

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



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 & the 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 for determining the use of future use of the waterway.

East Branch of the Little Calumet River & Salt Creek – The Little Calumet River & Salt Creek together drain hundreds of square miles of Northwest Indiana to Lake Michigan. Local governments and organizations have been posting watershed boundary signs and installing markers on storm drains to remind people that the drains lead to Lake Michigan. There is also some interest in creating a water trail and a permanent education corridor along the “Little Cal” through the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore (INDU). Urban Waters has facilitated communication among partners and is helping to find funding for an environmental assessment of the impacts of removing woody debris to open the channel for paddling. Because woody debris can be important to stream health, INDU scientists have begun research in partnership with local UW partners to identify ecological impacts of debris removal.

Trail Creek – Trail Creek is an outstanding resource for paddling and nature watching. However, non-point source pollution threatens these activities as well as Lake Michigan quality. Local organizations are collaborating to improve Trail Creek and to reach out to residents about caring for this resource. At the same time, federal partners are offering technical expertise for projects that aim to reduce urban and agricultural runoff. Federal partners have also been asked to help facilitate meetings & assist in the coordination of outreach opportunities for the local watershed committee.

Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway – This waterway has great recreation potential but water quality is threatened by non-point source pollution. Indiana’s Department of Environmental Management is currently developing standards for improving water quality. Additionally, Urban Waters partner organizations have also submitted a proposal to get USEPA funds to create a watershed management plan. There is much local interest in designating portions of the river as a water trail near the communities of Hobart and Lake Station.

Mapping Project – The US Geological Survey is working with the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership to create an online mapping tool that will allow local users to upload and map their data for the region. This data will include combined sewer overflow outfalls, detailed water recreation trails, and other points of interest that can be mapped and utilized by local residents and organizations.

EARLY SUCCESSES

\$75,000 Awarded to Projects in Lake, LaPorte, & Porter Counties – Forest Service State & Private Forestry provided the State of Indiana \$75,000 to award to local communities. Merrillville, Munster, and Valparaiso each received grants for tree planting projects to improve stormwater management. Over 150 trees have been planted to date, many replacing ash trees that were removed due to the emerald ash borer infestation. Plantings continue as the communities reach out to inform residents of their work.

\$145,000 Awarded to Hire a Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Ambassador – US Forest Service State & Private Forestry provided funding to local partner Save the Dunes to hire a dedicated person to coordinate the Northwest Indiana partnership for 2 years. The Ambassador, Natalie Johnson, has worked with multiple local groups, facilitating projects, connecting groups for the leveraging of resources, and helping them identify funding opportunities and write grant applications. Over \$15,000 of competitive grant funding has been received to date with Ambassador assistance.

URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERS

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

Restoration of 38 Acres of Riverine & Riparian Ecosystem – The US Army Corps of Engineers is working with local non-profit Shirley Heinze Land Trust on a 38-acre wetland restoration project in Chesterton. This project resulted directly from talks between the Army Corps and the Land Trust at an Urban Waters meeting.

Renewed Efforts to Restore Jeorse Park Beach – Partners in Indiana are exploring options for cleaning up East Chicago’s Jeorse Park Beach, one of the top five most polluted beaches in the country according to Natural Resources Defense Council. With the guidance of Urban Waters federal partners, local non-profits and governments have sought funding for a series of beach modifications designed to reduce *E. coli* contamination and restore natural ecosystem function.

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 sand was mined from dunes for glass production. Today remarkable natural features remain, but the waterways continue to show the effects of industrial, agricultural, and urban uses.



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