



**EAST-WEST GATEWAY  
Council of Governments**

Creating Solutions Across Jurisdictional Boundaries

**AGENDA  
WATER RESOURCES ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
Friday, November 5, 2021  
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM  
VIRTUAL MEETING - GoToMeeting**

**DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK, EAST-WEST GATEWAY’S OFFICES ARE CURRENTLY CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC AND WILL BE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

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1. CALL TO ORDER - Carol Lawrence, Chair, East-West Gateway Council of Governments
2. DISCUSSION ITEMS
  - A. Update Grand Glaize Creek Watershed Management Plan Efforts**
    - Jay Hoskins, Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District
  - B. Silver Lake Watershed Project**
    - Mark Rosen, City of Highland, IL
  - C. Urban Stormwater Flooding Research**
    - Bob Criss, Washington University
  - D. Report on Mississippi River Plastics Pollution Initiative**
    - Jennifer Wendt, Mississippi Rivers Cities and Towns Initiative
3. OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
4. ADJOURNMENT

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Bi-State Development

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## **Minutes**

Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee

Thursday, June 3, 2021

10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Virtual Meeting - GoToMeeting

### **Attendees:**

Carol Lawrence, Chair – East-West Gateway Council of Governments

Gus Raeker – Missouri Department of Conservation

Bryan Hopkins – Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Josh Ward – Missouri Department of Conservation

Rita Buechter – Hastings Engineering

Robert Stout – MITCO and Land and Learning Foundation

Mike Hartoin – Science Engineering

John Schumacher – U.S. Geological Survey

Camille Buckley – U.S. Geological Survey

Phil Stang – Mayor, Kimmswick, MO

Kaleena Menke – Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District

Mary Vandevord – Heartlands Conservancy

Eric Karch – Reitz & Jens

Jay Hoskins – Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District

Katie Wiesehan – Land and Learning Foundation

Laura Madden – Phoenix Consults

Rebecca Weaver – The Nature Conservancy

Jamie Paige – City of Wentzville, MO

John Johnson – Missouri Department of Natural Resources

Collin Wellenkamp – Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative

Steve Brendel – Madison County

Kimberly Baumann – Mississippi Lime

Roland Biehl – Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District

Gary Moore – Washington University

Paul Ryland – U.S. Geological Survey

Tom Schweiss – Great Rivers Greenway

Barbara Charry – The Nature Conservancy

Bonnie Harper – Open Space Council

Libby Reuter – Watershed Cairns

Traci Lichtenberg – Missouri American Water Company

Rachel Rimmerman – St. Louis University

Todd Miller – Missouri Department of Transportation

Christina Favilla – Sierra Club Piasa Palisades Chapter

### **Staff:**

Mary Grace Lewandowski   Jennifer Vuitel   Aaron Young   Lee Harris   Maureen McCarthy

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The virtual meeting of the Regional Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRC) was called to order by Chair Carol Lawrence, East-West Gateway Council of Governments (EWG). Those attending introduces themselves.

## 2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

### **A. Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative – Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act**

- Mayor Phil Stang, Kimmswick, MO

Each year the Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative (MRCTI) develops a federal policy platform regarding our legislation, appropriation, and authorization priorities for the upcoming year. As the 2021 platform was being constructed, several repeating themes came to light that have been made prevalent throughout this proposal. First, COVID 19 has laid bare vulnerabilities throughout the region that need to be addressed immediately. Secondly, much of what is most needed in our cities now supports recovery work from the pandemic. The recovery drive by the administration to arrive at a climate solution is something MRCTI supports in a broad sense, but that drive cannot leave Middle America behind. Biden's climate agenda is welcomed, but it will not be successful unless it includes Middle America. MRCTI has a plan for the Mississippi River Corridor to contribute to the nation's progress around climate.

The centerpiece of the MRCTI plan is the proposed Safeguarding the Mississippi River Together Act, or Smart Act. The proposal will allow cities to transform their economies from polluted industrial to clean manufacturing and tourism. The bill will give resources to States to secure their water quality so that the \$456 billion fresh water economy of the corridor can expand and thrive. The Smart Act also calls for the development of the comprehensive Mississippi River Restoration Plan and the establishment of a National Mississippi River Program Office to make the region more resilient. America's most vulnerable and most valuable natural assets such as the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes, Missouri River, Columbia River, Gulf of Mexico, and others all have their own discreet federal programs as authorized by the Water Resources Development Act. This proposal is paramount to increase national security, as it will work to eliminate vulnerabilities and secure the global commodity supply chain, keep commerce flowing, and protect public and private properties subject to numerous national disasters. This proposal would place the National Mississippi River Program Office within the Department of Interior using the DOI budget and closely co-operating with the EPA, Army Corps of Engineers, USDA DOJ, and FEMA.

