



Upper White River Watershed Alliance, Inc.
May 24, 2007

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM Thursday, May 24, 2007. Those present were as follows: Mr. Kenton C. Ward, Hamilton County Surveyor's Office; Mr. Robert Thompson, Hamilton County Surveyor's Office; Ms. Jill Hoffman, Empower Results; Summer O'Brien, R. W. Armstrong; Bret Robinson, USGS; Lisa Bihl, Empower Results; Trent Pell, Madison County; Robert Barr, IUPUI; John Duncan, HNTB; Larry Stout, ISS, Jason Armour, Town of Fishers; Liz Elverson, IDEM; Angelo J. Dattilo, Williams Creek; Bette Conway, Morgan County Stormwater Coordinator and Charlotte Templeton; guest

Review of Minutes of March 29, 2007:

There were no changes made; the minutes were approved.

UWRWA Membership Update:

Hoffman stated that there are 18 paid members that represent the County or City. I will try to do another membership drive at the Golf Outing.

UWRWA Golf Outing:

Hoffman stated there are 15 teams for the golf outing and there are 12 to 16 sponsors. Both beverage carts are sponsored. There will be free bars with wine, beer and appetizers which also have been sponsored. We have volunteers to help with registration and the putting contest. There will be three Mayors' at this event. Mayor Brainard and Mayor Distlear will be at the registration table to meet people and tell them what the Watershed Alliance is all about. The registration hours will be from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mayor Smith from Anderson will take a cart out and meet people on the course. We have not heard from Mayor Peterson's office, but I think this is a great start to push our organization off the ground.

White River Restoration Projects Update:

Thompson stated that there was a meeting on May 9th that gave an update of the fund balance. The City of Indianapolis talked about the ramp project. Another project submitted was the Cool Creek Restoration Project, Brookshire Golf Course. There was a watershed study the Surveyor's Office and the City of Carmel participated in and initiated which identified some stream banks that were in need of restoration. One stream was at the Brookshire Golf Course along Cool Creek where there had been a pesticide spill at one time. When the City of Carmel bought the Golf Course the spill was not made known, so the City has some issues to work out before the committee would even consider the project. There is another meeting coming up on June 6th at Holiday Park at 4:00 pm.

UWRWA Grant Proposals

Barr stated that there were two proposals that went before the Commission. One was a stream rehabilitation package where there were channel characters on the White River; the proposal tried to understand what the river should look like, what stable water looks like, what unstable water looks like and how we could achieve that. The second proposal was to look at upper water mapping and the areas that needed buffers. The Commission is not going to fund it at this time, but if more funds become available they may revisit it.

Hoffman stated that her impression was that the Commission wanted to spend the rest of the money pretty rapidly. I think half the group is in the mind set to get the money spent and the other half doesn't want to see it end.

Thompson stated that he sent an email to Carl Woodrich who suggested using the remaining funds to document the fish kill and history of the fish kill. Also use public education in a high definition format so local television stations could broadcast it. Since we had the fish kill, what can we do in the future to prevent it? As far as projects, the Upper White could tackle, with the support of IDEM and other agencies, stream restoration projects.

Barr stated that there are a lot of good projects that could have been and should have been promoted. The Commission is very worried about ending the project looking like they studied something to death and not done anything. One of the best proposals was to do a time and travel study in the time of the fish kill, but there was no way to do that.

Mitigation Clearing House Discussion with IDEM

Hoffman stated that there is a lot of damage and impacts in the Upper White due to development. There is a lot of need for restoration. The damages that go on are required to be mitigated which needs to be done through IDEM, whether its stream impacts, wetlands or sometimes forest mitigation. Those are done at different ratios depending on which impact it is. The developer has to pay for those things and is trying to find sites to restore as part of the mitigation for the damages the developers do to the ground. There are watershed groups, park departments and people who are interested in the restoration. Rates on our mitigation projects are pretty high, 70% or more. The developer spends a lot of money looking for sites, designing and paying for the construction of the mitigation in the millions of dollars range on a single project. That is a lot of restoration money that we can tap into. Thompson mentioned a good point, a lot of times private landowners or conservation groups are not interested in working with mitigation dollars because they don't want to be part of an impact somewhere else. Maybe we can show the landowners how Upper White could do things better. This is the concept of ideas that could be web based depending on the funding source. If there could be a log in on the web that would help us in terms of an organization. What would be the project goals? Who might be the targeted audiences? What organizations, besides IDEM, would want to be part of this discussion?

