

## MEETING MINUTES

- Date: January 15, 2014
- Location: IDOT District 1, 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, Schaumburg, IL
- Subject: IL Route 31 Phase I Study-Environmental Interest Group Meeting
- Attendees: For attendees presenting the meeting in person, see attached sign-in sheet  
Attendees via webinar include:
- Shawn Cirton, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
  - Soren Hall, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
  - Cory Horton, McHenry County
  - Dawn Thompson, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), Silver and Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition
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### I. Introduction

- a. Introduction of attendees
- b. Meeting purpose: Review environmental resources in project area, the minimization and mitigation efforts, the currently proposed design, and solicit feedback upon the proposed Best Management Practices (BMPs) and design elements.
- c. Project status update
  - A summary of the current project status and design changes to minimize impacts was provided by John Clark from STV.
  - Clark presented the project schedule. A Community Advisory Committee meeting is planned to be held in Spring 2014. The public hearing is planned to be held in Winter 2014/Spring 2015. The project will be presented at the June 2014 NEPA/404 merger meeting.
  - Norm West (U.S. EPA) asked if a depressed median had been considered for the design. Clark responded that a rural road section with a depressed median had at one time been considered, but that alternative resulted in greater environmental impacts than a narrower urban road section. An urban road section has a curbed median, but may still be turf.

## II. Environmental Resources Presentation

- a. Linda Huff (Huff & Huff) presented an overview of watersheds in streams in the project area. She discussed the area's watershed goals and how the roadway design is compatible with watershed goals.
- b. Jim Novak (Huff & Huff) presented a summary of wetlands and wetland impacts in the project area. Thirty-five wetlands were identified in the project area, with 19 wetlands impacted by the project. The wetland impacts affected 19 wetlands; the largest wetland impact among the 19 wetlands was 0.38 acre. Only one of the wetlands surveyed in the project area had a Floristic Quality Index (FQI) greater than 20, which is associated with a High Quality Aquatic Resource (HQAR). Two seep wetlands were identified in the project area. One seep (#35) is in close proximity to IL 31, while the second seep (#24) is outside the project limits. The project's ultimate design will avoid both of the seep wetlands, as seep wetland impacts are considered not mitigatable. The project team has developed design modifications (alignment shifts, lane width reductions, and median width reductions in the area between River Birch and Ames Road) to reduce wetland impacts and avoid both seep wetlands in the project area.
  - Liz Pelloso (U.S. EPA) asked if there is potential for incidental impacts to the seep wetlands due to the proximity of the roadway. Scott Czaplicki (IDOT) stated that erosion control measures and a retaining wall will be placed between the road and the wetland, and a buffer between the road and the wetland will also be provided.
  - Cindy Skrukud (Sierra Club) stated that the wetland may experience impacts from salt spray.
  - Dennis Dreher (Silver and Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition) asked that downgradient wetlands that could be impacted by chlorides be studied in order to protect groundwater. The Boone Creek Watershed Coalition has developed salt impacts research that should be used for this project. Huff responded that the proposed Best Management Practices (BMPs) in the project and improved IDOT deicing practices are anticipated to reduce chloride runoff.
  - West asked if direct impacts of the project included construction. The project team responded yes.
- c. Huff continued the presentation by identifying several BMPs currently proposed as part of the project: natural bottom culverts, vegetated swales, and meandering Squaw Creek.
  - Pelloso asked what IDOT's specifications for natural bottom culverts are and asked if there will there be excavation of 2-3 feet in depth with riprap.

Vanessa Ruiz (IDOT) responded that IDOT can use three-sided or buried culverts to achieve a natural bottom culvert. Pelloso requested more information as to the extent of the use of riprap. Clark added that hydraulic analysis also factors into the design of natural bottom culverts due to scour. STV will continue to develop culvert alternatives for the project, but will take these comments into consideration.

- Huff stated that vegetated swales are being considered at key locations where there could be discharge from the road into the stream. The meandering of Squaw Creek is being evaluated along the approximate 1900 feet it runs along the east side of IL 31 to slow stream flow and reduce erosion. Currently, Squaw Creek is a channelized stream with eroded banks. Clark added that riffles will also be added to the meandering stream, further slowing the stream flow.
- Pelloso asked if Squaw Creek is currently a ditch, and if the meandered stream is expected to also function as a ditch or if there will be a separate ditch for IL 31. Clark stated the meandered stream will continue to function as a drainage point with the proposed improvements.
- Randy Schietzelt (Land Conservancy of McHenry County) asked how IDOT will ensure that the vegetated swales from becoming all phragmites, as there is some present near Thunderbird Lake. Novak responded that this will be considered in the restoration plan; the area needs native plantings that aren't invasive.
- Jeannine Smith (Village of Prairie Grove) asked will the IDOT maintenance be used or a separate maintenance contract. IDOT maintenance will be used.
- Dreher stated that the project area has much reed canary grass, and a long term maintenance plan is needed that contains performance criteria to control invasive species.
- Dreher asked that the McHenry County Conservation Map with Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV) plan be used for the project
- Pelloso suggested that a two-stage channel design be considered for the meandering of Squaw Creek to provide a secondary filtration area. Sanjay Joshi (STV) stated that the road is being designed to direct all runoff through swales or other BMPs in this area. Pelloso asked how close the meandered Squaw Creek would be to IL 31; as the stream concept develops, it should consider that streams move over time so it is designed correctly. She prefers using natural open cell articulated revetment block mat and not rip rap for stabilization if possible.

