

PEORIA LAKES BASIN ALLIANCE
Wednesday, June 12, 2019 at 3:00 pm
456 Fulton Street, Suite 401
Peoria, IL 61602

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Tincher called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m.

Attendees:

The Nature Conservancy:	Jason Beverlin, Doug Blodgett (phone)
Heartland Water Resources Council:	Tom Tincher
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission:	Michael Bruner, Reema Abi-Akar, Ray Lees, Russ Crawford, Roy Bockler, Eric Miller
US Army Corps of Engineers	Chuck Theiling (phone)

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for May 1, 2019

Crawford moved to approve the May 1, 2019 minutes and Beverlin seconded.

4. Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan

a. IDNR Engagement

Bruner explained that staff has been meeting with other regional stakeholders about the Hanna City Trail. Lees said that he has submitted a letter to Colleen Callahan's staff about meeting with her. Miller noted that the point of the meeting is to talk to her about what the PLBA and other stakeholders are doing for the Peoria Lakes; about the IDNR possibly becoming an active partner in a hydrology study and/or sediment characterization study; and about becoming an active cost-share partner with the USACE.

Lees said that he has interest in also meeting with Lieutenant Governor Juliana Stratton to bring her in the loop about what the PLBA has been working on. He mentioned that she chairs the Illinois River Coordinating Council, of which Blodgett is a part. Blodgett mentioned that he attended a meeting with her 3-4 weeks ago and she seemed interested, but she has not followed up. He noted that The Nature Conservancy also had an interest in meeting further with her.

Theiling mentioned the Illinois River 2020 document and noted that the group should prepare a write-up in preparation for next year.

b. Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project (HREP) Projects – Floating Islands

Theiling suggested that floating islands would be a positive addition to the Peoria Lakes, and that it could be worth submitting an HREP proposal for them. He noted that it would be ideal to do so during the river shutdown in 2020. Some attendees ask what a floating island is.

A floating island is described as the following: Recycled items make mesh to make the bottom of the island. It creates habitat for underwater plants and bacteria, and it is durable (Theiling noted that some islands have survived numerous winters in Montana). They end up cleaning the water with the nutrients and the bacteria that emerge. They would reduce turbidity and block wind. IDNR is usually the lead on these types of HREP projects. Some members note that this has been tried in the past and part of it has been unsuccessful, so a new strategy would make it successful. Theiling noted that these would be most successful in the Upper Peoria Lake.

Bruner noted that there is a 35% match required if the land is not federal land. This match can include land value. \$23 million has been allocated for this, meaning a total of \$70 million federal dollars. HREP projects must include habitat-related projects. Research and monitoring can be involved, but projects must include other elements. Theiling noted that there could be a study about island design work, island building, and adaptive management. Theiling says Marshall Plumley mentioned that there is no cost constraint; the group can apply for very large size projects if interested.

Beverlin noted that the USACE is in charge of the Farm Creek Reservoir and posed the question if there is a partnership there.

5. McCluggage Bridge Sediment Removal

Lees noted that he is in contact with John Marlin. He said that there is a contract with the Johnson Brothers, a Texas-based construction group. They are determining if some of the sediment that they're already dredging for the pier can be developed into engineered topsoil. Lees spoke with Brian Johnson of the sanitary district, and Johnson told him that there is plenty of land to deposit the sediment. They mentioned dredging 20,000 cubic yards inside the coffer dam to construct the pier.

Theiling asked for more data, such as how deep the dredging would go. He said it would be useful for him to know. Lees noted that he could ask Dr. Marlin that, and what method the contractor is going to use to remove the sediment. Theiling said you have to be adaptable and work with what you have. Bockler asked what they would have planned to do with the sediment initially. Miller noted that they have reached out to Chris Michard from IDOT District 4 to talk about dredging and logistics. Lees spoke with Chuck Burlingame of ADM about using their barges, but he said they cannot due to flooding; they wouldn't be able to until next spring.

Bockler asked when the bridge project will start; Miller said "they're on the clock now," and it will last four years through 2023.

6. Grant Proposal Updates

TCRPC did not receive funding through the State Planning and Research (SPR) grants for this project. There is still no word about the Illinois Center for Transportation (ICT) Proposal; response will come sometime in July. Miller commented that these two projects are very similar, and the proposal to the ICT was a solid one.

Tincher said that in the past, TCRPC was reliant on conservation grants. What's happening now, he asks. Miller responded that this is why TCRPC is currently trying to merge transportation and environment with these grants to connect them. Crawford said that the PLBA helps solidify this linkage. There is also a maritime section of IDOT that is relevant. Miller said he would like to highlight the transportation-environmental connection in TCRPC's long-range transportation plan (LRTPC). Crawford also mentioned the Conservation Congress. Tincher noted that there will be a big effect on economic development in the region as a result of this.

7. Member Reports

a. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Abi-Akar mentioned the ongoing water supply planning project that meets every other month alternating in Peoria and Oglesby.

b. The Nature Conservancy

Beverlin and Blodgett mentioned that they are preparing for the drawdown at Emiquon. They had not started yet due to recent high water events. There have been several partnerships with science stakeholders in the region such as the Illinois Natural History Survey. Seasonal stewardship staff are onboard. There have been lots of nonnative purple loosestrife removal. Their GLOBE intern is present until the first week of August.

There is a 29-foot canoe out on the water, and lots of people are enjoying that. Many groups are planning to come, including ICC and women's STEM groups. Blodgett and Beverlin will check to see if an August or September meeting at Emiquon will be feasible.

c. Heartland Water Resources Council

Tincher said that some notable people in the region have passed away or have had recent health issues.

Tincher noted that he has prepared specific proposals and language for an action program. He said that he has been working hard to complete the plan, and that is now his highest priority. He is two-thirds of the way done. The concept and scope are broad. He commended the PLCCP, revisited relevant fact sheets from it, and used them in his plan.

8. Other

a. Next scheduled meetings:

- i. **July 17, 2019**—this is changed from July 10, 2019 due to a conflict with an existing HREP workshop in Bettendorf, Iowa on July 9-10. Tri-County staff are planning to attend to learn about HREP issues and preparing a project submission.

b. Other other

Bockler mentioned that in Peoria Heights, Kim Blickenstaff is eyeing the McCluggage Bridge to Lacon Bridge corridor. He said he wants to bring the melon festival back and potentially use that area for an Asian carp processing facility.

Bockler asked if there is a list of previous winners of the American Water grant. TCRPC staff noted that 2019 awards are not available online, but this can be brought up at the next meeting. Bockler also expressed interest in restructuring the agenda slightly to show what topics and projects have been discussed and their status.

Theiling said that he has gotten the visibility of high-level USACE personnel. He has been invited to Des Moines, Duluth, and Kansas, among other areas. He noted that there is now an alligator named Lisle living at his house.

Bockler asked which state has gotten approval for using dredged material, and Miller and Theiling said it is Minnesota. Bockler then asked if there is any movement on FEMA floodplain issues. Blodgett responded that it should be more convenient overall for people not to be on the floodplain, though the government cannot force people out of the floodplain.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:17 p.m.