

the regional view

the newsletter of the northwestern indiana regional planning commission

Winter 2012 Issue

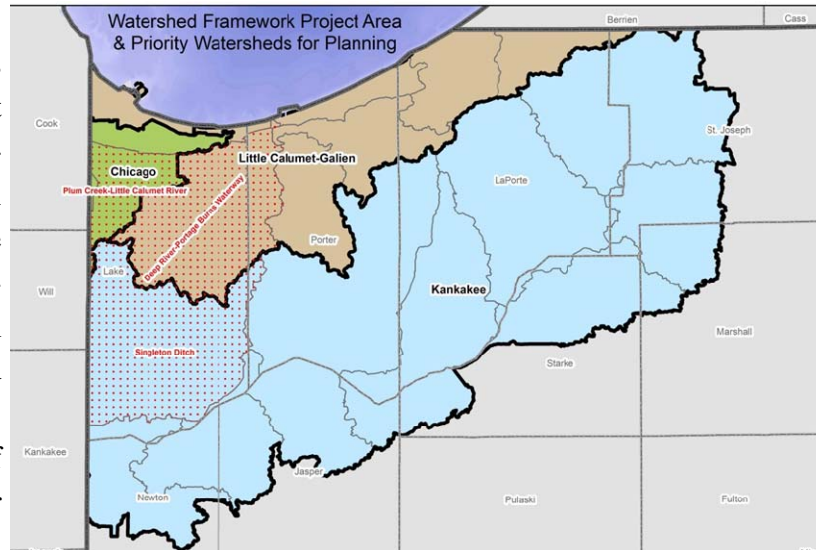
Watershed Framework Nearing Completion

By: Joe Exl


In 2010, NIRPC was awarded a 205j grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to update the Watershed Management Framework Plan for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties (2005). Section 205j is part of the federal Clear Water Act. This first rendition

of the Watershed Framework addressed water quality issues and contributing factors at a broad scale, sub-basin level. NIRPC was told by local watershed stakeholders, that the Watershed Management Framework Plan needed to provide information at a smaller, more focused watershed or subwatershed level for it to be of greater value. What has evolved based on their valuable input and feedback is a planning tool to help local stakeholders and decision makers identify where water quality and habitat problems exist and the factors that contribute to those problems. The update, now called the Northwest Indiana Watershed Management Framework or Watershed Framework for short, follows IDEM's 2009 Watershed Management Plan Checklist requirements to the greatest extent possible.

Using a watershed approach provides a flexible framework for managing water resource challenges within specific drainage areas, or watersheds. The watershed management planning process provides stakeholders the opportunity to work by collaborating on the



type of existing watershed conditions, identifying and prioritizing problems, defining management objectives and restoration or protection strategies. This method also allows the region to address many of the environmental goals and objectives identified in the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* in a holistic manner.

The Watershed Framework is now organized into sub-basin chapters including the Chicago, Little Calumet-Galien, and Kankakee. Each chapter includes watershed information such as topography, hydrology, soils, and land cover data. Additionally, new sections have been included discussing water quality information and targets, problems and causes, potential sources and pollutant loads, and next steps and prioritization. The map above shows the project area and NIRPC's recommended priority watersheds based on the Watershed Framework findings. Finally, a chapter has been included discussing potential implementation measures based on sources. Electronic copies and further information about the Watershed Framework are available online at <http://nirpc.org/environment/WatershedFramework.html> or you can follow the Watershed Framework on Facebook by searching Northwest Indiana Watershed Management Framework. 

Joe Exl is NIRPC's Senior Water Resources Planner. Email: jexl@nirpc.org; Phone: 219-763-6060, ext. 137

2011 NIRPC Executive Board

Chairman.....**Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.**
Mayor of Hammond

