

Urban Waters Meeting Notes
December 13, 2013

I. Introductions

- a. The December meeting began with introductions and a review on what the Urban Waters Initiative is for new attendees

II. Updates and Idea Sharing

a. Trail Creek:

- i. The watershed group is accepting applications for their 319 cost share program. There is \$80k for Michigan City plus \$20k from IDEM. One of the proposed projects includes pervious pavement.
- ii. The group has been working on marketing Trail Creek for paddling and fishing. This includes putting signage up at public access points.
- iii. Possible change in local zoning ordinance— Group wants to prevent conservation designated properties in Michigan City from being sold. 3 contiguous miles of Trail Creek's riparian area is under control of the state or Michigan City. Inholdings within municipalities. An additional \$40 k from Donnelley Foundation may be provided if Michigan City implements this zoning around conservation land. Some people want to sell cities' holdings because of budget shortfalls. Some of the acquisitions were from coastal money.
- iv. The first fully ADA canoe access point will be installed at Hansen Park (first in state). Groundbreaking will be in spring (installed by summer). Other waterways can use Michigan City's application as a model for ADA accessible launches. The pier = \$20k; total project = \$80k (a lot of pavement). State of IN is looking at this project; Urban Waters partners can help promote.
- v. 2014 is when the implementation of BMPs from cost share will occur.
- vi. Outreach events for 2014: Application put in by NWIPA to bring Wilderness Inquiry back again (3rd year). Wilderness Inquiry looking for more sites in NW Indiana; will drop the price if we incorporate more waterways – Deep River would be great for that. Also June 8th is the NWIPA Fun Float. Lastly, the WG Jackson Research Vessel, if brought back to Michigan City, could be coordinated for other locations in NWI.

b. East Branch of Little Calumet River / Salt Creek / Coffee Creek

- i. Save the Dunes has recently lost its watershed manager. Plans are unfolding to carry on the work, as well as the Executive Director's enrollment in the Watershed Leadership Academy to increase capabilities in watershed management and watershed policies. There will be no implementation money for 2014, but an application will be resubmitted once staff is designated.
- ii. The Coffee Creek Watershed Invasives Assessment Project, driven by The Nature Conservancy and other partners, will assess invasives in the watershed (includes groundtruthing, mapping invasives in the region). This tool, after piloted in Coffee Creek, will be made available for other locations.

- iii. 33 Dutch elm disease resistant trees were provided by the US Forest Service and planted in Coffee Creek . These trees will be monitored as part of a study. Other studies are encouraged.
- iv. EA of the river: Conversations have started and there will be more to share in 2014. The data is available (not yet available to public), but public meetings need to be held and a formal report written

c. Grand Calumet

- i. Jeorse Park Beach is an Urban Waters success—partners continue to coordinate modeling the restructuring of the beach, funded by Coastal. The product will help address water quality issues and create more habitat and recreational opportunities for people of East Chicago. The area will ultimately be revitalized while potentially delisting BUIs. Work is also going on on the land side of the beach.
- ii. Chi-Cal grant for AOC area and was awarded to the Cooperative Weed Management Group. The project will establish restoration along the Grand Calumet in the remediated area (as well as DuPont, Ivanhoe Dune and Swale). Certain levels of restoration are taking place now, but group would like to increase and better maintain properties. There is interest in doing outreach on this area as well.
- iii. Education in the AOC has been inconsistent; there is a need to ramp up outreach and public involvement. Identified Actions: Ensure that educators know enough about remediation projects. Encourage teachers to come to educational events.. The word needs to be spread that money is being spent and restoration is happening, as well as discussions about when the public will be able to use this waterway. There is also a need to bring cities together to see what their plans are and discuss how they want to use the waterways. A meeting will be held on education and outreach following the UW meeting.
- iv. The US Army Corps of Engineers provided an ecosystem restoration update, reminding that lands can be restored for the support of migratory bird corridors, fisheries, and other habitat support, but not for public use. Restoration examples include Jeorse Park Beach, Ivanhoe Prairie, Burnham Prairie. The USACE can restore the natural features but it cannot buy the land itself. Land can be used as match for the restoration projects and land acquisition under a conservation easement can be match for the work. If you already have land but it's a degraded ecosystem, can add restoration project there, ensures 50 more years of conservation easement (something to consider for Trail Creek and the Michigan City zoning issues). For some organizations, it is difficult to hold on to conservation easements; could look into insurance for defending easement against encroachment and harm (helps NGOs defend and the conservation easement long term—
- v. Gary is a sub-recipient of GLRI grant which allows an urban conservation team to lead outreach. It also has funded the identification of 22 sites in Miller for construction of BMP projects. 14 were installed; totaling over 2 acres. Remaining sites suitable for green infrastructure projects will be priority for 2014. Partners are encouraged to work with Gary on these projects.

