



CARE Meeting Summary – October 28, 2021

Thursday, October 28, 2021, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM CDT
MS Teams Meeting, Held Remotely

In Attendance: Michelle Caldwell, Michael Spinar, Jim Bailey, Anne Remek (IDEM); John Fekete (CARE); Joel Perez-Castaneda, Susan MiHalo (TNC); Cherie Fisher (USFS); Dan Sparks, Will Tucker (USFWS); Maureen Turman (NiSource); Murulee Byappanahalli (USGS); Kay Nelson (NWI Forum); Jenny Orsburn, Ashley Sharkey, Carl Wodrich, Lynn Riddle, Emily Stork (IDNR); Fernando Treviño (ECWMD); Natalie Mills (USACE); Jennifer Birchfield (NWI Urban Waters)

Public Attendees: 1

1. Introductions

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:05 am and requested that Michael Spinar list off those in attendance.

Michael then provided some reminders to CARE members related to utilizing the features of Microsoft Teams, some troubleshooting suggestions, and a reminder of the public comment section at the end of the meeting.

2. BUI #14 Removal Target Proposed Revision Comments

Michael reminded CARE members of the presentation he gave at the September 23 CARE Workgroup Meeting regarding the proposed removal target revision for BUI #14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat. That meeting was held remotely via MS Teams.

Michael noted that no questions were received by CARE members during the meeting; however, following the meeting, he was made aware of audio issues that impacted a few attendees. In response, Michael sent a note to CARE members requesting comments by October 8, 2021. He received three responses from federal and state agency staff. One inquired as to why the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) was not included in the target, and two suggested additional points of clarification for the presentation posted to the IDEM website. Michael shared the responses with CARE members, noting that the IBI is included with BUI #3, Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat.

Separately, IDEM also received a comment on the derivation of the target from a member of the public, Ms. Carolyn Marsh, and shared information on the agency's response to the comment.

Michael then provided CARE members with an additional opportunity to provide comments on the removal target. No comments were received. He invited any members of the public in attendance to provide comment at the public comment portion of the meeting.



3. IDEM RAP Website Tour

Michael explained that he thought it would be useful to review the website that IDEM has set up to provide information on activities undertaken as part of the Remedial Action Program for the Grand Calumet River AOC, particularly in light of the information that has been added in the last five years. He stated that, although there are nine individual webpages, he would only review five key pages with CARE members in the interest of time. The pages are part of IDEM's Lake Michigan Portal, which includes information on the Lake Michigan Lakewide Action and Management Plan (LAMP), Grand Calumet River AOC RAP, Lake Michigan Beach Monitoring and Notification, and Clean Marina and Clean Boating Programs. Michael posted the pages in the chat so that attendees could follow along as he shared his screen. The five pages described were:

- <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/rap/>, which provides an overview of the AOC and links to several other pages, including the CARE webpage, current and historical Remedial Action Plan documents, our BUI removal targets, and information about various project work conducted to date.
- <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/resources/citizens-advisory-for-remediation-of-the-environment/>, which provides general information about CARE, meeting information, a list of CARE members, links to presentations and meeting summaries, and how to sign up for automated updates when the page is updated.
- <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/resources/remedial-action-plan-documents/>, which provides access to all of the RAP stages developed to date, beginning with the Stage 1 RAP, developed in 1991 and ending with the latest update to the Stage 2.5 RAP, developed in 2012.
- <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/grand-calumet-river-and-indiana-harbor-ship-canal/the-14-beneficial-use-impairments/>, which lists the 14 BUIs and their criteria, as well as provides documentation related to the two BUIs that have been removed to date.
- <https://www.in.gov/idem/lakemichigan/grand-calumet-river-and-indiana-harbor-ship-canal/area-of-concern-restoration-work/> which provides a high-level overview of the various restoration efforts being conducted throughout the AOC. It also links to separate pages describing contaminated sediment remediation projects or efforts, habitat restoration projects, and efforts to reduce *E. coli* at AOC beaches.

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

a. Lake George Branch Middle & East

Michael provided minor updates for the East Portion, which is located near the Confined Disposal Facility in East Chicago. He related that the Phase II dredging, which includes areas along the south bank of the IHSC and additional “clean up” of areas dredged in Phase I, is expected to be conducted in 2024. Design work for the Phase II dredging is expected to begin next year. In the meantime, Michael noted that ARCO/BP is continuing its source control work on the South Tank Farm (STF) parcels



at the former ECI refinery site. Having completed pipeline decommissioning efforts on the property, it is now focusing on completing the 90 percent design for construction of a sheet pile wall along the boundary of the STF parcel with the Lake George Canal. The sheet pile work is expected to be completed in 2023, with some habitat restoration work extending into 2024.

Michael shared that the US Army Corps completed the project design for the Lake George Middle project earlier this year and has selected a contractor for construction. Construction is projected to begin next year 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 currently working to repair a tide gate at the land bridge on its property as part of the project.

b. Lake George Branch West

Michael reminded CARE members that the Lake George Branch West project area extends from the BP land bridge to Calumet Avenue in Hammond. He stated that the Great Lakes Legacy Act Project Agreement between BP Products North America, Inc. and U.S. EPA for Feasibility Study, Remedial Design, and invasive species control was executed October 1 and BP has begun work. The project includes sampling of the Lake George West project area.

c. Junction Reaches

Michael reminded CARE members that the Junction Reaches include the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal south of Columbus Drive and the Grand Calumet River between Indianapolis Boulevard and Kennedy Avenue.

The remedial design, including permitting, will be part of the fourth modification to the existing Legacy Act Project Agreement (PA) under which the original feasibility study and design work for the East Chicago waterways was included and which includes the Lake George Middle and East remedial action. That PA has been signed by all parties.

The ECWMD entered into a contract with TetraTech to complete the remedial design for the project in May. The ECWMD currently anticipates that the remedial design will be completed in mid-2022, with construction to follow in 2023. Implementation will likely occur under a separate PA.

The East Chicago Waterway Management District and project stakeholders continue to meet monthly to refine the scope for the final remedial design of the Grand Calumet



River Junction Reaches. Most recently, stakeholders met on September 16 to discuss progress.

d. East Branch Phase II

Michael stated that there are no significant updates regarding the East Branch Phase II project, which 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. U.S. 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

Michael stated that 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 current focus of the work is developing the practical range of remedial alternatives that might be considered for the project.

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

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

Michael provided a few updates regarding the Dune and Swale project. IDEM has extended the Contract with Lake County Parks for approximately three months to allow for on-the-ground work to continue through December 31 of this year. In addition, Lake County Parks has purchased a new compact track loader (CTL) using the Dune and Swale grant funds. The equipment will allow for additional habitat restoration tasks to be completed in-house at multiple AOC properties, greatly assisting in achieving project goals.

Carl Wodrich added that IDEM had also extended the Memorandum of Agreement with IDNR for approximately three months to complete the project work. In turn, the agency executed a no-cost time extension with The Nature Conservancy to continue the project work through December 31. Carl also stated that IDNR received new funding at the beginning of month for areas that need additional time for establishment.

Emily Stork reported that the field crews have demobilized from the field season. The project partners remain short staffed. IDNR has posted an opening for a new Intermittent Stewardship position.

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



Will Tucker provided an update on the implementation of prescribed burns. The burn season has not yet started and the project partners are preparing requests for open burning approvals, modifications to burn plans, etc. The burn season will likely start in early November.

Kay Nelson stated that she felt the USFS did a good job reaching out to the public, noting that information on the prescribed burns – including maps – was published in the local paper for members of the public to review.

Emily stated that the IDNR's contractor at Pine Station and Martin Oil was planning to complete prescribed burn preparation in the next week. However, the warm weather in October may result in the postponement of burns until later in the season.

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

Carl and Lynn Riddle provided an update on this project. IDNR was awarded a grant to complete the first phase of the project, which includes bank stabilization at the two ponds on the property and a round of invasive species control. IDNR is hoping to move to bidding out the project during the month of November.

6. Other BUI Updates

a. Beach Closings (BUI #10)

Michelle Caldwell updated CARE members on *E. coli* monitoring results from the nine AOC beaches and the associated reference beaches obtained during the 2021 beach season. Ogden Dunes was not able to be sampled during the period. Michelle pointed out that the East Chicago beaches were closed in 2021 but *E. coli* sampling results continued to indicate an inability to meet the BUI removal target.



AOC Beach Exceedance % Rates by Year*	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Hammond West	5	3	2	4	6	4	8	7
Hammond East	4	8	7	9	6	11	10	16
Whihala West	10	10	17	9	17	20	18	12
Whihala East	7	2	6	11	3	8	8	8
Jeorse Park I ***	46	30	26	32	11	24	42	54
Jeorse Park II ***	28	23	19	23	7	13	26	40
Buffington Harbor***	26	20	11	16	5	13	20	29
Lake Street**	4	1	2	3	1	4	5	3
Marquette Park**	3	1	3	<1	0	2	5	3

* Exceedance rates based on number of samples collected from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day.

** Lake Street and Marquette Park started monitoring on July 15, 2020, and on June 1, 2018.

*** East Chicago beaches started monitoring on June 16, 2020, and June 14, 2021

Non-AOC Beach Exceedance Rates by Year*	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014
Indiana Dunes State Park West	5	6	13	12	8	13	12	14
Indiana Dunes State Park East	8	9	7	14	8	9	14	12
Ogden Dunes West	4	4	6	2	1	5	6	11
Ogden Dunes East**	---	5	4	2	1	3	5	14
Washington Park	6	8	5	5	5	5	8	15

* Exceedance rates based on number of samples collected Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend

** Ogden Dunes East Beach not monitored in 2021 due to severe erosion prohibiting safe public access to the beach

BUI #10 Status Tracking

Beaches	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Hammond West	★	★	★	★	★
Hammond East	★	★	★	★	★
Whihala West	17	★	17	★	★
Whihala East	★	★	★	★	★
Jeorse Park I		32	26	30	46
Jeorse Park II		23	19	23	28
Buffington Harbor		16		20	26
Lake Street	★	★	★	★	★
Marquette Park	★	★	★	★	★

Key:

MEETS REMOVAL CRITERIA	★
DOES NOT MEET CRITERIA	

Kay inquired why IDEM has discontinued operation of the dog program. Michelle responded that U.S. EPA is not typically able to fund long-term maintenance or other long-term programs designed to achieve BUI removal through GLRI.

b. Degradation of Aesthetics (BUI #11)

Michael reminded CARE members of the persistent aesthetics issues that have been observed at the Old Cline Avenue Bridge. IDEM anticipates that these issues will likely preclude removal of the Degradation of Aesthetics BUI if left unaddressed. Michael stated that the agency has been meeting with key stakeholders to assess options to address the debris/logs jammed along the east side of the bridge. Proposed solutions discussed to date have centered on two options: (1) removal of the bridge itself and (2) periodic removal of the debris.

Michael shared that a small group of stakeholders met at the bridge on Monday, September 13 to gather additional information. The group observed a debris jam restricting flow through approximately the northern half of the upstream (east) side of the bridge. A number of invasive or undesirable plant species, including nonnative common reed, hybrid and nonnative cattails, and creeping water primrose, which is a



watchlist species for downstream preserves, were observed growing out of the debris field.

The group also observed oil sheens flowing on the west-end/downstream side of the bridge toward the settling basin constructed as part of the East Branch Great Lakes Legacy Act project. Also, rootwad fragments were regularly observed floating downstream in the upstream portion of the river.

Discussions with stakeholders continue to determine the best avenue for addressing the debris given available resources and corridor planning goals.

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

Michael stated that IDEM RAP Program staff and partners are working with USGS to analyze the preliminary dissolved oxygen data collected at 13 AOC sites. Once this data and the eDNA data from the plankton communities is available, the agencies will develop plans for more targeted monitoring in 2022. The ultimate goal is to determine what management actions may be required to achieve removal of these BUIs.

Murulee Byappanahalli added that USGS's Great Lakes Science Center is currently processing the samples for eDNA and USGS's Indiana-Kentucky-Ohio Water Sciences Center is processing water samples for nutrients. The agency currently expects initial results in November.

7. November/December Meeting Discussion

Michael discussed the timing of the next CARE meeting with members. CARE meetings are normally scheduled for the fourth Thursday of each month from 9 am to 11 am Central Time. However, these days conflict with state holidays in 2021. The annual Federal-State AOC planning meeting, which requires a great deal of preparation, is currently scheduled for December 2 so a date in December would be preferred. After some discussion, it was determined that Michael would send an email poll to fix the date for the next meeting.

8. Table Talk

No items were put forth by CARE members.

9. Public Comment

A number of questions and comments were posted in the meeting chat and brought up during the public comment period by a member of the public, Ms. Carolyn Marsh. These questions and comments received responses during the meeting or, in some cases, required additional information to be gathered by CARE members.



Susan MiHalo volunteered that she is writing a series of guest editorials in the Northwest Indiana Times and would welcome topic suggestions from CARE members.

10. Meeting Adjournment

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:35 am.

Next Workgroup Meeting: To Be Determined Based on Poll