

PEORIA LAKES BASIN ALLIANCE

Wednesday, July 8, 2020 at 3:00 pm

456 Fulton Street, Suite 401

Peoria, IL 61602

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Miller called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

Attendees:

The Nature Conservancy:

Doug Blodgett

Heartland Water Resources Council:

Wayne Ingram

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission:

Eric Miller, Ray Lees, Russ Crawford,
Roy Bockler, Michael Bruner, Reema
Abi-Akar

2. Public Comment

No public comment

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for 13 May 2020

Blodgett moved to approve the minutes for 13 May 2020 and Bockler seconded the motion. All approved.

4. Member Reports

a. Heartland Water Resources Council

Ingram reported that Tom Tincher has resigned as the executive director from Heartland. Discussions have taken place with Crawford, Miller, Tincher, and other Heartland members about the future.

The group agreed that Heartland should continue, especially with 501(c)3 financial advantages. The main task would be to understand Heartland's role—maybe a technical resource. Heartland will be closing its downtown office, and its website and phone number are ending. Heartland needs new people, new ideas. Stakeholders could provide input about the future.

Blodgett asked when the issue will be resolved. Ingram responded, as quickly as possible. Miller noted that Heartland has filed paperwork with the Secretary of State's office.

b. The Nature Conservancy

Blodgett reported that TNC is still on a soft shutdown due to COVID-19, and most personnel are working from home. There will be no seasonal employee this year, and there are single person crews only. Researchers from both University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and University of Illinois Springfield are gearing back up with fieldwork and research.

Blodgett said that they are currently focusing on water levels, and they are concerned with fish mortality in very hot weather. TNC is working with a Washington State company called WHOOSHH to build fish ladders and sorters at Emiquon. These devices would allow invasive carp to be harvested specifically.

c. Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Miller noted that there will be a USACE mini conference with tours of the Peoria lock and dam on August 6th. Lees mentioned an opportunity with the Navigational Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). He said that he had a conversation with Anthony Hiddleston and Andrew Goodall conversation from the Rock Island district. USACE plans to research north island performance (successes/failures) before moving forward with south island plans. This NESP project could potentially be 100% federally funded. Miller noted that it is necessary to know who is responsible for maintenance (IDNR?).

Lees gave an update about dredged material. He noted that coffer dams will be dropped into the river on the McCluggage Bridge. He said that ADM/AARTCO will dredge their dry dock on July 26-27, resulting in 1,000-1,500 tons of sediment. Lees also discussed DCEO funding from Rebuild Illinois. There will be a \$1.2-\$1.3 million request for carp processing; the application will be sent as soon as possible. Lees mentioned Roy Source's refrigerated vans and carp taste testing in Peoria. He said that food banks are interested.

Ingram said that six to eight years ago, Heartland was against the layout of the islands in the Peoria Lakes because it eliminated the possibility of a secondary channel. Blodgett noted that he remembered that discussion and the mention of a secondary channel for recreational boating. Lees

began a discussion about the island design workshop, and Blodgett agreed.

5. New Business

a. PLBA Future—Where do we go from here? Meeting Frequency?

Miller noted that Ingram will continue on the PLBA as an interested citizen, but the PLBA will only have two members, TCRPC and TNC. Crawford said that Heartland should determine what role they want to play in PLBA. He also suggested the GPEDC, Scenic Byway, IDNR, and USACE as potential members, though some could be nonvoting members.

Blodgett said there should be broader representation than just two groups. Bockler said that this is “a golden opportunity” to restructure what the PLBA is, to invest in restoration. Miller said the point is to bring everyone to the same table, identify gaps, and fill those gaps. Bockler and Crawford agreed that attendees’ time should be valued, and the group should do homework to fully identify people to contact and a purpose for the group. Bockler suggested to use Heartland’s 501(c)3 status to leverage monetary opportunities.

b. Stakeholder Symposium

This is set to take place in the fall, as an event for Illinois River stakeholders. Blodgett reminded the group of the Governor’s Conference on the Illinois River, suggesting its re-establishment. Bockler said that having that event could help determine a role for the PLBA.

6. Other

a. Next scheduled meeting: 12 August 2020

Crawford asked if this meeting will be in-person. Miller said it will be a hybrid meeting with a choice of in-person or virtual. For those who come in person, Miller said, there will be six feet of social distancing, and mask wearing.

7. Adjournment

Miller adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.