- vi. Gary North Side Redevelopment Initiative (HUD, EPA, DOT) has helped establish 4 communities for infrastructure projects.

d. Deep River

- i. IDEM is in the process of studying waterway for TMDL process. WQ data is available online (2 quarters worth). There is a need for feedback on the collected data to date.
 - 1. NIRPC has received funding for planning and implementing a watershed management plan. Jan 21st, 1:00pm, at the Hobart Community Center, will be the first meeting of the watershed group. Contact Joe Exl for more information. The goal is to get information on watershed characteristics and gather/address concerns for the watershed. Extra expertise is welcomed. It will likely take 1.5 years to develop the plan and 2.5 years for implementation. There is also desire to expand recreational use of Deep River/ Lake George, ultimately developing a river trail to Lake Michigan.

e. Mapping

- i. UW Interactive Map: <http://cat.usgs.gov/nwindiana/>
The map contains CSO outfalls, brownfields, and will eventually include water trail information.
- ii. It was brought up the HUCs may not be correct in Lake County. This will need to be reviewed.
- iii. Input is always welcomed. What would partners like to see on this map?

f. Other Projects

- i. A question was raised— What level of information can federal partners release about settlement funds? Federal partners can release information after a decree is finalized. If there is a list of projects in NWI, federal partners can present to company as possible options.
- ii. NIPSCO process was reviewed
 - 1. Advisory panel for projects (SDCF, TNC, SHLT, DNR, NPS) – demonstrate what projects would be worthwhile in the area.
 - 2. If a municipality wanted to be involved with green infrastructure projects, it is suggested that they work through groups already represented on advisory board.

III. Upcoming Grant/Resource Opportunities

- a. Natalie will continue to assist with proposal development if needed. Urban Waters 5 Star grants are due in February. Sustain Our Great Lakes grants will be open in January (due February 18).

IV. Defining Our Metrics: Measuring Partnership Success

- a. The UW National Workgroup has designed a menu of options to measure how the partnership has been successful for our area. We would like to encourage your ideas to help identify metrics for NWI.

V. Special Topic: Marquette Plan

- a. Kathy Luther presented on the Marquette Plan.
- b. The original plan was created in 2005 and was primarily Lake County to Portage; the rest of NWI was developed in 2008; 2014 is when updating of all of the plans will take place.
- c. A goal of the plan is to recapture 75% of shoreline and make as public use.
- d. Through updating the plan, status of projects will be captured, improvements to GIS will be made, a new framework of cultural and historic landmark redevelopment will be included, and a detailed geo-database for partner use will be created. The public has been involved in this process through a series of four public open houses.

VI. Other Business/Announcements

- a. Tom Dilley will be retiring from his position at US Forest Service in January.

VII. Future Meetings

- a. Proposed dates for future meetings are:
 - i. March 14th
 - ii. June 13th
 - iii. September 12th
 - iv. December 5th
- b. The time of 9:30AM-12:00PM will likely stay standing.