



CARE Meeting Summary – January 27, 2022

Thursday, January 27, 2022, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CST
MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely

In Attendance:

John Fekete (CARE); Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell, Anne Remek, Jim Bailey, Cathy Csatari, Bob Lugar (IDEM); Carl Wodrich, Emily Stork, Jenny Orsburn (IDNR); Dave Lampe, Murulee Byappanahalli (USGS); Cherie Fisher (USFS); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Leslie Dorworth (IL – IN Sea Grant); Will Tucker (USFWS); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Susan MiHalo (TNC); Brenda Scott-Henry (City of Gary)

Public Attendees:

Ms. Carolyn Marsh

1. Introductions

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:03 am; at his request, Michael Spinar took roll of those in attendance.

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

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael reminded CARE members that the East project area is located near the Confined Disposal Facility in East Chicago. The U.S. Army Corps has received funding to complete design work for the Phase II dredging of Lake George Canal East. Design work is expected to be completed in 2023, with dredging conducted in 2024. In the meantime, ARCO/BP has completed the 90 percent design for construction of a sheet pile wall along the northern boundary of the ECI South Tank Farm property and shared it with the project team for review. The sheet pile work is expected to be completed in 2023, with some habitat restoration work extending into 2024.

Michael then shared that construction on the Lake George Middle project is projected to begin in March 2022 and potentially continue through 2023. The project will consist of placement of an engineered cap within the canal, active mats at the ECI West Tank Farm property, and ecosystem restoration along the northern bank and the wetland shelf along the southern bank near Lake Mary. In addition, ARCO/BP completed pipeline decommissioning efforts at the West Tank Farm property this summer and is working to repair a tide gate at the land bridge on its property as part of the project.

b. Lake George Branch West

Michael stated that the Lake George Branch West project area extends from the BP land bridge to Calumet Avenue in Hammond. The Great Lakes Legacy Act Project



Agreement between BP Products North America, Inc. and U.S. EPA is for Feasibility Study, Remedial Design, and invasive species control and includes sampling of the Lake George West project area. BP is currently validating sampling data collected in October 2021, with the goal of completing feasibility study work by the end of 2022. Project implementation is currently projected to begin in 2024.

c. Junction Reaches

Michael shared that the Junction Reaches project is divided into three sections: the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive (otherwise known as Junction North), the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal (known as Junction West), and the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River between the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal and Kennedy Avenue (known as Junction East).

In response to input from project stakeholders, the East Chicago Waterway Management District and U.S. EPA are planning to adopt a phased approach to the project. Phase 1, which will consist of dredging and capping the Junction West area and dredging portions of the Junction North, will likely be constructed in 2023. Phase 2, which will likely consist of capping the Junction North and Junction East areas, is currently planned for construction in 2024. In addition, the project team is evaluating the feasibility of incorporating habitat restoration activities on adjacent wetlands.

The East Chicago Waterway Management District's contractor, TetraTech is expected to complete a draft design covering the Phase 1 scope within the next few weeks, with the final design and permits anticipated in May.

John commented that this project has been a long time coming and expressed excitement that the work will soon be getting underway.

d. East Branch Phase II

Michael stated that the East Branch Phase II includes the dredging and capping of the East Branch of the Grand Calumet River in the vicinity of the Gary Airport, as well as closure of the Ralston Street Lagoon.

He then updated CARE members that EPA staff continue to work with the Gary Sanitary District to identify potential nonfederal Great Lakes Legacy Act cost share required to complete the project. This review is expected to be completed in the next month or so.

e. Orphan Areas Site Characterization



Michael shared that there are no significant updates to this project. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to develop the scope of work for the site characterization of areas which lie outside, but adjacent to, Reaches 8 and 9 of the Congressionally authorized channel of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal. The area in question lies between the Forks and the Indiana Harbor. The current focus of the work is developing the practical range of remedial alternatives that might be considered for the project. A draft scope of work is expected for this project in the next month or so.

f. Great Lakes Legacy Act SEP Update

Michael updated CARE members that a second Great Lakes Legacy Act state Supplemental Environmental Project (SEP) is currently being processed by U.S. EPA. The new SEP, with Fas-Pak, Inc., is expected to provide \$10,320 in nonfederal cash match toward the East Branch Phase II project. This is in addition to the nearly \$51,000 in match Michael reported out on at the December 8 CARE Workgroup Meeting.

