

# ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE

NIRPC AUDITORIUM, PORTAGE, IN

September 5, 2013

**Members/Guests Present:** Alexis Faust, Mike Molnar, Andrew Pellosso, Lee Botts, Tom New, Sherryl Doerr, Stephanie Heyer, Michelle Caldwell, Jody Melton, Ashley Snyder, Susan MiHalo, Dale Engquist, Richard Morrisroe, Brenda Brueckheimer, Ron Shimizu, Matt Mikus, Cathy Csatari, Kevin Breitzke, George Malis, Charlotte Read, Deb Backhus, Laurie Keagle, Maggie Byrne, Leslie Dorworth, Geof Benson, Mardanna Soto, Dorreen Carey, Kim Kreiling, Courtney Blouzdis, Meg Kelly, Mike Milatovic, George Malis, Kris Krouse, Roger Nanney, Erin Nolan-Higgins

**NIPRC Staff:** Kathy Luther, Meredith Stilwell

## Call to order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Breitzke called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

## Approval of August 1, 2013 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Geof Benson, second by Richard Morrisroe and no opposition the August 1, 2013 EMPC meeting minutes were approved as presented.

## Presentations:

### a. JD Marshall Preserve – Mike Molnar, IDNR Coastal Program

The preserve based around the JD Marshall shipwreck will be Indiana's first underwater preserve and was chosen for better management and location to the dunes. The JD Marshall was originally transport for commercial and industrial goods such as lumber and was converted to a barge for sucking and hauling sand and sank in Lake Michigan on June 11, 1911. The ship was rediscovered in 1979 by Gene Turner and although the ship sank in 1911, in 1982 it was raised by salvagers from Michigan to sell for scrap but sank again during a conversation between the salvagers and the DNR. In 1985 the State said something should be done with the shipwrecks, 14 of which were found within our portion of the lake. In 2000 Indiana University was hired to look at sites and over the years recommendations for management and protection of the sites have been made. In 2008 309 funds were used to start the process and in 2011 CCRG was contracted. In 2012 DNR began work on the Marshall and hopefully the preserve will be dedicated September 2013. Mike noted this is an important piece of cultural history and what helped shape region. As a dedicated nature preserve under the Nature Preserves Act allows for protection of natural areas and helps to preserve and protect cultural sites. An internal DNR technical workgroup and many organizations are involved and are looking to set preserve boundary and set uses and non-uses implementing the CCRG management plan. The diving community has also been involved. Some damage to the site has occurred and is mainly from anchoring which if prohibited within the boundary protects the wreck itself, as well as surrounding debris fields. The preserve is approximately 100 acres and buoys will mark the boundary. Mooring buoys will be onsite and boats can tie off there. DNR is looking to work with Indiana Dunes Tourism on this project. More information on the JD Marshall project and the 13 other investigated sites can be found online at indianashipwrecks.org. However, current state statute does not allow for the exact locations of the wrecks to be revealed.

*Discussion was held following the presentation. The subject of climate change and the possibility of a new shoreline was discussed and while the wreck currently sits in about 28 feet of water, the preserve will allow no more than 8 feet of draft and the six fixed boundaries take those factors into account. The Preserve master plan will allow for additional management activities to address unknowns. There are three different recommended management plans at this point and design and implementation are being done at the state level due to management concerns. There is currently not a format for public input. On September 17, the Preserve will be presented to the Natural Resources Commission. If the vote is favorable, the preserve will be formally dedicated that day, with an onsite dedication later. It was suggested to find out if there is someone from the northwest Indiana area on the Natural Resources Commission, and if not to pass a resolution suggesting the addition of someone from the area. Also noted was a report on shipwrecks is given as part of the state park's interpretive program.*

### a. How the Oak Tree Can Bring New Economic Development to Northwest Indiana – Alexis Faust, President & CEO, Taltree Arboretum and Gardens

Taltree was founded by the Gabis family in 1997, and transitioned to a public 501c3 in 2007. At over 360 acres, it is home to hundreds of rare and endangered flowers, plants, animals, birds, trees and other wildlife. A history of the Arboretum and it's development and amenities were given. Twelve years ago, the Gabis family planted over 8,000 oak, hickory and

other hardwood trees which have now become a forest. The 37 acre tall grass prairie was seeded using a specially modified grass drill and has been cited as one of the best examples of Indiana's restore prairies. The restored wetlands are home to trumpeter swans that while thought to have been hunted to extinction are now part of a breeding program at Taltree. There are over 5 miles of hiking and skiing trails on the property and structures have been built around the Arboretum to provide quiet places for reflection and shade. A new Children's Adventure Garden has been established and features a seed-to-table garden, solar-powered chicken coop, green-roofed shed, miniature prairie and oak forest, as well as a music garden. This year was the first for day camps with themes such as water resources and woodland exploration. There are currently over 190 active volunteers and 40 trained education docents. Taltree also hosts weddings every weekend of the season and are one of the only arboretums in the country that allows you to bring your dogs.