Thompson stated that providing value to the Upper White River Alliance should be a goal. There is the idea of improving the water quality by preserving natural floodplains and wetlands.

O'Brien stated that it would be good to provide some criteria of standards and guidance information on how things are done and how it can be done better through research. We can provide links where people can find existing data.

Robinson stated that a potential goal would be to pull together the sites that are most in need of mitigation. It's like the blind cave fish theory, if there is a body of water with a blind cave fish then that body of water would be protected at all cost. Another goal there is sites that don't need mitigation, but if there is a group that wants to put effort into a piece of property. Identify the sites that are in most need of restoration.

Duncan stated that they should prioritize the restoration projects that best fit for what the fund is for and also connect the stakeholders to fit restoration projects with the amount of funds to maximize the benefit. You have to fit whatever money there is to the projects that are available. Some sort of prioritization is in need. There should be a database for the stakeholders to work on other projects.

Dattilo stated that he could share a few goals based on his experience with Central Indiana Land Trust. The President has made an effort to identify landowners along the watershed that are willing to put their property in the conservation easement. There is 128 acres that have been purchased with fish kill money and society donation money. Going to the landowners is one way of finding those properties that may be suitable for protection. A good soil and plat map could be helpful. Set a goal as to how much land needs to be protected. Central Indiana Land Trust is a not for profit organization. Their goal is to protect a certain amount of property.

Hoffman stated that there was a consultant firm that spent a lot of money laying plats, floodplain and soil looking for sites. It was unsuccessful for them because they were trying to find people to participate.

Barr stated that there are properties that really wouldn't meet mitigation criteria. We want properties that would be opposite of that. We want degraded lands that have, by virtue of their soils and potential hydrology, have been drained and cleared to meet the regulatory requirements. All this group can do is approach it from a better integrated watershed restoration plan. The Alliance puts a stamp on it and says 'these are projects we would like to see more buffers and wetlands in' because it is important for the functioning of the waterway.

Hoffman stated that some of these projects would be better suited in certain areas when building wetlands while holding back flood waters. Putting wetlands and wetland mitigation in areas that are flood prone will get them a double bang for their buck.

Templeton stated that she lives on the south side of a creek and there are some serious problems along the creek. Is there a connection between the damage that has been done and the people who suffer the damage? There is terrible erosion from development in Beech Grove which has happened over a period of time. The people downstream who receive the volume of water at high velocity and get the erosion should be helped by the developers who have developed the land that caused the erosion.

Hoffman stated that mitigation laws require the developer to mitigate within the eight digit watershed scale. In the case of the Upper White, which goes from Randolph County to Morgan County, there are impacts in Delaware County and mitigations farther away.

Templeton stated that she was in favor of areas that would improve the creeks.

Barr stated that what appears to be an increase in discharge in the stream is a different regulatory process. We have discharges that are allowed in streams that are set and established. Beech Grove has been developing for over 125 years and as it develops it changes the flow of the creek so there are channel adjustments, migration and all the problems that are associated with development.

Ward stated that there is a problem with Stony Creek with development going in on the east side of S. R. 37 which has caused tremendous problems downstream. The sediment load has increased.

Templeton stated that there are some problems like the construction of a Wal-Mart, the new exchange at I-465, the Lowe's and filling in the wetlands. There are some condo's being developed right along the creek and the creek is washing away. This entire project is interesting to me and I'm glad to be here today.

Ward stated that he had some property he wanted to do mitigation on to create a new wetland and it took Williams Creek three years to find the right impact for the right type of wetland.

