

Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee

Next Steps



Photo by Roberta Lammers-Campbell

Next Steps

The Wolf Lake Advisory Committee will resume discussion of projects discussed at last year's Research Summit. In the intervening months there have been updates to some of these project. Also, there may be new projects to discuss for which funding is being sought.

Wolf Lake Terminals (WLT)

Background: WLT is a liquid storage facility containing more than 500,000 barrels of storage capacity with 125 aboveground storage tanks, located on approximately 30 acres. WLT contains 12,000 linear feet of railroad track, providing room to stage over 200 railcars at a time. Approximately 1,800 liquid railcars pass through WLT each year.

History: In 1982 a lawsuit alleged that WLT "released hazardous wastes into Wolf Lake, failed to report under the Hazardous Waste Act, failed to file proper emergency plans for containment, and failed to monitor ground water." WLT "was cited for illegal acceptance, storage, sale, and disposal of hazardous wastes. The lawsuit was dismissed in 1986." (p. 30, Diagnostic-Feasibility Study of Wolf Lake, Cook County, Illinois, and Lake County Indiana.) Additional violations by WLT were found in subsequent years, including during an inspection in April 2014, by IDEM, Illinois EPA, and US Environmental Protection Agency, Region 5.

Recommendations from Environmental Site Assessment of Wolf Lake, Bell, 1990, included "nonpoint pollution from runoff should be studied further with particular concern for the region in the vicinity of Wolf Lake Terminals, Inc., and the Indiana Toll Road." In section 1 of the Wolf Lake Vision document, it states: "The primary land managers should work with federal and state agencies to regulate facilities and communities to improve the water quality of Wolf Lake. Actions should include the identification and correction of non-point source pollution...and other sources such as storm water runoff."

Current Concern: Dave Dabertin, a Hammond lawyer and member of Illiana Yacht Club, said he observed some progress being made in response to the 2014 inspection and subsequent violations found by the US EPA, IDEM and Illinois EPA. He expressed regret that a solution to Wolf Lake Terminals could not be resolved through meetings with the local communities, but is being contested in court.

Collaborative Efforts Needed:

► Dr. Joan Crist of Calumet College and coach of the school's rowing crew expressed a willingness to test the water on a regular basis and asked for guidance on how to do that.

► Continue seeking legal remedies and also seek resolution through meetings with



Concerns over pollution by Wolf Lake Terminals were discussed during the afternoon session of Research Summit in 2016..

Photo by Kevin Murphy

the company

- Submit another appeal to US EPA, since neither state is willing to take action.

Update: David Dabertin withdrew his objection to the permit issued Wolf Lake Terminal after city of Chicago failed to follow through on objection by 10th Ward Alderwoman Susan Sadlowski Garza.

Status: Educational picketing being considered this fall similar to the 2013 effort.

Indian Creek

Project: Halt the high level of Wolf Lake being caused by the erosion of Indian Creek’s stream bed in part by off-road vehicles and by silt buildup over the years. Also, clean up of contamination stirred up by off-road vehicles.

Background: Once a winding creek that looped its way west from Wolf Lake to the Calumet River, over time it has been reduced to a ditch.

Recent History: Indian Creek and its extended shoreline is owned by developer Donald Schroud, who purchased two parcels of land from LTV in 1994. The 70-acre south parcel was the former slag and landfill dumping grounds for Republic Steel from 1945 to 1980, During the late 1990s, developer Schroud caused flooding in Hammond when he replaced culverts under a bridge over Indian Creek. The new culverts were not placed at the same depth. Eventually, he agreed to re-engineer the bridge. Hydrologist Elon Verry of the US Forest Service, based on survey field work completed in 2000, wrote *Hydrologic Evaluation & Stream Restoration Recommendations for Indian Creek*, 2001. The study led to the restoration by the city of Chicago of the third of the creek that flows into the Calumet River. Developer Schroud still owns the remaining two-thirds.

Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Chicago and the state of Illinois attempted to compel Schroud to remediate his property. In 2002, the US EPA took soil samples and found elevated levels of lead, chromium and manganese. It concluded in 2003, however, that the site did not pose a public health hazard that would justify a removal action. In 2014, Chicago and Illinois met with environmental groups regarding concerns about the site. In 2016, Illinois EPA collected sediment samples in Indian Creek and soil samples from the extended shoreline. In March 2017, Illinois EPA issued its Site Inspection Report. Sample analysis showed lead, elevated chromium and zinc readings which “either exceeded the removal action level or was three times the background sample.” In June 2017 the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation installed



Concerns over Indian Creek were discussed in the afternoon session of the Research Summit on the Wolf Lake Watershed..

Photo by Kevin Murphy

barriers at the site to block major entry points.

The slag pile covered approximately 67 acres at a depth of 20 feet in addition to the large surface piles of slag. Sediment samples of lead were above three times background, and along a stretch of Indian Creek the pH level was as high as 11.6. Average would be about 7. Laboratory samples “documented the migration of lead, zinc, chromium, and hexavalent chromium from the site into the creek at levels meeting the observed release criteria.” Long-term exposure to contamination on site affects human health, and lead, zinc, chromium, and hexavalent chromium “can have deleterious effects on aquatic life.” Dead fish and wildlife have been found on the site.

Current Concern: On the south side of East 126th Street is vacant property where illegal off-road vehicles cause erosion and dust problems by disturbing the contaminated soils. There was agreement that the high water levels of Wolf Lake are connected to Indian Creek’s siltation. One-third of the creek has been restored by the city of Chicago. The remaining two-thirds are owned by a developer. The creek could be acquired at no cost, but no one (state, city, county or non-profit) to date is willing to acquire it because of the contaminants in the soil.

Collaborative Efforts Needed: Non-profit needed to take lead in project and acquire property, because no other entity will.

Update:

Questions: Can IDEM Section 319 be used for Indian Creek? If so, on whose behalf?

Status: Search underway for non-profit as lead organization to acquire property.

Calumet Container

Project: Restore Calumet Container brownfield as a natural area to serve as an outdoor classroom for area school children.

History: Calumet Container is an 11.5-acre, triangle-shaped brownfield. It lies along the state line between a set of railroad tracks along Hammond’s 136th Street and Chicago’s 134th Street (Boy Scout Drive), just 200 yards north of Cook County’s Powderhorn Lake and Prairie. It is owned by two private individuals with a utility easement owned by several pipeline companies.

The Calumet Container plant recycled industrial drums in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the property is in Indiana, but the parcel’s strip along the west border, about 10 percent of the total, lies in Illinois. In the early 1980s, shortly after closure, the site received two Superfund Emergency Response removal actions. In April and May 1982, the US EPA conducted a surface cleanup of 5,500 gallons of liquid waste and 27 cubic yards of solid wastes. In January and February 1984, the US EPA removed 5,000 gallons of liquid waste and 995 cubic yards of soil that most likely contained acids, volatiles and heavy metals. In early 2002, AWLI, through its Wolf Lake Vision Implementation Committee, recommended that the site be restored as a wetland. Some ten groups supported this recommendation. Later in 2002, US EPA agreed to restore the site now owned mostly by Lake County through tax delinquencies. Findings to the US EPA study recommended that the site be retained as a nature area and outdoor classroom for study by local school children. The restored site was dedicated in early 2006, but efforts to maintain it as an outdoor classroom failed and now phragmites threaten to overgrow the site.

Current Concern: Funds are needed to acquire the property. One parcel is tax delinquent. The second owner of the property was present at the Research Summit to answer questions about his interest and willingness to work with those who seek to implement the study’s recommendations.

Collaborative Efforts Needed: At a public meeting in 2006, Purdue University Northwest offered to help maintain the restored site. Scouts and other volunteers offered to build trails through the site. Neither offer was accepted then. Once the property is acquired, the manager should inquire about these prior offers and halt the spread of phragmites.

Update: Stakeholders are meeting August 11 to plan for restoration of the brownfield as an outdoor classroom on nature. Plant assessments were made earlier in the year show that the seed bank covered more than a third of the parcel.

Status: Seeking restoration plan and acquisition funds.

Hyde Lake Wetlands

Project: Acquire, restore and maintain the parcel valued for its dune and swale topography. It is owned by private investors.

