



## **CARE Meeting Summary – February 24, 2022**

**Thursday, February 24, 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, Bob Lugar (IDEM); Carl Wodrich, Lynn Riddle, Emily Stork, Katherine Balkema, Ashley Sharkey, Jenny Orsburn (IDNR); Dave Lampe, Murulee Byappanahalli (USGS); Leslie Dorworth (IL – IN Sea Grant); Dan Sparks, Will Tucker (USFWS); Joel Perez-Castaneda, Susan MiHalo (TNC); Brenda Scott-Henry (City of Gary); Crissy Foreman (Cleveland Cliffs); Peg Donnelly, Caitie Nigrelli (U.S. EPA); Amber Sample (ORISE)

**Public Attendees:** Carolyn Marsh

### **1. Introductions**

John Fekete opened the meeting at approximately 9:05 am and Michael Spinar announced those in attendance.

### **2. Bipartisan Infrastructure Funding**

Michael shared that on February 17, the Biden Administration announced that \$1 billion from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law would be used to restore the Great Lakes. Specifically, the funding will be used to augment the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) with the goal of completing cleanups at 22 of the remaining U.S. AOCs, including the Grand Calumet River, by the end of 2030. Also, Michael was aware of at least one press event held in Gary last week.

Michael described how many contaminated sediment remediation projects in the AOC have been and continue to be conducted through the Great Lakes Legacy Act, a cost-shared clean-up program. While CARE meetings have typically focused on the nonfederal match portion of these projects, he stated that there is also a 50 to 65 percent portion of each project that is federally funded. Since 2010, that funding has been derived from the GLRI. This funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will help ensure that there are sufficient federal funds available to conduct the remaining contaminated sediment remediation, habitat restoration, and other projects at the Grand Cal and the other 22 AOCs, allowing an incredible amount of work to occur in parallel in the Great Lakes Region.

Michael posted the following YouTube link to President Biden's full remarks from Lorain, Ohio in the chat: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJTNWhGjayg> and asked if there were comments.

Susan MiHalo posted a comment in the meeting chat stating that nonfederal match will still be required as part of the new funding. Michael and Caitie Nigrelli both confirmed that this was the case.

### **3. BUI Icons**



Michael reported that IDEM RAP Program staff have worked with the agency's Media and Communications Services team and various subject matter experts to design a set of icons to represent the 14 Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) applicable to the Grand Calumet River AOC. RAP Program staff believe these icons are consistent with similar graphics utilized at other AOCs, although there are some important differences. IDEM's intent is to utilize the icons in a variety of materials to graphically depict BUI status. RAP Program staff are soliciting feedback from CARE members to ensure no critical design elements have been overlooked.

Michael described the general parameters factoring into the icon design. These included requirements that icons should capture something of the essential nature of the BUI, should be approachable to the public, be visually clear at a wide variety of sizes, and should be developed for use in both print and digital formats. Michael then described design considerations for specific icons. These included referencing the distinction between the fish/wildlife consumption and flavor tainting BUIs and the fact that the icon for BUI #6 illustrates a stylized damselfly nymph, a pollution sensitive macroinvertebrate, to reflect degradation of benthos.

John Fekete inquired as to whether the icons would be available for CARE members. Michael replied that use by CARE members would likely need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

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

##### **a. Lake George Branch Middle & East**

Michael reminded CARE members that the U.S. Army Corps has received funding to complete design work for the Phase II dredging of Lake George Canal East, which is located near the Confined Disposal Facility in East Chicago. Design work is expected to be completed in 2023, with dredging conducted in 2024. In the meantime, 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 is currently evaluating. The sheet pile work is expected to be completed in 2023, with some habitat restoration work extending into 2024.

Michael stated that construction on the Lake George Middle project is projected to begin this March 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 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.

##### **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. 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 currently validating sampling data collected in October, 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**

Michael 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, completed a draft design covering the Phase 1 scope during the last week of January. The draft design is currently undergoing review, with final design and permits currently anticipated in May.

### **d. East Branch Phase II**

Michael stated 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. This review is expected to be completed in the next month or so.

### **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. A draft sampling plan is expected for review by the project team this month.

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

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

Carl Wodrich updated CARE members that grant agreements with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Lake County Parks and Recreation Department to carry out some of the Dune and Swale Phase II project work are either executed or near execution. IDNR will be retaining a contractor to conduct monitoring work on the acreage prior to the state fiscal year end close deadlines this spring.

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

Will Tucker gave a short report out that the burn season is still open but expressed that the burn ban implemented by the City of Gary may limit activity in some areas.

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

Carl stated that Lynn Riddle has been working with Tetra Tech to finalize the project design. IDNR has been working to provide information requested by EPA to potentially fund the remainder of the three-phase project. Draft permit applications have been prepared and IDNR is in the process of getting those signed and submitted. The agency is also working to execute a contract for invasive species control around the ponds, with the goal of doing so before the state fiscal year end closeout this spring.

## **6. 2022 CARE Meeting Scheduling**

Michael stated that he had sent a repeating MS Teams meeting invite to CARE members for the fourth Thursday of each month in 2022. Unfortunately, the following dates have conflicts:

- March 24
- November 24
- December 22

Michael stated that he would send out a poll to CARE members to assist in planning alternative meeting dates and get the new date posted to the website as soon as possible. He also stated that there is a need to correct the meeting link on the CARE website.

## **7. Table Talk**



- John noted that the East Chicago Waterway Management District was made aware of the use of its logo in some outreach materials that were being developed and requested more information about what was being designed. Leslie Dorworth stated that she would look into the matter.

## **8. Public Comment**

- Ms. Carolyn Marsh inquired as to whether the IDNR's habitat restoration contractors would be put out for bid. In response, CARE members provided clarification on the process used by the IDOA Division of Public Works for contracts and the process for the grant agreements with the project partners. Ms. Marsh then expressed concerns about the framing of the AOC and restoration progress made at the press conference in Gary last week and the causes of swan deaths at George Lake in Hammond.

## **9. Meeting Adjournment**

John Fekete adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:11 am.

**Next Workgroup Meeting:** TBD (based on poll)  
Via Microsoft Teams