



CARE Meeting Summary – March 25, 2021

Thursday, March 25, 2021, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely

In Attendance: John Fekete (CARE); Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell, Jim Bailey (IDEM); Carl Wodrich, Jenny Orsburn, Emily Stork, Ashley Sharkey (IDNR); Dan Sparks, Will Tucker (USFWS); Caitie Nigrelli, Peg Donnelly (U.S. EPA); Paul Labus (TNC); Ashley Overton (City of Gary); Jen Birchfield (NWI Urban Waters); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Leslie Dorworth (IL-IN Sea Grant)

Public Attendees: None

1. Introductions

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 1:02 pm CDT and took roll of those in attendance.

2. Sediment Management Actions (BUIs #1-2, #4-7) Update

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael updated CARE members on the progress of the Lake George Branch Middle and East project areas. The East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard to the CSX railroad bridge in East Chicago, with the Middle Portion extending from there west to the BP land bridge in Hammond.

There are no major updates to the East Project area. The contractor for the US Army Corps has completed the Phase I dredging, with the Phase II dredging along the south bank of the IHSC expected to be conducted during most of 2023 and 2024. This phase of the dredging will likely utilize offsite disposal of the dredged materials in a permitted landfill.

The US Army Corps completed the 90 percent project design for the Lake George Middle project at the beginning of the month and is now reviewing comments from project partners and key stakeholders. Construction is still projected to begin this year and continue through the first half of 2022. In the meantime, ARCO/BP continues its source control work on the South and West Tank Farm parcels at the former ECI refinery site. That work is expected to extend from the middle of this year through 2023.

b. East Branch, Phase II



Michael reminded the group that the East Branch Phase II includes the dredging and capping of the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Cline Avenue and the US Steel Reach in Gary, as well as closure of the Ralston Street Lagoon in Gary.

There are no major updates on this project area; EPA staff continues to work with the Gary Sanitary District to identify potential nonfederal Great Lakes Legacy Act cost share.

c. Junction Reach

Michael stated that the Junction Reach includes the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive and the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue.

There are no major updates to this item. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District continue to work to complete the identification of additional non-federal cost share needed to complete the Grand Calumet River and Indiana Harbor Ship Canal project areas concurrently. The ECMWD continues work to amend the existing Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement or develop a new one to allow for completion of the design and project implementation. If all goes according to plan, the project design would be completed in 2021 and the project itself would be conducted during most of 2022 and into early 2023.

d. Orphan Areas Site Characterization

Michael reported to CARE members that, on January 5, 2021, IDEM submitted a request to complete a site characterization of certain areas of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal located between Canal Street and Dickey Road in East Chicago. That request was approved by U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) on March 15.

These areas lie outside, but adjacent to, Reaches 8 and 9 of the Congressionally authorized channel. GLNPO is working with IDEM, the East Chicago Waterway Management District, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to initiate the site characterization work later this year. The characterization is expected to consist of sediment chemistry and geotechnical analysis required to assess any recontamination risk these areas may pose to the federal channel.

e. BUI #7 Removal Target

Michael reported that IDEM has elected to pause consideration of a revised target until the agency receives the data from the Orphan Areas site characterization.

3. Habitat Management Actions (BUI #3 & BUI #14) Update



a. Management Action #1 – Dune, Swale, and Riverine Restoration

Emily Stork reported that the field crews are winding down the dormant season activities, including brush clearing and removing invasive trees. Both The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and Lake County Parks have posted job announcements for the growing season and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) currently has a part-time field crew position open that it is seeking to fill.

b. Management Action #3 – Lake George Branch Wetlands Restoration

Michael updated the group that this will be the last regular update, as the restoration work is now moving into the long-term management phase. Carl Wodrich updated the group that the GLRI grant funding ended in December and IDNR is now closing out the grant. Carl is working to put together a scope of work in order to hire a contractor to target invasive species during the next two growing seasons as part of this long-term management effort.

Kay Nelson inquired whether grant eligibility was a factor in the grant funding ended. Carl explained that the project had received Sustain Our Grant Lakes and GLRI funding for seven years and it was appropriate to transition the project to long-term management.

