

# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC Auditorium, Portage, IN

June 7, 2012

## MINUTES

### **Members/Guests Present**

Geof Benson, Jim Ton, Kevin Breitzke, Kay Nelson, Mike Molnar, Lee Botts, Abigail Derby Lewis, Jenny Orsburn, Lauri Keagle, Susan MiHalo, Amber Winter, Sergio Mendoza, Michelle Caldwell, Ashley, Snyder, Lynda Lancaster, Dorreen Carey, Sue Lehman, Jeanann Ficker, Letty Zepeda, Chandra Viswanathan, Sherryl Doerr, Maggie Byrne, Leslie Dorworth, Bob Daum, Charlotte Read, Casey Sullivan, Colin Highlands, Paul Labus, Dan Mason, Dan Plath, Nick Dernick, Ramesh Tejuja

### **NIRPC Staff**

Kathy Luther, Amanda Pollard, Wenya Hou, Joe Exl, Bill Brown

### **Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Geof Benson called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **◆Approval of May 3, 2012 EMPC Minutes**

On motion by Jim Ton and second by Kevin Breitzke, the May 3, 2012 EMPC minutes were approved.

### **Presentations**

#### **◆ IDEM Beach Program – Michelle Caldwell, IDEM (Lake Michigan Beaches Program)**

In October of 2000, the beaches environmental assessment and coastal act passed and authorized money to be provided to states, tribes, and territories to develop and implement monitoring and notification programs for their coastal beaches. IDEM first applied for funding in 2004 and has successfully applied and received funding every year since. The voluntary beach program allows IDEM to contract with local beach entities along Lake Michigan, but not with any federally owned beaches. Currently 25 beaches participate in the Program and are monitored from three to seven days a week. Advisories or closures are required anytime a single sample result exceeds the standard. From 2008 to 2011 the number of monitored beaches and samples increased while the number of exceedances decreased. The number one question asked is why a beach closes or an advisory is issued based on a sample taken the previous day. According to EPA this is currently the best science available. Rapid methods are being developed and approved by EPA, but most of them are cost prohibitive. The funding does not allow for remediation, has requirements on what can be monitored and only recreational beaches along Lake Michigan during the designated recreational season can be monitored. Current initiatives include developing predictive models to help forecast levels of contamination, and investigating contamination sources. It is important to get the word out by improving the ways to distribute the beach information to make it more accessible and available. A beach guard online database and two mobile apps are available. In addition there is quick response code technology that will be available on signs at the beaches. Looking at the future, predictive modeling is being looked at to help beach managers make daily decisions without having to wait for sample results to come back. While many variables or components can go into the modeling formulas, a few may include air and water temperature, wind speed direction, and precipitation. Several modeling examples currently being used in the Great Lakes area were highlighted. The 2008 Project Safe has been redesigned and revamped by the USGS specifically for the Ogden Dunes Beach and was implemented in 2011. There is also a model being developed for Washington Park with validation happening in Summer 2012. Current contamination source investigations were discussed with detail regarding Lake Jeorse in East Chicago highlighted. Next steps for Lake Jeorse include EPA working with USGS on a more comprehensive follow up study and remediation options will be considered as well. IDEM currently has a GLRI project partnering with USGS and Michigan City Parks in which USGS utilizes University of Indiana students to complete survey work on microbial source tracking to identify the source host of bacteria. USGS has also collected samples from seven Indiana National Lakeshore beaches and seven tributaries and results from those collections should be back by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Beach sanitary surveys are also being done. Data is being entered into the online database Beach Guard and will be available to the public. The city of Whiting is applying for GLRI funding as well to fix an issue with runoff from a parking lot. Information for status of beaches may be obtained by the public at <https://extranet.idem.in.gov/BeachGuard/> as well as using the mobile apps for smart phones which are GPS enabled and updated when information is added to Beach Guard. Codes on signage at the beaches can also be scanned for status and amenity information. *A discussion and question and answer session followed the presentation.*

◆ **Cowles Bog Restoration Plan Environmental Assessment** – *Dan Mason, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore*