COVID 19 has laid bare vulnerabilities and in the MRCTI 2021 federal policy platform there are recommendations and increased resources for such programs as USDA Rural Reconnect Pilot Program, the Rural Community Facilities Program, the Department of Commerce Public Works Grant program, and the scenic byways program. All of the spending lines offer support for virtual working and learning. The aim is to augment our ability to increase services and distribute critical resources, such as PPE and vaccines, and help recover the tourism industry, which is one of the most vital to our region (one of the hardest hit). Overall, our recommendation to the administration is simply to invest in the Mississippi River Corridor as a partner in climate work

and infrastructure restoration. Since the region is part of a \$64 billion global commodity export operation, any infrastructure package moving forward must include our inland waterway system to sustain both built and natural infrastructure.

Finally, the MRCTI is also supporting the Break Free from Plastics Act to reduce plastic waste waterways, improve floaters, waste management, and incentivize markets around re-usable materials

On March 4<sup>th</sup> MRCTI signed an historic and innovative agreement with Ducks Unlimited Cargill and others to develop natural infrastructure assets, such as wetlands and marshes throughout the Mississippi River basin to provide both habitat and disaster protection for our cities. In carrying out our agreement with Ducks Unlimited, we will first embark an initial pilot project to deploy natural infrastructure in three locations in the upper, middle, and lower regions of the river basin. Pilot areas will include areas subjected to repetitive loss and good for waterfowl.

## **B. Update on Southwestern Illinois Watershed Management Plans**

- Mary Vandebord, HeartLands Conservancy

HeartLands Conservancy has been doing this work in Southwestern Illinois and greater Southwestern Illinois since 1989. The main purpose and vision is that all places in our region have clean air and water, there's places for nature to thrive, and that people in our region have access to high quality outdoor experiences. One of the ways that HeartLands work on this is through watershed planning and watershed improvement.

HeartLands Conservancy has completed seven watershed plans since 2012. Six of those plans have been approved by the Illinois EPA and one is still pending by review. There are four plans that are currently underway, one being the Prairie du Pont watershed. Also in progress is the Highland Silver Lake Watershed plan in partnership with the city of Highland and is to be completed this year. This watershed plan is intended to preserve the largest source of drinking water for a major area in the eastern part of Madison County. The planning for the Prairie du Pont Watershed and the Judy's Branch Watershed in St. Clair County began this year. These plans are being carried out in partnership with the Illinois EPA and address some of the issues happening in Cahokia Heights, IL.

There are many plans that are currently in the implementation phase. The first project was the Silver Creek Watershed Initiative in 2012. It is a primarily agricultural watershed but it does flow through more urbanized areas. As it goes further south it is in the Scott Air force Base vicinity and there are many issues in that area like riparian corridor destruction, erosion, trash and debris. The base has frequent flash flooding events that happen in the lower part of the watershed. There are two plans for the upper and lower Silver Creek Watershed. The surrounding communities and counties signed on to a memorandum of understanding that we would all work together to implement the results of those planning efforts towards healthier water and less flooding in the community. As a result of the first plan, we received a 319-implementation grant from the state of Illinois to do best management practices in the upper Silver Creek Watershed from the Madison County line to the Montgomery County line, along Silver Creek. HeartLands Conservancy is trying to target places that are currently in the

floodplain or lands that would be suitable for stormwater storage in the future so that land can be set aside to reduce the amount of water heading into Scott Air Force Base. We are trying to complete as much as we can by 2025 and then hopefully get renewed for another round of funding to continue that process. In terms of Silver Creek there are a lot of efforts still continuing in that area such as a hydrology study being conducted by the USGS to focus on some of the water flow heading into Scott Air Force Base.

HeartLands Conservancy received implementation funding to make sure that the water quality of Silver Lake reservoir is protected because it is the drinking water source for a lot of people living in that area. HeartLands has developed a virtual tour of practices installed over the last few years using 319 grants.

At the moment there is a major project going on in the Indian Creek – Cahokia Creek watershed. This watershed plan was completed in partnership with Madison County. An application for implementation funding was submitted and the watershed project was awarded close to \$1 million in funds from the Illinois EPA. The initial grant was set to expire in 2022 but was just extended to 2023.

HeartLands Conservancy is matching their 319 grant funds with the State of Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant opportunity to do wetland restoration and some flood control projects out at Brushy Lake. This is located within the Canteen Creek Watershed just off of I-55 and Horseshoe Lake Rd. It is a major project that has been in the works for a long time. HeartLands Conservancy is trying to work with the surrounding landowners to extend this restoration project into their land as well. This project will reduce the amount of water coming down into the State Park Place area, Fairmount City and the East St. Louis vicinity by trying to store the water up upland of those areas before it gets down to them.

This past year HeartLands Conservancy has worked around Dunlap Lake, which is one of the major lakes in the Canteen Watershed. There was an application submitted to the State Revolving Fund to assist with resolving the water quality issues in that area.