Vice-Chairman.....**Geof Benson**
Beverly Shores Town Council

Treasurer.....**David Uran**
Mayor of Crown Point

Secretary.....**Ken Layton**
LaPorte County Commission

Executive Board.....**Roosevelt Allen, Jr.**
Lake County Commission

Executive Board.....**Brian Snedecor**
Mayor of Hobart

Executive Board.....**Olga Velazquez**
Mayor of Portage

Executive Board.....**James G. Ton**
Chesterton Town Council

Executive Board.....**Kathleen Chroback**
Mayor of LaPorte

Executive Board.....**Stephen Mockler**
Wanatah Town Council

Executive Board.....**Chester Dobis**
Indiana State Representative

◆————◆
Executive Director.....**John Swanson**
NIRPC

◆————◆

Requests for alternate formats, please contact Stephen Sostaric at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 155 or at ssostaric@nirpc.org. Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, familial status, parental status, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Compliance Corner:

The Americans with Disabilities Act

By: Allen Hammond

Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). According to information from the Department of Justice documentation a municipality (city, town, township, county) must provide notice to the public about its ADA obligations and about accessible facilities and services in the municipality. The notice must inform the public about the ADA's nondiscrimination requirements. It must also describe how the public or employees may contact specific town officials about problems with accessibility and the need for effective communication. The information must be accessible to the public, including people who have disabilities that affect communication, such as blindness, low vision, deafness, and hearing loss. Although no specific method is required to reach the public, notice can be provided in multiple formats and by using more than one type of media, such as the municipality's website, print, radio, and television.

Although the ADA only requires state and local governments with 50 or more employees to take the following measures, municipalities with less than 50 employees may want to consider following the same or similar steps because the process may make it easier to comply with the ADA, and allow better access for all.


a. Designate an individual to coordinate ADA compliance

Responsibilities for the ADA coordinator may include conducting the self-evaluation and developing the transition plan, handling requests for auxiliary aids and services, providing information about accessible programs and services, and serving as a local resource to the municipality

b. Develop a transition plan

If a municipality decides to make physical changes to achieve program access it must develop a written plan that identifies the modifications, and a timeline for their completion. Interested parties must at a minimum have an opportunity to participate in the development of the plan by submitting comments. A copy of the plan and a copy of the self-evaluation must be available for public inspection for three years after completion.

c. Develop a grievance procedure

Municipalities must have an ADA grievance procedure. A grievance procedure provides a formal process to make a complaint known to the municipality. This procedure encourages prompt and equitable resolution of the problem at the local level without having to force individuals to file a Federal complaint or a lawsuit. 

Allen Hammond is NIRPC's Transit Program Compliance Officer. Email: ahammond@nirpc.org; Phone: 219-763-6060, ext. 144

By: Hubert Morgan

Jim Jessup, a resident of LaPorte County, was my guest at Northside BBQ Restaurant in the City of LaPorte for lunch. Overlooking one of the city's beautiful snow covered lakes, we talked about NIRPC, Leadership LaPorte County, and the upcoming LaPorte County Rural Summit #5. Jim has served as one of NIRPC and the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan's (2040 CRP) most active advocates.

HM: Jim thanks for joining me, first let me ask you to share something by way of introduction that most of us don't know about you?

JJ: I started my professional career as a teacher in high school; my masters' degree is in Math and German. My language took me to Germany where I lived for a couple years teaching English and Algebra. Then, after 15 years of teaching, I opened a State Farm Insurance firm which I ran for 20 years.

HM: How did you transition into regional planning, especially developing your relationship with NIRPC?

JJ: I got involved with teaching again with Leadership LaPorte County. Every year, classes of committed leaders, wanting to broaden their exposure to leadership issues that they could have the most effect on, by having a deeper and broader knowledge. These issues cut across the County. So, teaching regional issues and the challenge of teaching strategically brought me to NIRPC during the 2040 CRP process. I volunteered to serve on the CRP Committee. Now I've transitioned to serving on "Pathway to 2040," NIRPC's Implementation Committee.

HM: Our work in the past has touched on your Leadership LaPorte County classes, but also the LaPorte County Rural Summits you put on. You're planning Summit #5 for this spring. When will it be?


JJ: We've tentatively scheduled the LaPorte County Rural Summit #5 for April 14th in Wanatah.

HM: You've asked me to present the 2040 CRP, its scope for implementation and the impact it could have for rural communities. Share with us how rural communities will benefit?

JJ: Rural communities can benefit by recognizing the 2040 CRP and understanding the strategic position they play as part of a regional community. A few challenges that rural communities face are professional staff capacity and financial resources to implement projects and a lack of leadership within the community to tie its vision to the implementation of its plans. This goes for both incorporated but especially unincorporated rural communities.