Hoffman asked who the targeted audiences should be?

Pell stated that private developers and local municipalities could be target audiences.

Elverson stated that there are going to be an over abundance of developers and people in line to throw money. I think the sites will be harder to meet the needs.

Hoffman stated that is the problem of finding good sites. People scouting land, but prices keep going up. At some point there will be a critical junction where either IDEM is going to stop approving permits because there is no where it mitigate or there has to be more people interested in restoration. Something has to give.

Ward stated that there are more people interested in restoration.

Barr stated that the land is built for developers and consultants and it enables them to find property to mitigate on. We are trying to manage that and organize to integrate in some fashion. But it's a tool to find lands.

Hoffman stated that when she worked with watershed groups they kept going after little pots of grant money to do restoration projects. I would like to market an outfit of people that want restoration done in key areas to find a pot of money.

Barr stated that he knew of some landowners that bought properties that were big enough so they could put a wetland on it and didn't want to grow corn. NRCS tells us that the wetlands that have been in reserve are being bulldozed as we speak. The last thing the farmers are interested in is selling a piece of property for wetland or even putting in a reserve.

Thompson stated that INDOT is increasing their wetland staff before mitigation happens so there will be a big developer in that sense.

Hoffman stated that INDOT could be a potential target.

Barr stated that if you can convince INDOT that they aren't compromising their mission.

Duncan stated that he did not see the connection between an ideal area that should be restored and a development project. Where is the connection? If there is a site that needs repaired for whatever reason and there is a third party that has funding for it, why would it be associated with any particular developer.

Duncan asked how the land got damaged and how do we fix it? That is where I see a disconnect.

Hoffman stated that if this is the issue there should be lobbying for tougher mitigation or not even mitigation. The focus and energy should be on 'no more wetland destruction'. Go back through rule making and stop the process. The reality is that its permitable activity and its going on.

Barr stated that a lot of corporations own a lot of farm land especially if there is livestock on any scale. It seems to me that there would be a natural need to develop some kind of wetland to do something with wastewater. It would seem like a natural desire to put a wetland in that sort of situation and perhaps they don't know who to deal with.

Hoffman stated that the mitigation wetlands can't be used for any sort of treatment. There could be a pre-treatment in a farm type lagoon and then add the wetland as its own secondary filter. But there can't be a wetland mitigation to suit your own pollution prevention. The same thing is true for inline detention or holding water in a stream. You can't degrade that stream for the sake of getting your own pollution control out of it.

Elverson stated that using money to restore stream corridors by fencing cattle out of streams.

Robinson stated that a website that will put property out there for the picking; we want to see mitigation work going on. There ought to be a component of public education explaining why their land and that they could be part of something good; a grass root level for water quality, stream and wetland function in the entire watershed if the landowners are willing to participate. I think public education is an important part.

Duncan stated that the academic community has this as a database to see if there are research monies that could go toward certain subject areas.

O'Brien stated that relative partnerships would be targeted audiences. You want to target your partnership so they know what is going on like colleges and schools.

Hoffman asked Ms. Elverson if IDEM could or would point people in that direction to help the program objectives.

Elverson stated that you need to buy in a big scale for agency approval. Not just state agencies, but federal partners that could benefit from this.

Barr stated that he still thinks of the NRCS and their inability to spend their dollars. They are sitting on enormous amounts of monies and can't spend it.

Hoffman stated that the NRCS is more restrictive than what is allowed to be done with mitigation.

Barr stated that the NRCS has stream and wetland money to use. They have buffer money to spend and can't spend it.

Ward stated that target audiences would be landowners, farmers and consultants.

Thompson stated that he agreed that target audiences and relative partnerships tend to overlap. It includes the MS4's and anything that is tied to water quality in any aspect.

Hoffman stated that the MS4's can be frontlines of folks who are seeing development plans. They see stream crossings, stream piping and if they are out on the property they would be aware of where a wetland is. There are MS4's who are trying to work with developers to get them in tune with their requirements for erosion and sediment control and also permitting, which will ensure that developer's are getting permits. Permits require mitigation and mitigation means they could be working with the clearing house.

