

STATE WATER PLAN TASK FORCE MEETING

October 16, 2023

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Web-Ex Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members Present:

IDNR–OWR: Loren Wobig, Wes Cattoor, Terra McParland, Megan McKinney, Rick Pohlman, Tara Jagadeesh, Wei Han, Ania Bayers, Russell Flinchum
ISWS: Laura Keefer, Trent Ford, Glenn Heistand, Walt Kelly
IEPA: Jeff Edstrom , Gary Bingenheimer, Todd Rettig, Nidhan Singh, Scott Twait
IDOA: Michael Woods
IDPH: Gerrin Cheek-Butler, Brian Cox
IEMA: Zachary Krug,
IDOT: Brian McCoy
IWRC: IDNR – ORC-Mike McClelland

Agencies not in attendance: IDNR–OMM, DCEO, IPCB

Non-Members Present:

Robert Hirschfeld- PRI
Jeniece Nevillem- Engineering Enterprises, Inc.
Prof. Rachel Havrelock- Uofl-Chi
Prof. Krishna Reddy- Uofl-Chi
Dr. Matthew Wilson- Uofl-Chi
Dr. Ahmed Rachid El-Khattabi- UNC

Welcome:

After some technical difficulties and making sure everyone could hear and be heard, Loren opened the meeting at 1:30 pm. Loren welcomed everyone to the meeting indicating that the agenda was a short one but there is a lot to cover. The Task Force has transitioned into implementing and developing the plan that we have worked so hard to develop and one of those ways is with water reuse, which is the 2nd recommendation in the water use laws and regulations.

Minutes:

Loren brought forth the recommendation of approving the minutes from the last meeting; giving everyone online and in the room the opportunity to correct or add to the minutes. Laura Keefer moved to approve; seconded by Michael Woods. No opposition, motion carried, minutes approved.

Water Reuse- University of Illinois-Chicago: Loren introduced the topic of water reuse especially with a lot of his travels lately within the Great Lakes. Several other states are looking to solve some of their challenges with water depletion and with that Loren turned it over to Professor Rachel Havrelock who is the Director of the UIC Freshwater Lab. She introduced the members of her team: Professor Krishna

Reddy, UIC Sustainable Engineering Research Lab, Dr. Ahmed Rachid El-Khattabi, Associate Director at the U of North Carolina Environmental Finance Center, and Dr. Matthew Wilson, Associate Director, and Workforce Development, UIC Great Cities Institute.

Rachel began by mentioning she's attempting to come at this from the policy angle. She was inspired by the Illinois State Water Survey and shortly thereafter they met with Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) and in those conversations there was the thoughts and inputs brought up and grants were being sought after. They then realized they didn't have the groundwork to be competitive. So, in reference to Joliet specifically, they are wanting to do more of a dual pipeline system and partnerships. They were wanting to do collaborations with Water Reclamation and UofI-C, but it was likely that they needed a grant. They are very interested in industrial and commercial use and using within Cook County. There are massive investments coming through EPA and through the infrastructure act. Rachel said she wants to point out that the US EPA water resources action plan is the singular one in Illinois. They are not registering on the federal level yet and there's great opportunities to do so.

Rachel also pointed out that Chicago is in a unique position for a few reasons. The city has the deep tunnel system that can hold the contents of the combined sewers, storing them, treating and releasing them. We are a great lake state without return use and there's high volumes of that water and it can be used without impacting navigation. Rachel also brought up the July floods where Chicago was questioning what to do with all that rainwater? The surrounding communities are beginning to face water depletion and they're trying to balance some of these extremes: flooding and drought. She's wondering if there's some sort of pilot program that could begin to see what could be done. Loren brought up there is a precedent in Los Angeles since 1995 that has been successful routing and supplying recycled water to industry with great success.

Rachel suggests bringing industry in as a partner to help and perhaps reclaim some of that water, and that northern area of IL has a unique geology that perhaps we can use. But again, referencing Joliet is the main center and example that we're looking at. But we're hoping to use Chicago and this dual pipeline to expand this project. Rachel says it's a "win win" situation. The Los Angeles situation shows that its possible. This makes sure every household has water.

Dr. Krishna was invited in and said that it's possible to reduce the carbon footprint using this model. There's been very promising results. Rachel spoke again and said the next step they'd like to bring up to the task force is the Department of the Interior has made an appropriation for large scale water recycling projects. This is an opportunity to get Illinois into a reuse space and get some grants to collaborate with.

Rachel said this project is also raising a lot of concerns in the city about the cost burden which they're afraid will largely fall on households. We don't want to find anyone in Illinois afraid they can't afford their water bill. Rachel rested and opened the floor to questions. Loren pointed out that we (IDNR) are the ones who granted the water allocation to Joliet and there are stipulations they have to meet to get that allocation. But Loren points out he is also the one who must sit in a room like this with other Great Lake States and Provinces and stay within our decree as well as being good stewards of the water.

The more we reuse the water, the less we're pulling out of Lake Michigan which is tied to Illinois' own allotment. And that leads to the conversation of climate change. Part of that allocation is impacted by the runoff from storms for example into the north branch of the Chicago River watershed. We must

count that. So how do we better to control that and perhaps not pull as much water out of the Great Lakes?