HM: How can NIRPC be more relevant during its implementation phase?

JJ: The upcoming Rural Summit is a venue for rural communities to understand that strategic relationship between them and the rest of the region. We'll provide a better understanding at the Summit to identify where additional resources and capacity can come from, also it will provide opportunities for communities to tap into those resources. At the Summit, if we could facilitate forming a Rural Advisory Group that interfaces with NIRPC to advance rural concerns, that would be great. This group could better leverage the relationships between agencies, resource providers, and the rural community stakeholders. Hubert, I would say that 2/3 of the population lives in the urban parts of this region, but 2/3 of the land area is in rural areas. The agricultural economy is still number one, so it works both ways.

HM: Jim, thanks for spending some time with me. You have NIRPC's full support. 

Hubert Morgan is NIRPC's Public Involvement Coordinator. Email: hmorgan@nirpc.org; Phone: 219-763-6060, ext. 153. Search INvolve Northwest Indiana to connect on Facebook.




Meet the Commissioner. . .



Jonathan Costas has served as Mayor of Valparaiso since 2003. He is the city's representative on the NIRPC Commission, and served as its chairman in 2009.

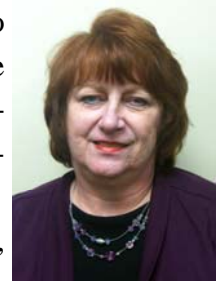
Mayor Costas earned a B.A. from St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer and his law degree from the Valparaiso University School of Law. Concentrating in the area of elder law, he went on to become one of only 15 attorneys in Indiana to be accredited by the National Elder Law Foundation.

Mayor Costas and his wife Sharon have four children and live in Valparaiso. He is involved in coaching his children's sports teams and has traveled with them around the world on service trips to places like Greece and Guatemala.


The Mayor also finds time for his own interests, having competed in thirty triathlons and three Iron Man competitions. Mayor Costas is also known for showing off his musical talent leading his band the Conservadellics. 

Meet the NIRPC Staff. . .

Gail Parks is a familiar face to NIRPC staff, having served the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission as its payroll manager for fifteen years.



Prior to coming to NIRPC, Gail worked in Hammond as the office manager of the credit union in the main post office on Sohl Avenue. In her current role as the payroll manager at NIRPC, Gail is in a job that, while more behind-the-scenes, is an important component in what makes the agency function. She tracks employee time, pay, and answers any questions regarding benefits.

Gail was originally a resident of South Hammond, but has lived in Chesterton for the past six years. In her off time at home she enjoys spending time with her three grandchildren, ages 17, 15, and 6. She also enjoys spending quiet time relaxing and watching the deer that venture into view around her home. 

Fifth Grade Forum Gives Region Youth a Voice


By: La'Kisha Girder

On a cold December morning, 75 fifth graders at Lafayette Elementary School in Hammond participated in a forum that discussed the issues they faced as fifth graders. Principal Colette Weitknecht came up with the idea after participating in a forum about NIRPC this past fall through Leadership Northwest Indiana. Three NIRPC staff members assisted Hubert Morgan, Public Involvement Coordinator, at the event.

Topics discussed included bullying, transitioning to middle school and getting into trouble. The students were also inspired by a speech from Hammond Mayor Thomas M. McDermott, Jr., Chairman of NIRPC. Mayor McDermott emphasized the importance of reading, writing, and math skills for everyone.



The fifth graders also discussed how teachers and staff at Lafayette could help address their concerns, and came up with their own ideas to solve some of their problems. Keypad polling was used to collect data and for the students to vote for their top responses. Solutions for addressing their concerns included hall monitors, standing up to bullies and increased attention to their concerns.

Four fifth grade student leaders from Lafayette Elementary served as members of the student design team, and student leaders from Hammond High School served as table facilitators. Parents of some of the fifth graders also attended the forum, and participated in a survey on their influence in their child's educational experiences. 

La'Kisha Girder is a Transportation Intern at NIRPC. Email: lgirder@nirpc.org. Phone: 219-763-6060, ext. 114