Future plans for the Arboretum include focusing on the oak by creating an Oak Preserve. There are about 477 unique species of oak trees from all over the world with many uses including food and ink. Oaks are the primary economic driver in housing, furniture, leather, lumber and landscaping industries and Indiana is ranked first nationally in the production of wood office furniture. How to conserve oaks is still a big question and since they have the second most diverse collection of living oaks in the United States, Taltree is proposing to develop the first research-based Oak Preserve, dedicated to the conservation of the world's oak trees. Designed by museum designer Ralph Appelbaum, it will feature a sustainable, LEED platinum-certified Oak Pavilion that will house a meeting place; oak cathedral; welcome green; changing exhibit gallery; seed to table café; acorn shop; research lab; oak seed bank; nursery; office space and below ground root maze. Features of the new facility were highlighted, some of which included a translucent, seed-like form suspended in the pavilion which will offer views of oak seedlings being propagated and the research lab and a multi-media room. Researchers would meet guests in regularly scheduled Q and A sessions. The root maze trail features underground tunnels where the root system and other features can be explored. A mile long circular greenhouse will surround the Pavilion and form the "mile of oaks trail" where guests can visit and enjoy the oak collections. The greenhouse will be organized by climate zones and will hold more than 250 subtropical and tropical oaks. As part of its education mission, Taltree will establish a Teacher Resource Center and partner with regional schools. The Seed to Table Café will serve locally grown, farm fresh meals that feature oak-inspired foods. "Glamping" (glamour camping) will also be featured in a series of tree houses. Figures highlighting Taltree's current economic impacts and impacts once the Oak Preserve is realized were provided to the group. *Alexis asked for input and help from the group regarding if the proposed preserve makes sense and can be supported and relating the project to where other events are happening and making connections and sharing resources. Discussion took place after the presentation. There is not timeline on the project as it is just in the beginning stages and the most important thing currently is looking for funding to begin conversations with schools and environmental organizations. Chairman Breitzke encouraged the group to visit Taltree calling it a phenomenal outdoor recreation opportunity. Individual membership is \$40.00 and family is \$100.00. One of the reasons the oak was chosen was because of the already established oak collection Taltree has. Suggested contacts were provided to Alexis including Chicago Wilderness, which is starting a major census of oak woodlands with other agencies, ecology people at local universities, and local programs, organizations and individuals such as the Mighty Acorns, soil and water districts, park arborists, DNR and the National Lakeshore. Other suggestions included think about doing the same thing for the Indiana state tree, consider featuring a global ecosystem approach, promoting large scale re-plantings across the State and linking to the restoration for natural areas and native species to the region rather than a focus on exotic species/non-native oaks from around the world. Upcoming conferences were also noted.*

## **Announcements:**

- Kathy announced that after reconciliation of the books by INDOT, the CMAQ money originally thought to available for environmental projects is no longer available. Therefore the Committee which was being brought together to help with those projects will not be formed.
- Everglades of the North will be airing on Lakeshore TV September 11 and 12<sup>th</sup> and is available for purchase from them as well. The broadcast has also been booked to be shown in 21 states and Washington D.C. as well.
- The trailer for the documentary being developed by Lee Botts and Pat Wisniewski concerning what is happening in northwest Indiana and the changes underway will be shown at Green Drinks in Michigan City.
- Various upcoming events and activities were announced. The announcements will be forwarded to the Committee in an email.

Lee Botts wanted to revisit the topic of requesting the Natural Resources Commission add someone from northwest Indiana to their commission. Geof Benson researched the names of people on the Commission and it appears there is no one from northwest Indiana. Kathy Luther will research how people are appointed, how often, etc. and bring the information back to the EMPC.

On motion by Susan MiHalo and second by Richard Morrisroe, the meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.