Cowles Bog is located on the western terminus of the Great Marsh and was purchased by Save the Dunes in 1952 or 1952 and designated a National Natural Landmark in 1965. The history of Cowles Bog and historical photographs were presented and included information regarding construction of the transportation system and jurisdictional ditches. The restoration of the lake plain wet-mesic prairie portion was submitted for public comment and now is in the process of having an environment assessment completed. It was noted there were no trees in the subject area in a 1938 photograph. Currently there are around four acres of jurisdictional wetlands that have hydric soil, hydrology, and plants and around 1.5 acres of ditches. Secondary ditches flow into the primary ditches conveying the water to Mineral Springs Road and in its current state, when it rains water flows rapidly to Mineral Springs Road and to the culvert. Some stressors that resulted in the negative direction of Cowles Bog included the harvesting of white pine, the removal of the conifers that were historically in the forested swamp, the annihilation of the Great Marsh to the West, and construction of a sand dyke along the south edge of the wetland separating the lakeshore property from NIPSCO's property. In addition, beavers began to build dams at the culvert allowing water to flow over Mineral Springs Road. Inventory on Cowles Bog was conducted from 2002 to 2004 and restoration work began in 2005 or 2006. In 2002 a procedural manual for wetland protection was produced and included a director's order stating wetland would be restored to their pre-disturbance conditions when they have been lost or disturbed by human activities. Studies were conducted to determine the pre-disturbance conditions and it was concluded between the years of 1938 and 2010 the area became colonized with trees. Land survey notes from 1830 indicate there were trees in the southeast corner, but the rest of the area was marsh prairie. An analogy was performed based on the fact that soils retain the imprint of the native vegetation under which they form even when the vegetation is completely removed and results indicated the soil had not developed under a forested influence. During the testing, nine types of soil were found within the 25 acre testing site with the majority being hydric soils. In order for an area to have wetland hydrology, water depths must be 12 inches or higher from ground surface for 14 consecutive days within the growing season. 14 wells were placed and readings taken every week. In April and May of 2011, even with above average rainfall, there were few wells that could be asserted as wetland hydrology. Measurements in the majority of wells this year indicate wetland hydrology is not present in the project site and therefore would not be considered jurisdictional wetland. 3,485 trees were found, with about 1,400 less than 27 meters. Types of trees were noted and the majority found were red maples which are not specific to a swamp area. Plant information argues against the area being a wetland as well. The restoration project objectives and plans to return the area to its natural condition before disturbance were highlighted. Three alternatives for restoration were noted and while other options were considered as well, they did not seem to provide the intended intent. The public comment period is over and many comments were received, both happy and concerned. Those comments are currently being reviewed and analyzed and scientific justifications are being written for the comments of concern. Following that process the entire package will be sent to the Midwest office for review and a decision will be made. If approved, the restoration of the 25 acre project area could start immediately. Around \$250k has been budgeted and would account for removal of trees and the shrub layer, repair of all the ditches, put in the other hydrological features, and complete the initial planting. The environmental assessment is available online for review. *A discussion and question and answer session followed the presentation.*

Kathy Luther noted that at the last meeting a vote was taken to encourage IDEM to do a TMDL on the Deep River/Portage Burns Waterway. The recommendation was made to the NIRPC board and a resolution was passed. The resolution and a letter will be sent to Tom Easterly.

The Illiana process schedule was made available for the meeting attendees. Currently only one comment has been received and Kathy encouraged the group to look at the website. [www.illianacorridor.org](http://www.illianacorridor.org).

**Announcements:**

Kay Nelson will be attending Asian Carp Meetings on July 10<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Coastal Awareness Month**

When: June, 2012

Where: [www.coastalmonth.in.gov](http://www.coastalmonth.in.gov)

Contact Info: Mike Molnar [mmolnar@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mmolnar@dnr.in.gov)

**Dunes Learning Center Get Outdoors Day Picnic**

When: Saturday, June 9, 2012 / 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Dunes Learning Center

700 Howe Rd., Chesterton, IN 46304

Contact: John Hayes [info@duneslearningcenter.org](mailto:info@duneslearningcenter.org) 219-395-9555

### **Asthma Awareness Night @ Railcats Stadium**

Organization: Partners for Clean Air

When: Friday, June 8, 2012

Where: South Shore Railcats Stadium

### **Roxana Marsha Legacy Act Cleanup Press Event**

Organization: US EPA and State of Indiana

When: Monday, June 11, 2012 / 11:00 a.m.

Where: Knights of Columbus parking lot

1104 Knights of Columbus Dr., East Chicago, IN

### **Dunes Daylighting Dedication**

When: Wednesday, June 13, 2012 / 10:00 a.m.