Conway from Morgan County stated that one project that needs to be made aware of is one that the Morgan County Commissioners have approached the sand and gravel companies on along the river asking them to donate a strip of land along the river to eventually form a park system. There are areas in the town of Waverly where FEMA maps have changed, had to mitigate and move homes out of the floodway. There are some suitable wetland locations that could be tied into part of the parks system down the river. A gravel company would leave too deep of a pit to establish a wetland, but maybe they could put in some wetland areas which would provide a barrier for the parks system.

Hoffman asked who would fund something like this and how could it work better?

Ward stated that what comes to mind are Counties themselves because of bridge projects. Several times we had to do mitigation through the bridge and also for road projects.

Duncan stated that you could throw the regional NPA'S there also.

Barr stated that there could be relative agencies such as IDNR, IDEM, NRCS, USGS, Corps. Of Engineers, INDOT, County Surveyor's, cities, towns and governments. I think politically before there is a web put out there which areas have the potential for wetland development and so on. It's better to get the blessings of City Councils and groups around.

O'Brien stated that other groups are U.S. Wildlife service, EPA, USGS, existing watershed groups, recreational groups, KIVI and Pheasants Forever.

Thompson stated that on the Hawthorns Golf Course there is one of the best wetlands in Indiana. The Indiana Golf Course Superintendent Association might be a user group where the golf courses have a lot of land and have areas there they can mitigate.

Pell stated that there is a website called MIBOR (Metropolitan Board of Realtors). It is a website that has listings of real estate available in all of central Indiana.

Hoffman stated that there are a lot of people we need to talk to in order to have a large impact on something that's continually being degraded. It is definitely our mission to build partnerships. If we were to build something like this, I need a budget; building the website, materials are needed and staff time, which would include outreach and would come together in a proposal form. Some information that would be helpful is a definition of what a wetland is and its function. There is a large portion of the community that does not understand what's involved with mitigation and what the ratios are. What kind of mapping or features do we want people thinking about in order to plan restoration projects? On the homepage there would be little intro

for the ecology 101, mitigation 101, and depending on funding, a GIS system where you could turn on several layers. Where are existing mitigation sites? This is something I spoke with IDEM about and if a map could be put together. Get coordinates because building onto smaller sites give us a more functional habitat and storage. Think of sites that we are already in and building onto them, such as floodplains, natural areas such as land trusts, easements, and parks. Things that you might want to link together on the web. Where would you want to make connections for wildlife movement or filtration? The impaired stream segments are listed for a variety of impairments. It shows up on the bad waters list for a particular reason and some of them are listed simply for impairments to biotic communities because there is a physical impediment in the stream like a bad culvert that's pinching that stream. A potential restoration for stream damage somewhere else might open that culvert up. Do a three sided, natural bottom, oversized stream to let fish migrate up and down the stream and that would remove that stream from the impaired water body and take our streams to a healthier state. Those could be some existing layers we could come up with. New layers that would be good to think about are the buffer widths which would require us to do an intense mapping effort. Looking at areas that had limited buffers and marking those on a map to create some of our targets. The Homepage would be designed to be more than a match making effort. We want this to be an educational effort and from there, click on the kind of user they are, such as landowner, parks manager, etc.

Elverson asked if this site would be user friendly enough for a homeowner. Developers will not be using the site because their environmental consultants will be using the site. You need to get back with the environmental firms that deal with permitting. This web site would have to have technical information the consultant could go to and feel comfortable about mitigation, but also something the homeowner can understand. Make sure it would be education first and clearing house second.

Hoffman stated that there is a GIS on the website now, which is limited to a couple of Counties. It goes out and reaches other peoples information. When the web survey was done on feasibility there were a fair number of complaints about it being slow or not sufficient for technical users.

Robinson stated that we have to come up with a product that consultants don't already have access to.

