

NEW URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP FOR NORTHWEST INDIANA

A UNIQUE COLLABORATION

ABOUT THE FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

Northwest Indiana is one of seven locations selected for help from the nation's new Urban Waters Partnership program. The goals of the program are to reconnect urban areas, particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed, with their waterways and to improve collaboration among the federal agencies and local partners working to improve those waters.

Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will attempt to:

- Encourage federal government agencies to learn about each others' urban waters-related projects.
- Energize existing programs and create meaningful new ones.
- Ensure that local communities are full partners in restoring and protecting their waterways.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area expertise and funding. Early and visible victories will fuel long-term action.

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

The Northwest Indiana partnership has decided to focus its initial efforts on three key waterways with wide ranging regional impacts: 1) Trail Creek, 2) the east branch of the Little Calumet River and Salt Creek, and 3) the Grand Calumet River Area of Concern. Partnership task forces have just begun to identify potential projects and priorities for each of these waterways (and will consider others in the future).

Grand Calumet River Area of Concern – In the 1980s, the EPA declared the Grand Calumet River an Area of Concern and classified it as impaired for all 14 possible human uses. A \$31.1-million cleanup on the west branch of the river started in 2009, funded under the Great Lakes Legacy Act. Local residents and non-profit groups worked together to produce a Vision document and plan for the Grand Calumet River some 15 years ago. As cleanup progresses on different segments of the river, this document will need to be revisited and updated with fresh input from local stakeholders.

Little Calumet River and Salt Creek – The Little Calumet River and Salt Creek together drain hundreds of square miles of northwest Indiana. 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. Distribution of rain barrels to residents and classes on rain garden installation are among the initial steps to reduce stormwater runoff to these waterways. The "Little Cal" is also a great paddling opportunity.

Trail Creek – Trail Creek has outstanding potential as a recreational waterway but is currently classified as unfit for swimming. Reducing pollution from sewage, agricultural runoff, and non-point source drainage will improve the water quality for people and wildlife.

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST INDIANA URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP

The Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership Pilot project strives to develop urban green spaces, reduce flood risks, improve water quality, and create a vision for greenway preservation and water trail development. Federal partner agencies are working with interested municipalities and counties, Indiana State agencies, and local non-governmental organizations.



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The Northwest Indiana region has strong communities of families where residents take pride in both their industrial heritage and the abundant natural riches. Community-led groups are acting to improve local conditions – economically, socially, and ecologically. Assistance is needed to meet the grassroots vision of a thriving region with clean water, good jobs, robust economies, resilient communities, and healthy ecosystems.

Mapping – The U.S. Geological Survey is working with several Urban Waters Partnerships to create a mapping tool that will allow Urban Waters partners and local users to upload and display their data on a map for the region. This data may include soils, waterway depths, local environmental projects, restoration efforts, etc.

CURRENT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

USEPA Urban Waters Small Grants – In 2012, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency expects to award \$1.8-\$3.8 million in Urban Waters Small Grants to projects across the country. The goal is to fund research, training, demonstration projects, and studies that will advance the restoration of urban waters. Priority will be given to proposals that also support community revitalization and promote other local priorities such as public health, social and economic opportunities, general livability, and environmental justice for residents.

This funding is part of EPA's Urban Waters program, which supports communities in their efforts to access, improve, and benefit from their urban waters and the surrounding land. These are open to all, including the Urban Waters Partnership Pilot projects. Proposals are due January 16, 2012. More information at: <http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/funding>.

US Forest Service/Indiana DNR Urban Watershed Forestry Grants – The purpose of these grants is to improve water quality and overall ecological health of northwest Indiana waterways by improving the urban forests of the region. The grants will focus on the three Urban Waters Partnership target waterways: the Grand Calumet River Area of Concern, Trail Creek, and the east branch of the Little Calumet River and Salt Creek.

A total of \$75,000 will be awarded and proposals are due by January 16, 2012. Additional information is available from Pam Louks of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry, (317) 591-1170, plouks@dnr.in.gov.

THE NORTHWEST INDIANA URBAN WATERS PARTNERS

Federal government partners include: U.S. Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture), National Park Service (U.S. Department of the Interior), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers (Department of the Army), Economic Development Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (U.S. Department of Commerce), U.S. Geological Survey, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Local partners include 25 non profit organizations, local municipalities, and Indiana state agencies.

ABOUT THE NORTHWEST INDIANA AREA

Northwest Indiana is an urban area heavily affected by industrial development. In the 20th century, Indiana's extraordinary natural shoreline of dunes, marshes, and rivers was extensively modified for human use. Rivers were dredged and channelized, marshes were drained and filled, and sand dunes were mined for glass production and to make room for industry. Today a remarkable number of natural features remain, but the waterways continue to show the effects of industrial, agricultural, and urban uses.

The Urban Waters pilot project includes the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore and adjacent areas. The National Lakeshore extends across three counties in northwest Indiana and encompasses 15 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, one-third of Indiana's shoreline. The location of the national lakeshore in and near 15 cities and towns across the region makes it a logical nexus for Urban Waters projects.



For more information on the Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership, contact:

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