The Indiana Arborist Association (IAA) has received \$250,000 in funding from Indiana Department of Natural Resource's Community and Urban Forestry program to launch the first ever workforce development program dedicated to training certified arborists from under-resourced communities in Northwest Indiana (NWI). This grant is funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service Urban & Community Forestry program.

The IAA strives to enhance the quality of life for Indiana residents by encouraging the planting, maintenance and preservation of trees and promoting the advantages of working with qualified professional arborists who use current industry standards. Ashley Mulis, who will serve as program manager for the initiative is excited for this opportunity. "The need for qualified arborists in NWI has consistently surpassed the number of available practitioners. The IAA is thrilled to be able to launch such an important program in an area of the state that has historically suffered from both lack of tree canopy and certified arborists."

The Arborist Apprenticeship program will be a collaborative effort with several partners in NWI including Purdue University Northwest (PNW), Purdue Extension, the Center for Workforce Innovation, the US Forest Service, the NWI UWFP, among others. PNW Chancellor Kenneth Holford had this to say of the program partnership with IAA: "Purdue University Northwest is pleased to be a partner in this innovative workforce development program aimed at filling a growing and increasingly important gap in local talent to enhance the urban forests and ecosystems throughout Northwest Indiana. This program is consistent with PNW's goal of building a strong, skilled, and sustained workforce for the region."

"The Center of Workforce Innovations applauds IAA on their work to bring this transformational program to NWI. Disadvantaged communities often bear the brunt of climate change impacts and environmental degradation. Training individuals from these communities in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies can lead to healthier local environments. The CommuniTree program, in conjunction with this Arborist Apprenticeship program specifically aims to not only reverse these environmental impacts but also equip residents of those same communities with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in the emerging green economy through a proven work-and-learn model." Shaun Sahlhoff, Director of Planning and Fundraising at the Center of Workforce Innovations.

According to Victoria Wittig, the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership Ambassador, "CommuniTree, an outgrowth of the NWI UWFP, has created an unparalleled opportunity for this workforce development initiative. Arborists trained through the apprenticeship program will support the continued growth, diversity and health of our urban forests by drawing on the strengths that regional partnerships bring to the table."

To learn more about the Indiana Arborist Association's Arborist Apprenticeship Program email info@indiana-arborist.org



Above Image Caption: An arborist wearing safety gear while connected with ropes and pulleys to a tree uses a chainsaw to trim a tree branch.

Funding Opportunities

The Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership may be able to provide assistance to advance your initiatives by exploring grant opportunities, building partnerships, and helping you develop competitive proposals. Email [Victoria Wittig](mailto:Victoria.Wittig) to discuss your projects and ways we can help.

National Sea Grant Law Center Coastal Resilience Program Competition

The National Sea Grant Law Center is accepting applications from institutions of higher education, government agencies, and non-profit organizations to conduct research on the effectiveness of laws and policies related to a wide range of coastal resilience issues including sea level rise, flooding, amplified storm surge, increased frequency and intensity of storms, land use, or other environmental factors, and whether those policies are achieving desired policy changes. The 2024 Coastal Resilience Program grants have a recommended funding level of \$75,000, and the Law Center anticipates selecting up to two projects for funding. Matching funds will not be required. Learn more [here](#).

**Letters of Intent due March 8, 2024*

**Full proposals due June 7, 2024*

Legacy Foundation Transform Lake County Grant

Transform Lake County Grants will continue to support Lake County communities with a sharpened focus on the most pressing challenges our community is facing today: systemic racism and racial injustice and the underinvestment and lack of infrastructure in under-resourced and marginalized communities across Lake County. The award range is \$2,000-5,000. Learn more [here](#).

**Applications due April 1, 2024*

NIPSCO Environmental Action Grant

Each spring, NIPSCO supports environmental restoration and education projects and programs throughout northern Indiana with funding from the Environmental Action Grant. Grants are available in the amount of \$500 to \$5,000. Eligible organizations must be a 501(c)3 or other non-profit as determined by the Internal Revenue Service with an environmental restoration or education project or program and have a direct impact in the NIPSCO service area. Learn more [here](#).

**Applications due April 5, 2024*

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) National Coastal Resilience Fund

NFWF, in partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, released a request for proposals for the FY 2024 National Coastal Resilience Fund. Funded projects will restore, increase, and strengthen natural infrastructure—the landscapes that help absorb the impacts of storms and floods—to ultimately protect coastal communities and enhance fish and wildlife habitat. This year, the fund will invest approximately \$140 million in projects. Pre-proposals are due Wednesday April 10, 2024. Applicants invited to

submit a full proposal will have a Tuesday July 2, 2024, deadline. The complete request for proposals can be found [here](#).

**Pre-proposals due April 10, 2024*

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Pollution Prevention (P2) Source Reduction (SRA) Grant

EPA funds SRA grants to support research, investigation, experiments, surveys, study, demonstration, education and training using source reduction approaches (also known as P2 or pollution prevention). EPA is particularly interested in projects that promote practical source reduction practices, tools, and training on P2 approaches to measurably improve human and environmental health by reducing the use of hazardous substances, reducing toxic pollutants, reducing resource use (e.g., water and energy) and reducing expenditures and liability costs to businesses, non-profit organizations and/or communities. Learn more [here](#).