The newest project that began in March 2021 is the Prairies du Pont and Judy's Branch Watershed projects. The Judy's Branch portion of St. Clair County includes East St. Louis and Fairmont City. The Prairie du Pont Watershed includes Cahokia Heights, Centerville, some unincorporated areas, and the western part of Bellville. There are significant storm water and sewer system issues in this area. Overall wastewater system infrastructure problems are happening in this area. Over the next two years we will be working on solutions based approaches, as well as smaller short-term projects that could help provide immediate relief in the northern Centerville area (Cahokia Heights).

### **C. Land Conservation Grant Program**

- Gus Raeker, Missouri Department of Conservation

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) structures its efforts around three primary goals: take care of nature; connect people to nature; and to maintain public trust. This grant program is recognition of what the MDC can do. However, the MDC can't accomplish its goals alone. There

has to be collaborations and synergies with great partners to look for innovative ways to work together for conservation.

There was a first and second calls for proposals and the third will be launched within the next month. The Land Conservation Grant focuses on protecting places that harbor a lot of species of concern or have high ecosystem benefits and provide great opportunities to connect people to nature. The program is split into four different sub-grant programs: the Land Acquisition Program, Conservation Easements, Land Conservation Innovations, and the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Program.

The Land Acquisition Program helps MDC find partners that can help protect as much land that needs to be conserved as possible. This program works with non-profits and local governments who are interested in acquiring lands and making those available for conservation purposes and for public use. MDC will award grants that cover up to 75 percent of the cost up to a maximum of \$200,000 for a specific project, for a specific property that they would like to acquire. This program is run by a scoring system to figure out how valuable the project is and how far it advances our goals, and then compare it to the amount of funding we have and so on. Examples of projects recently closed on with partners include assisting St. Louis County to acquire 150 acre and assisting in the acquisition of ten acres for a community forest property adjacent to an urban downtown area near Springfield, MO.

The Land Easements Program provides funds to create legal documents that put certain protections on properties which will limit what can be done in terms of development. MDC has found over the years that there are a number of landowners out there that actually have some interest in donating conservation easements but the costs associated with their development can be a barrier. Conservation easements are managed by a land trust and the only way for the trust to do that is by receiving the funds necessary to develop the easement. The trust will need to close on it, put together a baseline data report, and then monitor the easements annually. Then, they will actually need to act on any enforcement issues that come up in the future.

The Land Conservation Innovation Program is an open-ended solicitation of ideas for ways to work together with partners to advance land conservation. The application is a two page summary of the vision of the proposal, what the budget is and what match will be provided. MDC intentionally doesn't provide a lot of sidebars in terms of what we are willing to consider partially because this program is so new and MDC doesn't know what to expect and does not want to stifle creativity. It is an opportunity for partnership and coordination of efforts. This program has been discussed with the Lower Meramec Core Partners.

The Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Program assists MDC in finding ways to connect people to nature through outdoor recreation. This could include things like new trail systems and fishing docks.

#### **D. Recap of Global Freshwaters Summit**

- Laura Madden, Phoenix Consults

The Global Freshwater Summit took place virtually April 19 – 23 during Earth Week using the Missouri History Museum platform. One objective of the Summit was to activate the will of the people, community and leaders toward restoration of our freshwater biomes. There were about 400 unique registrations and participants throughout the Summit either during the daily sessions or the film festival. Each day of the Summit had a different theme. They were: state of the river, governance, protecting the river, food and agriculture and lifestyles in harmony with nature. The themes were addressed with panels and presentations led by speakers with local, regional, national and global expertise and perspectives. In partnership with Films for The Planet, a virtual film festival was held with documentaries and films which coincided with the theme for each day. Recordings from the Summit will be available on the Global Freshwaters Summit website. One to look for is the bonus interview with Libby Reuter of Watershed Cairns who works to increase the understanding of how beautiful and vibrant these rivers are.

### 3. OTHER BUSINESS/ ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### **A. Operation Clean Stream**

- Bonnie Harper, Open Space Council

Operation Clean Stream will be taking place this year in the Meramec Watershed on August 28. There will be groups of people on floats throughout different sections of the Meramec River. There will also be cleanups at various parks and greenways throughout the watershed. There will be an option to do a self guided cleanup for those who do not feel comfortable gathering as a group. The waste hauling coordination will take place from August 21<sup>st</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>. Registration will be open at the end of June.

#### **B. Grand Glaize Creek 319 Watershed Plan**

- Jay Hoskins, Metropolitan Sewer District

MSD is organizing an effort to develop a 319 watershed plan for Grand Glaize Creek, located in the south-central portion of St. Louis County. MDS will be wanting to meet with community partners to learn about what kinds of projects people would be interested in doing to improve water quality in the Grand Glaize Watershed. MSD would like to have a plan developed by next summer or early fall 2022. MSD could be eligible for grants funding in 2022, but there has to be an approved 319 plan so the community partners can complete their projects. You can contact Jay Hoskins at (636) 346-7961 if you are interested in participating in this plan.

### 4. AJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting of the Water Resources Advisory Committee will on Friday, November 5, 2021.