History: Hyde Lake, which extended as far south as 133rd Street and north to 110th Street, exists no longer. However, a 40-acre remnant of the lake remains as the Hyde Lake Wetland. Bordering Indian Creek to the north and Carondelet Avenue to the west, the parcel was included in Elon Verry's *Hydrologic Evaluation & Stream Restoration Recommendations for Indian Creek* and has been restored. The restoration, managed by Chicago's Openlands organization, was funded by \$150,000 that resulted from a 1997 agreement between the Sherwin-Williams Company and the US EPA Region 5. The \$150,000 was part of \$1 million that the paint company agreed to set aside to compensate local communities. It also paid \$4.7 million for violating pollution laws. The Sherwin-Williams monies also paid for construction of two bird observation platforms, a wetland burn, re-seeding of the two bird observation sites, and flora and fauna inventories accomplished by Conservation Design Forum and Walter Marcisz. In recent years, phragmites have completely taken over the parcel.

Collaborative Efforts Needed: A non-profit is needed to raise funds for the acquisition of the parcel and oversee its restoration and management.

Update: Change in ownership may be first step toward restoration.

Status: Initial talks are underway.

Bi-State Management Plan

Project: Develop a bi-state management plan for the Wolf Lake watershed.

History: NIRPC in 1995 "encouraged local and state governments in Indiana and Illinois to cooperate in their efforts at controlling nonpoint source pollution in the watershed." (Recommendations for Managing the Wolf and George Lakes Watershed, 1995.) Bob Robertson, in his 1999 and 2005 Fisheries Survey of Wolf Lake in Lake County, listed the following recommendation: "Indiana DNR and Illinois DNR should establish a Wolf Lake Management Team to develop a management plan for this important urban resource." Tom Bacula, in his 2014 Fisheries Survey of Wolf Lake in Lake County, made the same recommendation. The Wolf Lake Vision document of 2000-2001, under Section 4, Planning and Management, stated, "Explore the need for and the approaches to creating a bi-state Master Plan for Wolf Lake." Under section 1, the document states: "Determine the best management practices for restoration and enhancement of the lake's natural resources" and "Determine best land protection strategies and determine priorities for land management."

In 2006, AWLI held a public meeting to discuss the need for a bi-state management plan for Wolf Lake. In January 2008, AWLI submitted an application to Indiana DNR to "conduct planning meetings to develop best management practices for a bi-state Wolf Lake Watershed Plan, and hire a consultant to guide AWLI in developing the plan." Indiana DNR approved the application and awarded AWLI up to \$67,500 to develop such a plan. Several weeks later Indiana DNR rescinded the grant when the city of Hammond objected.

Current Proposal: Deadline for Notice of Intent to apply for a Section 319 are due June 1, whatever the year.. IDEM also funds efforts to develop a bi-state lake management plan for the watershed.

Collaborative Efforts Needed: The support of all land owners would be required.

Status: Being considered.

Wolf Lake/Powderhorn Connection

Project: Connect Powderhorn Lake to Wolf Lake to include restoration via restored marshes.

History: A study by the US Forest Service begun in 2002, Wolf Lake Futures, included a report on the public's perception, expectations and ideas on the reconnection of Wolf Lake to Powderhorn Lake.

Current Proposal: Determine feasibility for the project with cost projections.