Kay then mentioned that Audubon, the Wetland Initiative, and TNC were working on a project with the Little Cal River Basin Commission and Lake County Parks. CARE members might be interested in some of the project areas. She mentioned that the Wetland Initiative will be hiring an Indiana staff position associated with the project.

c. Management Action #4 – Prescribed Fire Plan/Contractual Burns

Will Tucker updated CARE members that he has not received reports from all partners. However, a unit at Cline Avenue Nature Preserve was recently burned and units at both Beemsterboer and DuPont have had prescribed burn preparations made.

d. Management Action #5 – Pine Station Ponds and Oxbow

Carl reported that IDNR recently had a meeting with its contractor, TetraTech, and the project is currently at a 60% design stage. IDNR is currently exploring various options/designs for the water management portion of the project.

e. BUI #14 Removal Target

Michael reported that IDEM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, IDNR, and The Nature Conservancy continue work to revise the removal targets for BUI #14 Loss of Fish and



Wildlife Habitat, with the goal of providing a revised draft at next month's CARE meeting.

John observed that there have been many references to the impact of high Lake Michigan water levels at previous CARE meetings and requested that the CARE members put together a short list or summary of how high lake levels have impacted the various projects. Dan Sparks suggested that everyone could send a few impacts they have observed to Michael to compile. Kay is on the Great Lakes Commission's Climate Resiliency project and stressed the importance of adaptability and resilience in project planning. She plans to recommend that lists of impacts due to high lake levels be constructed for all AOCs. Paul Labus suggested that Michael reach out to USGS to get input on the groundwater and streamflow aspects of the high water levels.

4. Management Action List Update

a. Beach Closings

On March 15, IDEM provided a revised draft of the proposed Beach Closings Management Action List to U.S. EPA for review. Once the agency makes any additional changes in response to comments, IDEM RAP Program staff will provide a revised draft to the CARE Committee for review. This is expected to take place during the April CARE Meeting.

b. Degradation of Aesthetics

Yesterday, IDEM provided a conceptual framework for the Degradation of Aesthetics Management Action List to U.S. EPA for review and comment. The agency is still on track to provide a fully developed draft for CARE Committee review in the first half of 2021.

John remarked on the considerable progress made toward AOC delisting, including the completion of the Lake George wetlands management action and the progress toward developing management action lists for the Beach Closings and Degradation of Aesthetics BUIs.

5. Cline Avenue Ditch Update

Michael reminded CARE members that the Cline Avenue Ditch is located near the northeast corner of the intersection of Gary Avenue and Cline Avenue (Indiana Route 912) in Gary. The Ditch flows to the south parallel to Cline Avenue into a subterranean pipe/culvert for approximately one-half mile and discharges into the Grand Calumet River. Discharges of petroleum products into the ditch have been observed for many years and a responsible party is currently implementing a RCRA corrective action expected to address the issue. Work is set to begin on March 29 with the closing of the on ramp from Gary road to Cline Ave. Pump around systems will be installed and the diversion of Cline Ave ditch will begin the week of April 5.



6. Outreach/Education Updates

Michael related that IDEM is continuing its efforts to provide the no handfeeding signage to area beach managers, with a focus on the AOC beaches. The purchase order has been issued for the posts, mounting hardware, and signs themselves and they are in production. IDEM has requested a grant funding extension from U.S. EPA to allow the agency to develop an AOC video in 2021. Finally, IDEM, IDNR, TNC, and Lake County Parks continue to discuss dates, locations, and logistics for hosting a set of small-group tours of the AOC restoration areas.

7. Rescheduling of CARE Meetings

Michael discussed the idea of moving the April and May CARE Workgroup meetings to the morning due to a conflict. Members attending the meeting suggested that a meeting time of 9 am – 11 am Central Time would be preferred to one occurring later in the day. Michael agreed to send a note to the CARE Members to confirm that the time will work.

8. Table Talk

- Kay shared an update on the present state legislative session with CARE members.
- Paul announced that he would be retiring at the end of April.

9. Public Comment

- No members of the public were present.

10. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:44 pm.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, April 22, 2021, TBD
Via Microsoft Teams