

Northwest Indiana's Accomplishment Highlights

2015 Accomplishments

- **\$85,000 Secured to Take Thousands of Youth and Adults Paddling on Local Waterways** – In 2015, Urban Waters helped local partners draft successful funding proposals to the USEPA Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program and the National Park Service Challenge Cost Share Program to bring Wilderness Inquiry's Canoemobile program to northwest Indiana for two more years. Since 2012, Wilderness Inquiry has offered safe, no-cost paddling opportunities to students and families across the region – most participants have never paddled on local waterways before. Local school districts work with non-profit and government partners to provide land-based education stations at the canoe launch points.
- **Indiana's First Wheelchair-Accessible Boat Launch** – For years, a vibrant network of paddlers has worked to expand non-motorized boating opportunities in northwest Indiana. They identified a need for wheelchair-accessible boat launches and began raising awareness about the issue – and seeking funding to address it. Michigan City installed the state's first ADA-compliant launch this year and other nearby municipalities are seeking funding for additional launches.
- **Septic System Focus Groups with Local Residents** – In consultation with the Septic System Coordination Work Group (SSCWG), the Ambassador talked with northwest Indiana homeowners about their knowledge of septic system maintenance and practices. The project grew out of local and state government agencies' concerns that improperly maintained septic systems are contributing bacterial contamination to local waterways. The research findings will help inform outreach and education efforts across the region.

2014 Accomplishments

- **Assessing Expanded Recreation Opportunities along the Little Calumet River** – Local interest in creating a water trail and education corridor through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore has led the National Park Service to consider supporting non-motorized boating on the east branch of the Little Calumet River for the first time. The Urban Waters Ambassador and US Forest Service are helping with the first step – an environmental assessment of the possible impacts of increased recreation on the National Lakeshore's natural and cultural resources. Begun in 2014, the environmental assessment will eventually be part of a revised National Park Service management plan for the river.
- **Renewed Efforts to Restore Jeorse Park Beach** – In 2014, the Natural Resources Defense Council again listed East Chicago's Jeorse Park Beach as one of the most polluted in the country. Many partners are now working together to redesign and clean up the beach. With the help of Urban Waters federal partners, local non-profits and governments sought funding to determine the most effective redesign option for reducing *E. coli* contamination and restoring natural ecosystem function.

- **\$250,000+ in Grant Funding Awarded to Local Partners** – This year, the Urban Waters Ambassador and federal partners helped local organizations develop successful funding proposals for the USEPA Urban Waters Small Grant Program, Chi-Cal Rivers Fund, Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake Michigan Coastal Program, and other sources. Funded projects will support Urban Waters goals of connecting urban residents to their waterways and improving water quality monitoring.

2013 Accomplishments

- **Septic System Impact Working Group Re-established** – The Lake Michigan Coastal Program, Urban Waters Ambassador, local health department officials and non-government organizations reengaged after several years of inactivity to collaborate on strategies to reduce failing septic systems in the Lake Michigan watershed.
- **38-Acre Wetland Restoration Project Underway** – US Army Corps of Engineers and local non-profit Shirley Heinze Land Trust began work to restore a 38-acre wetland in Chesterton, Indiana. This project resulted directly from talks between the Army Corps and the Land Trust at an Urban Waters meeting.
- **\$75,000 Awarded for Tree Planting** – The US Forest Service provided \$75,000 for tree planting to improve stormwater management in Merrillville, Munster, and Valparaiso. Over 200 trees were planted, many replacing ash trees lost to emerald ash borer infestation. Projects included community outreach to inform residents of the work.
- **Trees Will Help Manage Stormwater in Valparaiso's Naturalized Detention Basin**– Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the US Forest Service provided funding to the City of Valparaiso to plant native trees in the recently naturalized Thorgren detention basin. The trees are expected to help sequester an additional 83,000 gallons of stormwater in the basin over the next 20 years. This builds on a 2012 project by Save the Dunes and the City of Valparaiso to do the naturalization design and implementation work with USEPA Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding.