



CARE Meeting Summary – April 28, 2022

Thursday, April 28, 2022, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CDT
MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely

In Attendance: John Fekete (CARE); Michael Spinar, Michelle Caldwell, Anne Remek, Jim Bailey, Cathy Csatari, Paul McMurray (IDEM); Lynn Riddle, Emily Stork, Ashley Sharkey, Jenny Orsburn (IDNR); Dave Lampe (USGS); Dan Sparks (USFWS); Susan MiHalo (TNC); Peg Donnelly (U.S. EPA); Amber Sample (ORISE); Steve Barker (NiSource); Betsy Maher (Save the Dunes); Fernando Treviño (ECWMD); Jennifer Birchfield (NIRPC)

Public Attendees: Ms. Carolyn Marsh, Ms. Kate Green

1. Introductions

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:00 am. At Mr. Fekete's 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

Mr. Spinar provided an update on the Lake George Canal East Project area, which 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. Mr. Spinar also shared that the Army Corps recently developed a draft sampling plan as part of the design and is working to respond to stakeholder feedback.

In the meantime, Mr. Spinar updated CARE members that 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 project team has provided comments which ARCO/BP has incorporated into their design. ARCO/BP provided a backcheck version with incorporated comments to the team to review. Further team comments were provided to ARCO/BP on April 22, 2022. The sheet pile work, along with the habitat restoration work is expected to be completed in 2024.

After a pause for questions or comments, Mr. Spinar provided an update on the Lake George Middle project area located immediately to the west. Construction began in March 2022 and will continue through 2023. The project consists 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 last summer and has completed repairs to the tide gate structure at the land bridge on its property as part of the project. Vegetation work is planned for this spring. Mr. Trevino added that J.F. Brennan is the construction contractor for the project. There were no further questions or comments from CARE members.

b. Lake George Branch West

Mr. Spinar then provided an update on the Lake George Branch West project area, which 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 still validating sampling data collected in October 2021, with the goal of completing feasibility study work by the end of this year. Project implementation is currently projected to begin in 2024.

c. Junction Reaches

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members 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 adopting 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 working to develop the final design, based on stakeholder input. The District submitted a Great Lakes Legacy Act project proposal on March 9 and U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office subsequently convened a Technical Review Committee Meeting on April 1 to review the project proposal. The next step is for the District to respond to comments from the review committee. Once any issues are addressed to GLNPO's satisfaction, the District and EPA will determine whether to proceed to develop a project agreement for the Phase 1 construction.

Mr. Trevino added that the District received comments from the Technical Review Committee yesterday, April 27, and plans to respond within the next few weeks.



d. East Branch Phase II

Mr. Spinar reminded CARE members that the East Branch Phase II Project 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.

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.

e. Orphan Areas Site Characterization

Mr. Spinar stated that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is conducting this 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 study area is roughly bounded by Canal Street to the south and Dickey Road to the north. These areas have not been well studied, nor have sediment remediation activities occurred. The site characterization seeks to evaluate the risk of recontamination these so-called “Orphan Areas” might pose to the federal channel.

Mr. Spinar informed the group that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed a draft scope of work and sampling plan for the site characterization in late March and is currently responding to feedback from the project team. A revised scope of work is expected by the end of May.

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

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

Mr. Spinar shared that the original Dune and Swale Restoration Project has now completed closeout.

Ms. Stork updated the group on the Dune and Swale, Phase 2 work. It has been a cold, slow start to the 2022 growing season, with the only major invasive emerging so far being garlic mustard. Within a month, DNR expects much more invasives activity.

So far, TNC has been conducting restoration activities with a small staff and is working to fill crew positions, with the goal of starting them in mid-May. Ms. Stork reported that DNR currently has two positions open and that Lake County Parks has a new full-time person to help with Gibson Woods and Tolleston.

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



Mr. Spinar provided an email update from Mr. Will Tucker of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, who had a conflict and was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Tucker reported that there were no major updates with respect to the prescribed burns project. As of the CARE meeting, Gary still had a burn ban in place and weather conditions at the Hammond units did not allow any burns to take place.

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

Ms. Lynn Riddle provided an update on the habitat restoration project at the Pine Station Nature Preserve ponds. The current project phase focuses on bank stabilization and invasives control.

4. Table Talk

There was no discussion by CARE members during the table talk portion of the meeting.

5. Public Comment

Ms. Carolyn Marsh provided several comments to CARE members. She observed a second nestling in a nest at the west end of the Lake George Canal. Ms. Marsh expressed concerns about a drone operator photographing the nest. Ms. Peg Donnelly referred Ms. Marsh to the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Federal Partnership and offered to provide her with the contact information for the coordinator. Ms. Marsh also commented on a complaint she filed with IDEM on Styrofoam in George Lake and various aspects of the IDEM enforcement action against PolyJohn.

6. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:35 am.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, May 26, 2022 at 9 AM Central Time Via Microsoft Teams