Elverson stated that some consulting firms actually use paper copies and surveys that don't have these resources.

Robinson stated that we need to figure out how to make this accessible to the small consulting firms.

Elverson stated that on the land seeker icon you don't want to make it too complicated because people might be offended by the development. If they find out how much it cost then they would find a different site to put the development on. They also may find it less expensive to move to a site that has an impact. You might know the total acreage of impact, but you may not know whose jurisdiction your wetland would be under. You definitely would not know mitigation ratio's especially if it's an isolated wetland because that would involve a big discussion with IDEM. You have to be careful with acreage. If someone needs five acres, but it comes down to 1/2 acre, the commitment is already made with the landowner as far as impacts with minimizations and the process the landowner has to go through.

Hoffman asked how she would know how to match a specific person that wants open water?

Elverson stated that by the types of impact and not acreage. On the web you can also put total acreage of impact or a range of impacts.

Robinson asked if open water has to be mitigated with open water?

Elverson stated that it is usually mitigated with the merchant. A lot of the open water that gets permitted is basically open water that is in a stream, pond or a pond that is connected to a stream. Some source of water body that is connected to a stream. It wouldn't be treated exactly as a stream, but a regulated feature.

O'Brien stated that there should be a feature on the web about how often it's updated.

Robinson stated that there has to be a lot of maintenance to keep the website updated.

Hoffman asked if there was any interest in the Home Page with the concept of thinking of mitigation and restoration priorities.

Barr stated that pulling together the educational tools would be a start. There has to be a lot of research on corridors that need to connect. There could be databases put together that would allow land seekers and landowners to input their information, but for the UWRWA to be able to identify the critical ones and the ones that are important in the corridors that need connections; that would be years worth of work.

Robinson stated that Eagle Creek is a good example to consider. There was a lot of resource that went into that. We did corridor status in the Eagle Creek watershed and one of the watersheds inside that area. There were several interns and it took a web master server, a separate server to melt that information which took well over a year. It will probably take four or five years and probably \$500,000.00.

O'Brien asked if the UWRWA used that information as a tool to go back to the areas that were identified?

Robinson stated that they did. Eagle Creek is on the web and you can look at the buffers and the wetland connections. There is a drive tool so people can look at elevations.

O'Brien stated that maybe we can provide a database for volunteers and even join the organization.

Hoffman stated that the larger goal is to go after big federal money. But we can't go after it without enough interest generated or tools to prove to EPA that the Upper White in Central Indiana ought to receive targeted watershed funding. There has to be a watershed management plan to get the help of doing the kind of watershed management plan we want to be doing. Part of this is getting some assessments done. We have lots of information, but not syntheses of it. We need to start putting the pieces together to get a rough watershed plan with objectives, projects, and interested people sitting at the table. To proceed with this project, should there be a budget to build an educational page that would have environmental features that people could quickly map? Where do we want to go from here?

Barr stated that we need to get together a budget for an educational page. Education is focused on the general public and why they want to be involved in being good stewards of the watershed. Getting a budget for a resource page that supports the developers, offenders and whoever needs to be involved in the mitigation process.

Robinson stated that we need to start building a basic budget for what we need to consider as a launch. Get some feedback from potential user groups, willingness to pay and who would fund this. The watershed is big enough to get a grant for building something like this. How do we reach people to go to our website?

Elverson stated that we would probably have to bring the outreach to the potential user groups by doing an educational seminar on how to use this website.

Robinson stated that this is a big watershed, how long would it take to market this?

Pell stated that is where MIBOR could come in. MIBOR is a group of realtors that are trying to find landowners who want to do something with their land. If we could market to people like MIBOR that would be helpful.

Hoffman stated that she would take the ideas and put them in some kind of format, get together a budget for the resource page and think of some kind of outreach plan. The next general membership meeting is June 28th. At that meeting you will be voting for officers.

Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting was set for Thursday, July 26, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. in Noblesville.

Kenton C. Ward
Hamilton County Surveyor

Attest: _____
Executive Secretary