

# *Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee*

## **Next Steps**



*Photo by Roberta Lammers-Campbell*

# Next Steps

All projects pursued will require collaboration. Initial effort will be given to those with potential for funding. Others underway may not need funding, but require collective effort to resolve an issue—i.e., doable projects. Separate meetings should be held for each project, since separate partnerships will be required. AWLI and Calumet College of St. Joseph offered to host these meetings. At this link <https://youtu.be/9KTPHsOJNLc>, the team of Kevin Murphy and Joann Podkul captured discussions on much of the final session that wrapped up the day's work:

## *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:**



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

► 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 legal

*Photo by Kevin Murphy*

remedies in court with the hope that remedy can be achieved through meetings with the company. Hopefully this would preclude contesting the permit application when it is renewed in 2018 or 2019.

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

**Status:** Court proceedings on permit issues continuing.

### *Indian Creek*

**Project:** Halt the high level of Wolf Lake being caused by the erosion of Indian Creek's stream bed primarily 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:** During the late 1990s, developer Donald Schroud caused flooding in Hammond when he replaced culverts under a bridge over the 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 of the third of the creek that flows into the Calumet River by the city of Chicago. Developer Schroud still owns the remaining two-thirds.

**Current Concern:** On the south side of East 126<sup>th</sup> 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 parcel.

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

**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 136<sup>th</sup> Street and Chicago's 134<sup>th</sup> 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, EPA conducted a surface cleanup of 5,500 gallons of liquid waste and 27 cubic yards of solid wastes. In January and February 1984, 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 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.

**Status:** Seeking 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.

**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 Gorge 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:** AWLI should resubmit the request to Indiana DNR, who now funds lake management plans in the state.

**Collaborative Efforts Needed:** The support of all six stakeholders would be required.

**Status:** Being considered.

### *Wolf Lake/Powderhorn Connection*

**Project:**

**History:** A study by the US Forest Service began 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:**

**Collaborative Efforts Needed:**

**Status**

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***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 “cooperation with Illinois for removal of dikes” A study by the US Forest Service began 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 considered to reduce more dikes.

**Collaborative Efforts Needed:** Land owners and funding sources.

**Status:**

***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 Recreation 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 places. 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*

<b>Time/Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Location</b>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
<b>9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 3, 2017</b>	<b>Watershed Advisory Committee meeting</b>	<b>Rm 200, Calumet College</b>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
<b>9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 2, 2018</b>	<b>Watershed Advisory Committee meeting</b>	<b>Rm 200, Calumet College</b>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
<b>9 a.m.-4 p.m. November 4, 2019</b>	<b>Watershed Advisory Committee meeting</b>	<b>Rm 200, Calumet College</b>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	

<b>November 3, 2020</b>	<b>Watershed Advisory Committee meeting</b>	<b>Rm 200, Calumet College</b>
Scheduled as appropriate	Project meetings	
<b>November 1, 2021</b>	<b>Research Summit on the Wolf Lake Watershed</b>	<b>Rm 200, Calumet College</b>