

JOINT ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT POLICY COMMITTEE and URBAN WATERS MEETING

NIRPC- Lake Michigan Room

April 6, 2017

Members/Guests: Geof Benson, Deb Backhus, Jennifer Gadzala, Will Farrellbegg, Michael Kuss, Tim Kingsland, Reggie Korthals, Richard Morrisroe, Natalie Johnson, Leslie Dorworth, George Topoll, Michelle Caldwell, Jennifer Birchfield, George Malis, Sherryl Doerr, Mary Tanis, Tim Zorn, Martin Wille, Diana Schmoe, Lauri Keagle, Susan MiHalo, Dorreen Carey, Bill Emerson Jr., Jan Bapst, Jeff Loewe, Diane Trgovcich-Zacok, Lynda Lancaster, Maggie Byrne, Chandramouli Viswanathan, Michael Spinar
Phone Conference Attendees: Greg Becker, Cherie Fisher, Peg Donnelly, Laurie Kuiper

NIRPC Staff: Kathy Luther, Meredith Stilwell

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Benson called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance and self-introductions.

NIRPC Business:

a. Approval of March 2, 2017 EMPC Minutes

On motion by Will Farrellbegg and second by Reggie Korthals, the March 2, 2017 EMPC meeting minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

b. Federal Environmental Budget Cuts – *NIRPC Legislative Committee*

The 2018 President's budget has significant cuts to environmental programs of interest in the region. Kathy Luther indicated that while federal employees have no position on any federal legislation, NIRPC's Legislative Committee, chaired by Mayors Blair Milo and Tom McDermott, takes positions on federal and state issues. The EMPC can make a request to the legislative committee to consider positions on environmental issues in the budget. A handout was made available to those in attendance of the identified changes that could impact northwest Indiana environmental programs and natural resource projects and partners. The upcoming changes were reviewed and discussion held, after which it was determined Kathy will compile a draft of recommendations using the 2040 Plan and highlighting environmental and economic impacts to be sent to the committee prioritization. The final prioritized recommendations will go before the Legislative Committee for recommendation to the NIRPC full Commission.

Presentations:

a. Lead in Drinking Water – *Peg Donnelly, USEPA*

Peg is a biologist with the USEPA office in Chicago who in addition to helping lead the EPA emergency response to the Flint drinking water crises, worked on the East Chicago drinking water study.

Due to financial issues, Flint chose to go back to using the Flint River as their water source and reopen their water treatment plant. Their issued permit to the City stated they did not have to use corrosion control chemicals but people began to see brown water and the corrosiveness of the water source lead to orthophosphate scale inside the pipes to dissolve. A spike in legionnaires was also a concern. The President declared a state of emergency and the water team arrived in January 2016

and began testing and sampling. Health agencies did additional studies. Some lead service lines were removed and Flint continues to remove more. News media and community driven meetings were used to disseminate facts. During the emergency response, which lasted about 8 months, Unified Coordination Group meetings were held twice daily and included heads from each of the responding federal, state and local agencies. Monitoring and technical assistance continued after the response period to aid in meeting the needs of the federal order Flint is under.

About the time Flint was on a path of maintenance things started to happen in East Chicago. The West Calumet Complex in East Chicago is a superfund site and has high lead and arsenic levels in the soil. Excavating of contaminated soil and replacement with clean soil began in summer 2016. With concern that lead service lines would be disturbed, a study was conducted to determine if the acts of digging and pounding the ground would break up the scale on the pipes and expose individuals to that source of lead. Sequential water tests were conducted before and after the excavation of the contaminated soil. Communication was essential since people thought the contaminated soil would leech into the water pipes, which was untrue. Differences between the East Chicago and Flint situations are that East Chicago's water comes from Lake Michigan and while the City was adding some phosphorous to the water it was not enough to coat the pipes. Results are available online. IDEM has been working with EPA closely on having the City add more phosphorous at the drinking water plant. The State has also offered money to help replace lead service lines. Filters will be provided to people within the superfund site.

b. Michigan City's Multi-department Committee on Lead – Michael Kuss, Sanitary District of Michigan City

Based on a Reuters report featuring an interactive website that reflected higher lead levels in the urban/older area of Michigan City, Mayor Meer created a committee on lead. The committee has held six meetings and will meet and report regularly to the Mayor, the City Common council and to the public; strive to find better ways to educate the community on the dangers of lead; and promote awareness and access to the many available resources; and discuss of issues. Discussions have taken place on many issues dealing with lead, including the City's drinking water testing and results and all avenues in which lead can get into an individual's system will be looked into. Lead information pamphlets and brochures were shown. An information flyer will be in water bills and the City is expecting to draft a lead ordinance. Schools and physicians have been contacted. Federal EPA requires a real estate disclosure for all homes built before 1978 that declares a home potentially contains lead based paint. The City has applied for a \$1.5m HUD grant to remove lead based paint hazards in homes. If the grant is received, low income homes or homes that are being rented to low income families with young children will be tested and all lead hazards from lead based paint will be abated in the home. The cost is estimated to be \$10k per home on average.

Announcements:

- Discussion was held regarding the usage of USGS and Indiana Map tools.
- CommuniTree proposals will continue to be accepted and reviewed in the fall.
- Upcoming meetings and events information will be forwarded to the Committee.

Public Comment: *None*

Meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.