



October 2020 CARE Meeting Summary

Thursday, October 22, 2020, 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM CDT
Zoom Event, Held Remotely

In Attendance: Jim Bailey, Michelle Caldwell, Michael Spinar (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Carl Wodrich, Emily Stork (IDNR); Paul Buszka (USGS); Dan Sparks, Will Tucker (USFWS); Paul Labus (TNC), Caitie Nigrelli, Peg Donnelly (USEPA); Amber Sample (USEPA/ORISE); Ashley Overton (City of Gary)

Public Attendees: 1

1. CARE Introductions:

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 1:03 pm and took roll of those in attendance.

2. September 2020 CARE Meeting Summary

- **Is there any discussion regarding, or are any changes needed to, the September 2020 CARE Workgroup Summary, posted to the IDEM Website?**

John clarified that the CSX railroad bridge is located in East Chicago, not Hammond.

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

a. Dredging of Navigational Channel

Michael Spinar reminded CARE members that this dredging includes both the work to clear the dredging backlog of the Congressionally authorized federal navigation channel and the dredging of selected berthing areas outside the federal channel at the request of local property owners. All dredged materials will be deposited in the Indiana Harbor Confined Disposal Facility (CDF) in East Chicago.

The contractor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began dredging on October 3, 2020 plans to continue work through early December, depending on the weather. Dredging will occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. A total of approximately 182,000 cubic yards is anticipated for removal during this dredging season, of which approximately 129,000 cubic yards is slated for removal from the federal channel. Dredging outside the federal channel paid for with ArcelorMittal Supplemental Environmental Project funds is no longer planned for 2020; however, the Army Corps still estimates that the remaining sediment backlog within the federal channel will be cleared this year. The dredging on the Lake George Branch East project area is anticipated to begin in November.



The Army Corps has received incremental funding to begin the dike raise at the CDF and still expects to award a contract for the construction in September 2020, with the project being completed sometime in late 2023. Thereafter the CDF will be utilized to store sediments dredged over the next 30 years (through approximately 2053).

b. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael provided an update on the Lake George Branch Middle and East Great Lakes Legacy Act projects. The East Portion extends from Indianapolis Boulevard in East Chicago to the CSX railroad bridge in Hammond. Approximately 40 percent of the Lake George East project area is within the federal navigation channel. The Middle Portion extends from the CSX bridge to the BP land bridge.

The US Army Corps is currently working to complete the project design. In the meantime, ARCO/BP continues source control work on the South and West Tank Farm parcels at the former ECI refinery site.

As reported last month, the 30 percent basis of design report submitted by ARCO/BP's contractor has been completed and EPA has issued a letter of acceptance. The 90 percent design is currently expected to be completed by the end of 2021. The construction schedule is as follows:

- Lake George East, first phase dredging:
 - Approximately 33,000 yards of material to be deposited in the Indiana Harbor CDF
 - Anticipated to occur this year, tentatively from November 24 through December 4.
- Lake George Middle, capping:
 - Beginning in early-to-mid 2021 and continuing through the first half of 2022
- Construction of the bank stabilization system at the West Tank Farm:
 - Beginning in mid-2021 and continuing through mid-2022
- Completion of the sheet pile barrier wall at the South Tank Farm:
 - Conducted during most of 2023
- Lake George East, second phase dredging:
 - Will likely utilize offsite disposal in a permitted landfill for materials dredged from the south bank of the IHSC
 - Expected to be conducted during most of 2023 and 2024.

c. East Branch, Phase II

Michael discussed that East Branch Phase II includes the dredging and capping of 2.5 miles 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.



EPA staff continue to work with the Gary Sanitary District to determine whether additional work may be credited as non-federal match. It is therefore currently unknown whether sufficient nonfederal match will be available to proceed into the project phase.

d. Junction Reach

Michael stated that the Junction Reach includes approximately 1.5 miles of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive and approximately 1.4 miles of the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue. It is currently anticipated that only containment will be utilized for the portion of the Grand Calumet River from the Junction to Kennedy Avenue. Both removal and containment are anticipated for the remainder of the project area.

A 70% design of the Junction Reach was completed in 2015, with the report being released in early 2016. EPA, IDEM, and the East Chicago Waterway Management District are still working to identify additional non-federal cost share needed to complete the Grand Calumet River and Indiana Harbor Ship Canal project areas concurrently. 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.

e. BUI #7 Removal Target Update

Michael relayed that IDEM continues to work to revise the removal target for BUI #7: Restrictions on Dredging Activities. Once the draft target has been further refined, it will be vetted through the CARE Committee. IDEM currently plans to complete revision of this BUI removal target in 2020.

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

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

Michael reported that the agreements between IDEM and Lake County Parks and IDNR to allow for the project work to continue through September 30, 2021 were executed August 25 and September 8 respectively. IDNR plans to submit a proposal for additional funding necessary to complete the work early next year.

Emily Stork reported that the field crews were completing the growing season work by conducting control of invasive Phragmites and woody plants. They are in the process of transitioning to winter work, such as preparing prescribed fire breaks. Water levels have declined somewhat in the past few months, which has allowed the crews to get to isolated upland areas that were previously surrounded by water too deep to safely



traverse. Carl Wodrich reported that the subagreement with TNC is still in the approval process.

b. Management Action #2 – River Corridor Establishment

Michael reported that IDEM, IDNR, and other CARE Members continue to evaluate alternative mechanisms for supporting the BUI #3 and #14 removal target in lieu of the River Corridor Establishment project.