**Applications due April 15, 2024*

NFWF America the Beautiful Challenge (ATBC)

NFWF ATBC grants support projects that conserve, restore and connect habitats for wildlife while improving community resilience and access to nature. These projects will enable states, Tribal Nations, U.S. territories, nonprofits, academic institutions, and other grantees to develop and implement multijurisdictional, high-priority restoration projects on both public and private lands. Read more about how to apply [here](#).

**Pre-proposals due April 20, 2024*

Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program (CWMP)

The CWMP contributes to the WaterSMART strategy by providing funding to watershed groups to encourage diverse stakeholders to form local solutions to address their water management needs. Funding is provided on a competitive basis for watershed group development, watershed restoration planning and implementation of watershed management projects. The award floor is \$10,000 and the ceiling is \$300,000. To learn more about the program, click [here](#).

**Second round applications due September 3, 2024*

Department of the Interior WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program Phase I

The Department of the Interior invites states, Indian Tribes, irrigation districts, water districts, local governmental entities, non-profit organizations, existing watershed groups and local and special districts to submit proposals for Phase I activities to develop a watershed group, complete watershed restoration planning activities and design watershed management projects. The award ceiling for the WaterSMART Cooperative Watershed Management Program is \$300,000 and the floor is \$10,000. To learn more about eligibility and apply, click [here](#).

**Second round applications due September 3, 2024*

USDA Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants

The USDA Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants program supports eligible communities prepare, or recover from, an emergency that threatens the availability of safe, reliable drinking water. Eligible applicants must show a decline in quantity or quality of water that occurred within two years of the date of the application or that a significant decline in quantity or quality of water is imminent. The award range is \$150,000-\$1 million. To learn how to apply, click [here](#).

**Rolling application window open*

USDA Water & Wastewater Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grants

The USDA Water & Wastewater Disposal Predevelopment Planning Grants program helps eligible low-income communities plan and develop applications for proposed USDA Rural Development water or waste disposal projects. Partnerships with other federal, state and local entities are encouraged, and grants are awarded only when the applicant cannot afford to borrow the needed funds. The award ceiling is \$30,000. To learn how to apply, click [here](#).

**Rolling application window open*

Partner Resources

2024 Urban Waters Federal Partnership National Virtual Workshop: The Power of Partnerships

You are invited to attend the virtual 2024 Urban Waters Federal Partnership National Workshop: The Power of Partnerships on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, and Wednesday, April 3, 2024. Urban Waters Ambassadors, national and regional federal agency leads, location

partners and Urban Waters Learning Network members are encouraged to attend sessions listed at “open to all” on Day 1 and 2. Learn more [here](#). Register [here](#).

Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study(GLCRS)

The GLCRS has officially kicked off! The GLCRS will complete a comprehensive assessment of the United States coast of the Great Lakes and connecting channels and the identification of coastal areas that could be vulnerable to future storms, flooding, extreme low or high water levels, erosion and accretion under a range of possible future climate scenarios. In April 2024, the GLCRS Team will host virtual public meetings to provide an overview of the GLCRS and solicit feedback from the public to shape a shared vision for the Great Lakes coast. The Indiana virtual public meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2024 at 9:00am CT. The meeting link will be available on April 1 [here](#).

i-Tree Academy

The i-Tree Open Academy virtual learning series is back for spring of 2024, with everything you need to explore the latest from the i-Tree suite of tools. Whether your work with trees involves planting, managing, funding, educating, or beyond, i-Tree can help you better understand the benefits that trees provide, the impacts of where those benefits are, and how to apply that science to your project goals. Register for the courses [here](#).

EPA Competition Process Webinar

In December, EPA hosted a webinar to help grant applicants learn how to find and successfully apply for competitive EPA grants. EPA also provided an overview of the competition process from application through evaluation and selection. To access the webinar recording, presentation and frequently asked questions click [here](#).

Grants.gov Getting Started Checklist

Grants.gov prepared a checklist of the main steps in the grant process. Each step in the process is linked to a webpage with more details about the step. This includes a brief explanation of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act which set in motion government-wide reporting procedures. To view the checklist, click [here](#).

National Wildlife Federation Versatility of Nature-Based Solutions: Protections and Benefits from the Parcel to Community Scales Showcase Report

Versatility of Nature-Based Solutions: Protections and Benefits from the Parcel to Community Scales features success stories across the United States at various scales, showcasing the adaptability and wide range of benefits that natural infrastructure approaches provide. Whether it is a small-scale project on an individual property or a larger community-wide project, each story featured in this report illustrates how thoughtfully implemented nature-based solutions cater to unique community needs, reduce hazard risks and produce numerous co-benefits to create healthy, thriving and resilient communities and ecosystems. To view the report, click [here](#).

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Environmental justice Dashboard

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Environmental justice Dashboard is available for exploring data on environmental exposures, community characteristics and health burden. To access the dashboard, click [here](#).

Airnow.gov

AirNow is a one-stop source for air quality data. AirNow reports air quality using the official U.S. Air Quality Index (AQI), a color-coded index designed to communicate whether air quality is healthy or unhealthy. AirNow is a partnership of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Park Service, NASA, Centers for Disease Control and tribal, state and local air quality agencies. To access AirNow, click [here](#).

Urban Waters works to connect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and state and local partners. The goals are to improve the Nation's water systems and to promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.

NWI Urban Waters | Northwest Indiana, Lake, Porter, & LaPorte Counties, IN 46360

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