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

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

Michael shared that the Dune and Swale project has now ended and IDEM and the other project partners are working to complete the grant closeout activities. IDNR is currently overseeing a Phase II project to complete establishment on a 394-acre subset of the project acreage. Michael shared that IDNR will be providing future updates on this management action.

Carl Wodrich shared that IDNR has been working to get passthrough agreements with TNC and Lake County Parks uploaded into the state contracting system for approval. Unfortunately, there have been significant delays due to staff outages caused by the holidays and the Covid-19 pandemic. IDNR anticipates that it will begin routing the agreements for approval within the next week or so.

Emily Stork shared that IDNR and the project partners are transitioning to the second phase of project funding. IDNR is working with TNC on developing the site conservation plans that were called for in the revised BUI #14 removal target. Currently the partners have low staffing levels so there are not many field work activities occurring.

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

Will Tucker stated that a prescribed burn was conducted on 15 acres of the Seidner Dune and Swale Nature Preserve. Lake County Parks was also able to conduct a small burn on a portion of Gibson Woods.



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

Carl reported that IDNR is working with its contractor to finalize designs and submit permit applications. The agency's goal is to get these done in February. IDNR will then work to get contract specifications in place and out for bid.

d. BUI #14 Removal Target Status

Michael informed CARE members that IDEM management reviewed and approved the adoption of the proposed removal target for the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat BUI in a letter provided to U.S. EPA on January 6. IDEM has not yet received a formal response to the letter.

4. Other BUI Updates

a. Beach Closings (BUI #10)

Michael stated that there were no major updates on this item. RAP Program staff plan to meet with federal, state, and local stakeholders in advance of the next beach season to discuss the path forward to address *E. coli* exceedances at the East Chicago beaches in a sustainable manner.

b. Degradation of Aesthetics (BUI #11)

Michael stated that there were no major updates on this BUI. IDEM RAP staff continue to work with EPA and other stakeholders to discuss the best way to address persistent aesthetics issues observed at the Old Cline Avenue Bridge. Proposed solutions center on two options: (1) removal of the bridge itself and (2) periodic removal of the debris.

c. Eutrophication & Degradation of Plankton BUIs (#8 and #13)

Michael reminded CARE members that USGS has completed monitoring of dissolved oxygen and other parameters at 13 sites within the AOC for the 2021 season and has completed initial analysis of the eDNA data from the AOC plankton communities. IDEM RAP Program staff plan to meet with USGS staff to meet within the next two weeks to review the data and plan more targeted monitoring in 2022. The ultimate goal is to determine what management actions may be required to achieve removal of these BUIs.

5. BUI Icons

IDEM RAP Program staff are working with the agency's Media and Communications Services team and various subject matter experts to design a set of icons to represent the 14 BUIs applicable to the Grand Calumet River AOC. The intent is to utilize the icons in a variety of



materials to graphically depict BUI status. Once drafts of the 14 icons have been completed, they will be shared with CARE members for feedback.

6. Table Talk

Michael informed CARE members that the governor's office has appointed a new commissioner, Brian Rockensuess, to lead the agency. Brian was previously chief of staff at IDEM. John Fekete added that this was Cathy Csatari's first CARE meeting and provided her an opportunity to introduce herself. Susan MiHalo invited Cathy to visit some of the AOC properties once the weather warms.

Dave Lampe stated that USGS is upgrading the stream gage on the Grand Calumet River at Columbia Avenue to allow for continuous monitoring of nitrate and orthophosphate. The nitrate sensor is currently online but the orthophosphate one is forthcoming. The data may be found at: <https://waterdata.usgs.gov/monitoring-location/05536356/#parameterCode=32316&timeSeriesId=274232&period=P7D>.

John Fekete announced that ECWMD and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers formally approved an amendment to the Project Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The amendment clarifies the next steps and provides a more direct path to securing nonfederal matching funds to move forward with the Phase I Junction Reaches project.

7. Public Comment

Ms. Carolyn Marsh discussed her request for a camera at the eagle's nest located near Calumet Avenue. USFWS is currently reviewing the request.

8. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:43 am.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, February 24, 2022, 9:00 am – 11:00 am CST
Via Microsoft Teams