

**PEORIA LAKES BASIN ALLIANCE**  
Wednesday, May 1, 2019 at 3:00 pm  
456 Fulton Street, Suite 401  
Peoria, IL 61602

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order**

Ingram called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

**Attendees:**

The Nature Conservancy:	Jason Beverlin, Doug Blodgett
Heartland Water Resources Council:	Wayne Ingram, Tom Tincher
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission:	Michael Bruner, Reema Abi-Akar, Ray Lees, Russ Crawford, Roy Bockler

**2. Public Comment**

No public comment.

**3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for April 10, 2019**

Beverlin moved to approve the April 10, 2019 minutes and Bockler seconded.

**4. American Water Environmental Grant Program Update**

Bruner reported that Tri-County's grant submission was not successful. Ingram asked if this grant is offered annually, and Bruner responded that it is. In the past, Nick Hayward had applied for it and was also not accepted. Bockler asked if the group can see the winners, and Bruner noted that winners from previous years are available online, but this year's winners have yet to be published. Crawford asked if Illinois American Water is still part of Heartland, and Tincher responded that it is not. Lees commented that the PLBA should build a relationship with Illinois American Water in the future.

**5. Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan**

**a. IDNR Engagement**

Bruner reminded the group that in the previous meeting, the group discussed engaging Colleen Callahan, the Director of the IDNR. Blodgett reported that he has spoken with Mike McClelland, who said that the fisheries will still be the point of contact for IDNR for HREP. He said that they want to participate more in the future, as they had not participated too much recently. Bockler suggested holding future meetings at the Fish Hatchery, and Crawford agreed, saying that could be another point of collaboration. Beverlin said he will begin thinking about the next PLBA meeting to be held at Emiquon.

**b. Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP)**

Bruner mentioned that Tri-County staff will be attending the HREP workshop next Tuesday put on by UMRR. Blodgett noted that UMRR has \$20 million of rehabilitation planned per year. He said that it will be 100% federally funded if it is on federal land, or

35% cost share if it is on non-federal land (in-kind can also be accepted as a cost share element). Blodgett also said that hundreds of millions of dollars are available for floodplain restoration.

## **6. Illinois Center for Transportation Proposal Update**

Lees explained that ICT was one of two proposals submitted for beneficial use. He said that they went through the IDOT process to clarify and tweak scope. The leadership was then handed from Tri-County to Bradley. UIUC, UIC, and ISU are the other collaborators. Another review process, he said, is currently underway. The schedule is not clear. Since the proposal was flexible, there are several possible variables. Lees said the budget was reduced from \$1 million to \$150,000.

Lees noted that after receiving a suggestion to do so from IDOT personnel, staff submitted another beneficial use proposal to IDOT like last year. This is \$150,000 through statewide planning research (SPR) funds. Lees said that other states, including Ohio and Minnesota, are already doing this. Bockler suggested that the group should keep legislators in the loop about this process. Lees explained that the whole point of this research is to get the scientific evidence to show that using this dredged material is viable on the roadways.

Lees also spoke about marine transportation planning. He said that the group should determine the port facilities for moving commodities, navigation in general, and issues related to this. Lees said that a navigation ecosystem plan would merge these issues together. In the past, the Tioga Group created a study about this, focusing on navigation and goods along the Illinois River.

Crawford reiterated that the group must notify Callahan of the PLCCP and summarize it for her. Bockler said that she should be invited to the PLBA and other smaller-scale meetings. Blodgett noted that it may be most effective if she brought her Illinois River biologist. Lees said that he can write her an invitation. Tincher mentioned that 8-9 years ago, she was supportive of his economic development initiatives. Blodgett suggested meeting her in Springfield or at the Fish Hatchery. Lees mentioned the importance of engaging Koehler.

## **7. Member Reports**

### **a. Heartland Water Resources Council**

Tincher talked about linking economic development, nature, and tourism. The scenic byway program has a focus on highways. He said that there has been past work with TNC and nature tourism; the Fermata company did a study in the past for TNC on nature-based tourism.

Three components of the Heartland proposal include Rivertowns USA, the Scenic Byway, and nature-based tourism. The Illinois River Programming Alliance connects nature tourism players and identifies tourism opportunities. Tincher said that this could become a community development strategy with Peoria as the "Central Park" of the Illinois River. Tincher recommends presenting a proposal branded as saving the Illinois River with Peoria as the centerpiece. He suggests building a headquarter facility for Illinois River programming and planning. This building could be where Hooters used to be along the riverfront. His plans also include a theater, meeting hall, restaurant, plaza, park, and Illinois River Center.

Crawford noted that it's important for USACE not to be against it—they do not have to necessarily be on board, but they should not be opposed. He said that this may mean that the plan may have to be modified to get on the same page.

Tincher asked if the group can vote to approve his Heartland plan. Ingram noted that it can be moved to a future meeting. Blodgett asked Tom to write a memo about this, and other members of the group can email specific issues to Michael about the plan identifying negatives, obstacles, and pushback. Beverlin said that TNC wouldn't necessarily be able to approve of the plan in its entirety because it is too far out of their organizational scope. He noted that many of these projects are included within the PLCCP, which the PLBA has already approved, so why not go forward with those elements of the plan?

Beverlin asked Tincher to outline what each organization is expected to do regarding his plan. Lees asked if there were any formalities regarding who Tom has spoken to (in terms of regional stakeholders) and who has officially shown that they have approved the plan. Members of the PLBA appeared to agree that these formal approvals should be in place before forward movement can occur.

**b. The Nature Conservancy**

Beverlin described the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Emiquon Science Symposium at Dickson Mounds at 9:00 a.m. on May 8. They took part in the Clean Water Celebration this past Monday, which hosted 2,300 students. Crawford presented an article he had read in the paper in Florida about a man who donated a Florida island to The Nature Conservancy.

**c. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission**

Abi-Akar mentioned that Tri-County staff had held a water supply planning meeting in Room 420 to kick off the second phase of that process. The next meeting is scheduled for June 25<sup>th</sup>, and it will take place in Oglesby, IL at Illinois Valley Community College.

**8. Other**

**a. Next scheduled meetings:**

- i. June 12, 2019**
- ii. July 10, 2019**
- iii. August 13, 2019**

**9. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.