Collaborative Efforts Needed:**Status:** Being pursued*Eliminating more dikes at Wolf Lake***Project:** Improve the circulation of water through the lake by reducing some of the dikes to islands to establish additional shallow places for fisheries.**History:** In his 2001 biological assessment of Wolf Lake, Dr. Young Choi urged “cooperation with Illinois for removal of dikes.” A study by the US Forest Service begun in 2002, Wolf Lake Futures, included a report on the public’s perception, expectations and ideas on the elimination of dikes at Wolf Lake. As part of the shoreline restoration in the mid-2000s, one east-west dike was reduced to an island.**Current Proposal:** Consideration should be given to reducing more dikes.**Collaborative Efforts Needed:** Land owners and funding sources.**Status:** Under study*Reconnecting Wolf Lake to Lake Michigan***Project:** The Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant is floating the concept of reconnecting Wolf Lake to Lake Michigan to form an estuary and establish a research center.**History:** As early as 1895 in response to a request, the US government sent representatives to Hammond to conduct the feasibility of reconnecting Wolf Lake to Lake Michigan to build a harbor at Wolf Lake. The team said it was feasible and estimated the cost. However, it questioned the need since there was no local industry there at the time. It gave a much smaller cost estimate to reconnect the lakes to allow a rowboat to enter from Lake Michigan. In his 2001 biological assessment of Wolf Lake, Dr. Young Choi recommended the connection via underground culverts.**Current Proposal:****Collaborative Efforts Needed:****Status:** conceptual stage*Extension of hike and bike trails in the bi-state watershed area***Project:** Complete the bike trail gap at Brainard Avenue, construct bike trail along 134th Street, and extend State Line dike as bike trail south of iron bridge to Boy Scout Drive.**History:** Illinois DNR expressed a desire as early as the mid-1990s to circumvent Wolf Lake with a bike trail. The cities of Hammond and Chicago have discussed this goal with the Illinois DNR in recent years. In 2016, the Chicago Department of Transportation has accomplished final engineering for a trail on the north side of 134th street to the Indiana/Illinois border. Funding has not yet been identified. The IDNR circle trail in Wm. Powers State Fish & Wildlife Area has been held up because of Illinois’ budget debates. The Burnham Greenway trail extension from Wm. Powers and 126th Street to Brainard Ave. along the ComEd corridor has also been delayed because of state budget issues. The Burnham Greenway extension through the Village of Burnham is in its final engineering stage and is currently being reviewed by the Illinois Commerce Commission. The two Burnham Greenway trail segments in Chicago and Burnham are substantially funded through construction.**Current Proposal:****Collaborative Efforts Needed:** Illinois DNR, cities of Hammond and Chicago, Village of Burnham**Status:***Save the Mudpuppy Campaign***Project:** Post notices for those fishing in Wolf Lake and Powderhorn Lake to return mudpuppies to the water**History:** The population of mudpuppies in the Great Lakes is in a decline. To understand why, studies are underway in each of the Great Lakes. Dr. Phil Willink of the Shedd Aquarium is heading the study for Lake

Michigan and this includes Wolf Lake.

Current Proposal: Prepare signage and place in appropriate public locations. This would include construction of metal signs for installation around the lakes.

Collaborative Efforts Needed: AWLI, Shedd Aquarium, land owners

Status: In conceptual stage

Moving On

The first project listed under the Planning and Management Section of the Wolf Lake Vision Document reads as follows: “Create the Wolf Lake Advisory Committee as a forum to bring together public and private agencies and interests, to provide community input and to foster communication between the primary Wolf Lake managers and other state/regional planners with regard to their management of the lake.” A meeting of the Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday, November 3, 2017 in Room 200 of Calumet College. During the morning session, discussions will focus on updates of research conducted in the past year and discuss new research plans and needs. Discussions will also focus on progress made during the year on projects conducted. These advisory meetings, co-sponsored with CCSJ and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, will continue annually until the next Research Summit in 2021.

It is anticipated that, during the year leading up to the Nov. 3, 2017 Advisory Committee meeting, there will be smaller, ongoing meetings addressing many of the issues discussed at the Research Summit. These will be collaborative in nature. AWLI will report on the progress of these meetings on a regular basis to those who have registered to attend the November 3, 2017 meeting. The registration form can be found by visiting AWLI’s Website or at the following link:

<http://www.wolflakeinitiative.weebly.com/registrationmeeting.html>.

Calendar

<i>Time/Date</i>	<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Location</i>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
10 a.m., August 4	Initial planning meeting for Advisory Committee meeting	
10 a.m., August 11	Initial meeting on Calumet Container	
9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 3	Watershed Advisory Committee meeting	Rm 200, Calumet College
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 2, 2018	Watershed Advisory Committee meeting	

Rm 200, Calumet College	Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings
	9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 4, 2019	Watershed Advisory Committee meeting
Rm 200, Calumet College	Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings
	November 3, 2020	Watershed Advisory Committee meeting
Rm 200, Calumet College	Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings
	November 1, 2021	Research Summit on the Wolf Lake Watershed
Rm 200, Calumet College		