Where: Indiana Dunes State Park Beach Pavilion

Contact Info: Brad Bumgardner [bbumgardner@dnr.in.gov](mailto:bbumgardner@dnr.in.gov)

### **Naturepalooza**

Organization: Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Group/Woodland Savanna Land Conservancy/Porter Co. Izaak Walter League

When: Saturday, June 16, 2012 / 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Swarner Nature Preserve

102 E. Wee Saw Trail, Valparaiso, IN 46383

Contact Info: Walt Breitingger (219) 462-5821

### **Trail Creek Fun Float**

Organization: Northwest Indiana Paddling Association

When: Sunday, June 20, 2012 / 8:30 a.m.

Where: Washington Park Boat Ramps, Michigan City

Contact Info: Dan Plath [dplath@nwipa.org](mailto:dplath@nwipa.org) (219) 871-9559

### **Dunes Day Barbecue and Council Fire**

Organization: Save the Dunes – 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

When: Thursday, June 21, 2012 / 5:30 p.m.

Where: Barker House

444 Barker Rd., Michigan City, IN 46360

Contact Info: Nicole Barker [nicole@savedunes.org](mailto:nicole@savedunes.org) (219)879-3937

### **Lake Michigan Coastal Program-Grant Priorities Setting**

Organization: DNR – Lake Michigan Coastal Program

When: Wednesday, June 20, 2012 / 6:30 p.m.

Where: NIRPC

6100 Southport Rd., Portage, IN 46368

Contact Info: Maggie Byrne [mbyrne@dnr.in.gov](mailto:mbyrne@dnr.in.gov) (2169) 983-9912

### **Hobart Water Awareness Festival**

Organization: Hobart Storm Water Department

When: Saturday, June 23, 2012 / 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Where: Festival Park on Lake George

Hobart, IN

Contact Info: Sherryl Doerr [sdoerr@cityofhobart.org](mailto:sdoerr@cityofhobart.org) (219) 942-5517

### **Save the Dunes 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration “Why History Reveals the Dunes are Never Saved”**

Organization: Save the Dunes / Historical Society of Ogden Dunes

When: Sunday, June 24, 2012 / 4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Where: Ogden Dunes Community Church

Contact Info: Susan MiHalo [smihal763@frontier.com](mailto:smihal763@frontier.com) (219)763-4871

### **Public Comment Opportunities:**

#### **EPA SO<sub>2</sub> White Paper**

<http://www.epa.gov/airquality/sulfurdioxide/pdfs/20120522whitepaper.pdf>

Comments are due by June 22, 2012

#### **IDEM 2013 Ambient Air Monitoring Network Plan**

The proposed 2013 Ambient Air Monitoring Network Plan is posted on the IDEM website at

<http://www.in.gov/idem/5342.htm> and comment for thirty (30) days.

Comments can be emailed to Steve Lengerich ([slengeri@idem.in.gov](mailto:slengeri@idem.in.gov))

or mailed to: Steve Lengerich

100 North Senate Avenue

MC 61-50-2 Shadeland

Indianapolis, IN 46204-2251

or faxed to 317-308-3239

Kathy Luther announced Mike Molnar's 10 year anniversary with DNR.

Geof Benson reported during a workgroup meeting held regarding the Arcelor Mittal East entrance it was noted Arcelor Mittal has done a number of voluntary things to help short-term with the backup of trucks. The changes have not only improved the truck backup issue, but due to less idling time are improving air quality as well. INDOT has agreed to help on issues that include the timing of traffic lights using information gathered by NIRPC. Long-term solutions are still being worked on.

Kathy Luther announced the Wildlife Habitat Council has an Ecological Restoration Manager position open. Anyone interested should send a resume, writing sample such as ecological management plans, and references to Kimberly Ozug, Administrative Assistant. [kozug@wildlifehc.org](mailto:kozug@wildlifehc.org).

Mike Molnar emphasized the Coastal Advisory Board Meeting on June 20 is the most important meeting of the year since it involves the public input process for 2013 Coastal Grant priorities.

Kathy Luther announced the Chicago Wilderness Executive Board is meeting at NIRPC on July 18.

The next EMPC meeting will be August 2, 2012.

Meeting adjourned.

Reasonable Accommodations

Requests for alternate format materials or interpreters may be made 48 hours in advance to Kathy Luther:  
(219)763-6060, Ext. 127 or e-mail [kluther@nirpc.org](mailto:kluther@nirpc.org)

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