

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP FOR NORTHWEST INDIANA

A UNIQUE COLLABORATION

ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

Northwest Indiana is one of 18 locations selected for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Initiative. The program's aim is to reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and facilitating community-led revitalization efforts. The overall goal is to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits. The Urban Waters Federal Partnerships will:

- Promote more efficient and effective use of federal government resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership by working closely with community partners.
- Work with local officials and community-based organizations to help stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible successes to fuel long-term action.

Led by 14 federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council, Urban Waters advances the White House's place-based efforts, including the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in our nation's cities and towns. Urban Waters also complements the work of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative.

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov.



Nwipa.org

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

The Northwest Indiana Partnership focuses on waterways with wide-ranging regional impacts. Federal Partners are working with local organizations from each of these waterways to help leverage resources and connect to funding opportunities.

Grand Calumet River Area of Concern – In the 1980s, the USEPA declared a portion of the Grand Calumet River and surrounding waterways an Area of Concern and classified it as impaired for 14 possible human uses—the only waterway in the nation impaired for all 14 uses. A \$31.1-million cleanup on the west branch of the river started in 2009, funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act. As cleanup continues, there is a need to educate community leaders and residents about the ongoing improvement of the waterway. Partners are working together under the direction of the USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant to develop a cohesive plan for education. Eventually the communities along the river will build upon existing vision plans to determine appropriate future uses of the waterway.

East Branch of the Little Calumet River & Salt Creek – These waterways together drain hundreds of square miles of Northwest Indiana to Lake Michigan. There is local interest in creating a water trail and education corridor along the “Little Cal” through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (INDU). Urban Waters has facilitated communication among partners and is helping to conduct an environmental assessment of expanding recreation opportunities along the Little Cal. This may include removing dozens of logjams from the channel. Because woody debris can be important to stream health, INDU scientists have begun research with local UW partners to identify ecological impacts of debris removal. Local partners have proposed creating a public-private partnership to manage woody debris in the channel in the coming years.

Trail Creek – Trail Creek is an outstanding resource for paddling and nature watching. However, nonpoint source pollution threatens these activities – and Lake Michigan water quality as well. Local organizations are working together to improve Trail Creek and reach out to residents about caring for this resource. At the same time, federal partners are offering technical expertise for projects to reduce urban and agricultural runoff. Federal partners have also been asked to help facilitate meetings and coordinate outreach opportunities for the local watershed committee.

Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway – There is much local interest in creating a water trail along these waterways near Hobart and Lake Station. Indiana’s Department of Environmental Management is developing standards to improve water quality. Local partners have secured funding to create and implement a watershed management plan. US Army Corps of Engineers is studying removal of a dilapidated dam to improve water quality and safety. For the dam project, Urban Waters worked with the federal Sustainable Communities Initiative to get the right partners to the table.

EARLY SUCCESSES

\$266,000 Awarded to Support Urban Waters Coordinator – Since 2012, the US Forest Service has funded a dedicated position to coordinate the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters partnership. Local partners have provided office space and administrative support for the Coordinator, Natalie Johnson. Natalie works with dozens of local partners, connects groups to leverage resources, and helps identify and pursue funding.

38-Acre Wetland Restoration – US Army Corps of Engineers and local non-profit Shirley Heinze Land Trust are working together to restore a 38-acre wetland in Chesterton. This project resulted directly from talks between the Army Corps and the Land Trust at an Urban Waters meeting.

\$75,000 Awarded for Tree Planting – In 2013, the US Forest Service provided \$75,000 for tree planting to improve stormwater management in Merrillville, Munster, and Valparaiso. Over 200 trees were planted, many replacing ash trees lost to emerald ash borer infestation. Projects included community outreach to inform residents of the work.

Mapping Project – The US Geological Survey worked with Urban Waters partners to develop an online mapping tool that allows local users to upload and map data. Available local data includes combined sewer overflow outfalls, in-stream logjam locations, and water recreation trails. There is also enthusiasm about digitizing industrial fill maps for the region. <http://lcat.usgs.gov/nwindiana/>

Renewed Efforts to Restore Jeorse Park Beach – In 2014, the Natural Resources Defense Council again listed East Chicago’s Jeorse Park Beach as one of the most polluted in the country. Many partners are now working together to redesign and clean up the beach. With the help of Urban Waters federal partners, local non-profits and governments have sought funding to change the beach shape in order to reduce *E. coli* contamination and restore natural ecosystem function. Urban Waters partners are working with university experts to determine the most effective redesign option.

Michigan City Installs Wheelchair-Accessible Boat Launch – In 2014, Michigan City installed the state’s first wheelchair-accessible boat launch. Other nearby municipalities are seeking funding for additional launches. A vibrant network of paddlers in northwest Indiana has worked for several years to expand non-motorized boating opportunities on local waterways.

ABOUT NORTHWEST INDIANA

In the 20th century, Northwest Indiana’s extraordinary natural landscape of dunes, marshes, and rivers was extensively modified for industry and other human uses. Rivers were dredged and channelized, marshes were drained and filled, and dune sand was mined for glass production. Today remarkable natural features remain, but the waterways continue to show the effects of industrial, agricultural, and urban uses.



URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERS

US Department of Agriculture; US Department of Energy; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; US Army Corps of Engineers; US Department of Housing and Urban Development; Federal Emergency Management Agency; US Department of Education; Corporation for National and Community Service; US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; US Department of the Interior; National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences; US Economic Development Administration; US Department of Transportation; US Environmental Protection Agency

For more information on the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership, go to <http://urbanwaters.gov/nwi> or contact:

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