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

Carl reported that the growing season work for this project has concluded; however, there was a bit of funding remaining to execute a prescribed burn on the site. IDNR will be reallocating that funding to seeding instead. The grant is open through March 2021, but all work will be completed before that.

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

Will Tucker reported that the prescribed fire season is just beginning. No burns have been conducted during this fall season. The period of performance for the interagency agreement funding the burns can theoretically be extended to December 31, 2022, which would allow for three additional prescribed fire seasons. Will has been reaching out to partners to discuss extending the various cooperative agreements.

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

Carl reported that IDNR's contractor, Tetra Tech, is working on a design for this project. IDNR anticipates a 35 percent project design will be completed soon, with a 50 percent design anticipated for early 2021.

f. Early Detections

Emily reported that no new early detections were reported since the September CARE meeting.

g. BUI #3 and BUI #14 Removal Targets

Michael reported that IDEM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and IDNR continue work to revise BUI #14 Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Currently separate fish and wildlife habitat workgroups have convened to draft proposed revisions. It is currently anticipated that the revisions will be vetted before the full CARE Committee in the first quarter of 2021.

5. Beach Closings (BUI #10) Update



Michelle Caldwell provided an update on the Beach Closings BUI. IDEM is currently working to close out the Nearshore Bird Management grant. Three education and outreach deliverables are still outstanding: a project poster that is in design, an AOC beaches video that is still getting cosmetic touches, and no handfeeding signage, which is in the final design stages. Michael then shared the design for the 18” by 24” no handfeeding signage with CARE members. Michelle stated that IDEM was still working to determine a final unit price in order to determine how many signs the agency will be able to procure. Michael pointed out some nice elements of the signage are that it focuses on how handfeeding is bad for birds and bad for people, that there is a side-by-side Spanish translation, and the watermark.

6. Aesthetics (BUI #11) Update

Michael reported that IDEM RAP Program staff continue to track the progress of projects that have the potential to positively impact aesthetics within the AOC, including implementation of the remedy to address oil discharges at the Cline Avenue Ditch that is expected to be completed this calendar year.

7. BUI #8 and #13 Update

Michael reminded CARE Members that he had reported previously that USGS will measure seven parameters (pH, specific conductance, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll, and phycocyanin) during the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022 at approximately 15-minute intervals at two streamflow gauges. The water quality data for both sites, the Indiana Harbor Canal near Canal Street and the West Branch of the Grand Calumet River at Columbia Avenue, is being transmitted live to the USGS National Water Information System, or NWIS. The probes were removed for the winter season on October 12. USGS plans to reinstall and operate the probes between April and September next year.

Michael reported that IDEM is continuing to work with USGS and other partners to explore additional avenues for assessing dissolved oxygen and algal biomass within the Grand Calumet River AOC to address these BUIs.

John Fekete inquired whether the Canal Street probe was located near the railroad bridge. Paul Buszka stated that the probe was moved earlier in the year because of high lake levels. John recommended that Paul check with Fernando Treviño, because the US Coast Guard has requested that the ECWMD investigate a degraded dolphin impacting navigation through the area. John was concerned the work might impact the instrumentation. Dan Sparks clarified that dolphins are basically big cluster of telephone poles in waterways. John indicated he would follow-up with Paul and Fernando on the matter.

8. Outreach/Education Activities



Michelle reported that the AOC Beaches Video is divided into two parts; the first video focuses on the challenges to beach water quality and the second one focuses on the solutions or the actions taken to address the challenges. Michael then played the first video for CARE Members. In response to a question from John, Michael stated that the second video was about twice as long as the first. Michael added that IDEM's Communications Division is putting some finishing touches on the videos received from the contractor and the agency anticipates being able to showcase it at the November CARE Workgroup Meeting.

9. Table Talk

- Michael announced that the Lake Michigan webinar series was currently underway, with two sessions completed and eight remaining. The webinars are one hour in length, from 1 to 2 pm central time every other Wednesday. To find out more, CARE Members and others can refer to the IDEM webpage at: <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/2679.htm>.
- Kay Nelson suggested offering the AOC beach videos to Kathy Luther for the Northwest Regional Planning Commission's (NIRPC's) Environmental Management Policy Committee (EMPC) meetings and she stated that she would be interested in showing the videos to the Northwest Indiana Forum's Environmental Committee.
- Kay also announced that the Great Lakes Advisory Panel was scheduled to meet for the first time next Thursday, October 29. Once Kay receives the call-in information, she will forward it to Michael for distribution to CARE members.

10. Public Comment

Ms. Carolyn Marsh spoke about a variety of concerns she has regarding the Hammond Lakefront, including ownership status, permitting for a fireworks display, and trash removal following an event held over the Labor Day Holiday. Ms. Marsh also expressed concerns regarding beach closure notifications at Whiting Park, the timing of herbicide applications conducted as part of the Lake George Wetlands Project, and *E. coli* source identification at AOC beaches.

Michael thanked Ms. Marsh for raising her concerns and stated that IDEM has responded previously to several of the them and referred her to those responses. Michael then explained that each agency has a scope of authority and is not be able to respond to requests outside of that scope. Finally, he encouraged Ms. Marsh to submit a public records request in writing if she is seeking specific additional information.

11. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 2:13 pm.

Next Workgroup Meeting: Thursday, November 19, 2020, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Tentatively a Zoom Meeting