Steve jumped in as the division manager for Resource Management and pointed out he's been heavily involved in these recent allocations. Steve asks if maybe it can throw things into chaos by doing this as well. He wants to state he does heavily support the idea but there may be bigger players such as industry that could create issues for. Some communities are taking their water allocation and selling that water to other industries for a profit, and then instead of putting that money back into their infrastructure as they should, they're using it to beautify and upgrade parks and green spaces. Rachel answered that it doesn't have to have such a dynamic impact. One thing they looked at when they were in discussions with MWRD is that resistance was tempered by industries reaching out. By having those entities supply the water wholesale thereby not setting up competition, and you don't want to undercut utilities, you want them whole. This is where policy comes in, do we incentivize adoption? Do we use a lower rate? What it did in L.A. is help pay for their infrastructure. But from industry's point of view, it was a great investment. However, it's become kind of a game for communities on how long can they stay on the aquifer? By signing on to recycled water, it creates a stability in volatile supply conditions. These industries benefitted from all the grants that came into build infrastructure. There would need to be a conversation about the pricing of course.

Loren says he had an encounter recently with a steel worker about how it's been great P.R. for their company to be considered green and move forward.

Laura from State Water Survey asked would there be any consequence in the downstream aquatic ecosystem? Depending on the industry, would it be returned or consumptive? Dr. Krishna says the impact is minimal. Laura wanted to know how this could affect other counties- what the extremes are? Rachel says some models could be rerun to look for the worst and best extremes.

Loren turned the conversation to Todd at EPA. He says they've had discussions on the regulatory side. Jeff from EPA wanted to know about water distribution, who builds or maintains these things? Scott says some legislation has been proposed. How is it being treated? Loren says the legislation is coming too fast, too soon in his opinion. There are some regions, and the port of Chicago has shown some interest that they could use to promote the grey water with some ad rule changes. Todd says they'll take that back to EPA for more guidance.

Dr. Krishna says from a water policy perspective, the treatment could be tailored easily. Infrastructure, he's aware, is a big concern. Loren says we should have funding appropriation. And we should be able to use the Task Force to bring that ask as a unit.

SWP Recommendations Status:

1. *Water Quality*- Loren stated that he has been working to codify the SWPTF within the Illinois Rivers Lakes and Streams Act. There are some general assembly people who are asking him frequently how they can help move this forward. The Integrated Water Information Center (IWIC), he's been working to further establish the center. By working with PRI we could make DNR a repository. The National Flood Plain Implementation (NFIP) has had some movement as they work closely with FEMA and FEMA has been on the record as making sure the NFIP program is working with communities to make sure they are not actively building in flood plains and staying within the guidelines set by the program. Each agency of

the Governor is only allowed to advance a certain number of legislative items per year. Some have been postponed.

2. *Climate Section*- Trent Ford from ISWS says flash drought has been a big concern of theirs lately. A lot of their recommendations need federal funds.

3. *Integrated Water Management*- Loren has nothing new to add.

4. *Long Term Funding*- Jeff at EPA says he's already spoken some on this issue, but EPA wants to do more collaboration. They've gotten some new equipment and they've been testing some sports fish and monitoring fresh water. Asset management is ongoing.

5. *Water Sustainability*- Wei reported they are wanting to develop a website to make this data available to stakeholders. They are also finalizing a 2-year grant agreement with Heartland Conservancy in the downstate area. They are also working with IDPH for updating state job preparedness and response, PRI has also helped with that.

6. *Lake Michigan*- Ania is moving away from the program so Tara from Chicago is starting to take the lead. Coastal is working on updating their number of staff. They will be working on recruiting other water leaders from our region to help with tasks. Their focus currently is applying for federal funds that are coming in. Also applying for NOAA grants as well as working on some coastal residency plans that they are partnering with various municipalities nonprofits to develop those.

7. *Flood Damage Mitigation*- Terra says they didn't make as much progress last quarter as she would have liked so she would remind everyone to make sure your committees are being reconvened and these topics are being discussed. A lot of these recommendations require funding so if your agency or committee is hearing about some funding opportunities, make sure to share that with the task force as it could help another section secure some funding which could help you make some progress on some of your items.

8. *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat*- No current updates

9. *Water Use Laws and Regulations*- No current updates

10. *Navigation*- Brian from IDOT says they are currently working on some studies to provide resources for port districts. They are finding it may take longer than anticipated, closer to 3 years. But eventually there will be a directory and rates and charges database. The Governor signed a new order to establish a ports district commissioner in June of this year. IDOT website will be updated.

11. *Erosion and Sedimentation*- Michael Woods is hosting a series of meetings coming up.

12. *Data Management*- Laura is looking at the streamgaging network and seeing which ones are still being used by USGS and which stations need to stay.

13. *Recreation*— Mike McClelland spoke about a mobile app being developed for angling. Jeff from EPA had a comment about technology and how to get data from wisdom. Loren likes the meetings as scheduled like today with more of a focus on 1 major issue with updates from the other sections. However, if we go back to critical milestones like today's meeting, we may need to schedule out 2 hours of time again vs 1.5 hours. Laura recommended an "owl" which is a device used in hybrid meetings that

turns and zooms in on the person talking automatically. IDOT and EPA have wired rooms they can offer to let us use for future meetings so we may not have the troublesome issues experienced this time.

Schedule:

Future Meetings: **January 8, 2024- 1:30 PM- virtual**

April 8, 2024- 1:30 PM - virtual

July 8, 2024- 1:30 PM- virtual

Meeting adjourned at 3:34 PM.