- Clark described the proposed shared-use path that extends along IL 31 as part of the project. Skrukrud stated that local bicycle groups have stated they would not use a trail adjacent to IL 31 due to the proximity of the existing Prairie Trail. Skrukrud commented that she is interested in the cost comparison of bike path versus oak trees. Czaplicki responded that the IL 31 shared-use path was proposed to comply with the IDOT Complete Streets policy and is part of the project's purpose and need. IDOT determined the Prairie Trail was a regional bicycle facility, and did not accommodate all local bicycle traffic from residential areas along IL 31. Because an on-street bicycle facility was not appropriate along IL 31 due to traffic, a shared-use path was proposed. Each signalized crossing of IL 31 is proposed to include bicycle and pedestrian crossings. He continued that local agencies may choose to opt out of the shared-use path, if desired. Eric Morimoto (Crystal Lake) commented that Crystal Lake is in the process of developing a bike plan. Smith stated that the Village of Prairie Grove does not desire to have a path south of Sleepy Hollow Creek.
- Dreher asked if there were design criteria or design targets for pollutant removal for the BMPs identified to be included in the project. He is in favor of improving filtration for the length of the corridor, and suggested that swales be included for the entire length. Huff responded that since the project will have a Section 404 individual permit, a pollutant loading analysis is required, and all proposed BMPs will be evaluated to determine pollutant loadings as part of the anti-degradation permit analysis. It may not be in the area's best interest to infiltrate everything to the groundwater; sending some water to streams may be preferable to protect seeps and private wells. Cirton concurred with Huff, stating that the project team should be concerned with both groundwater and surface water preservation. He suggested that more BMPs be considered for infiltration in addition to the vegetated swales.
- West asked if the county has regulatory guidelines. Horton responded that McHenry County is evaluating its hydrology to determine where infiltration is beneficial. He mentioned two recent studies: 1) IWGS-groundwater simulation study, 2) McHenry County GIS study.
- Skrukrud asked if IDOT can provide a commitment to reduce salt use. Ruiz responded that IDOT could investigate such items during IEPA permitting in the design phase of the project.
- Pelloso asked the project team to summarize the proposed stormwater detention in the project area. Clark stated that the project team identified

seven sensitive outlets in the project area. The north area of the project corridor (Bull Valley Road to IL 120) is considered one sensitive outlet due to existing flooding problems. The project team will identify sites for regional detention ponds. The soil is very sandy, so clay liners could be used in stormwater facilities if chlorides were a concern in the area of the detention facility, which are projected to be wet-bottom facilities with native plantings.

- Dreher asked if the McHenry County stormwater ordinance was considered when creating stormwater detention for the project. Horton added that detention may help to dilute pollutants, but a plan is needed to minimize IDOT salt use on the roads. McHenry County has been experimenting with methods to reduce salt use, and has found that prewetting salt can reduce its use by 30%. Horton also stated that IDOT does not need to follow the county ordinance, but they ask that IDOT consider doing so.
  - Morimoto stated that Crystal Lake has received many complaints of flooding from area residents. Residents could view the road project as exacerbating the situation, and Smith concurred.
  - Horton stated that although IDOT is exempt from McHenry County local requirements, the county is willing to review proposed plans.
- West asked if the truck traffic on IL 31 was high, and if there is a concern for spills from vehicles. Clark responded that truck traffic is high, and Smith stated there was a recent spill in the project area due to a vehicle crash.
- Smith asked if the project had design funding. Czaplicki stated that there is funding for design, but not for land acquisition or construction.
- Schietzelt asked how wetland mitigation for the project would occur. Novak and Ruiz responded that it would likely occur in wetland banks within the Fox River watershed, as that is the USACE's preferred mitigation method. Dreher responded that the Silver and Sleepy Hollow Creeks Watershed Coalition's watershed plan states that their preferred mitigation will occur within their subwatershed. Skrukud stated that Steven Byers from the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission asked if wetland mitigation for the IL 31 project could occur at Stearns Fen. Ruiz stated that IDOT has worked with McHenry County Conservation District on similar projects in the past, and that method works if the county has an existing project where the mitigation can occur. Cirton stated that mitigation at Stearns Fen could be potentially be accepted by USACE; a

wetland bank is their first option but they could consider other options. Novak indicated that the IWPA does not allow for fee-in-lieu, unlike the USACE and local ordinance. Novak concluded that IDOT has to comply with IEPA.

- d. Czaplicki stated that a proposed drainage plan is being developed and the project is going above and beyond typical IDOT standards. Novak summarized the environmental surveys expected to take place in the project area in 2014, including Eastern prairie fringed orchid (EPFO) and Blanding's turtle surveys, as well as tree surveys.
- Shawn Cirton (US FWS) stated that EPFO surveys occurred in the project area in 2012. Ruiz concurred that EPFO was completed in 2012, but since the Blanding's turtle would be surveyed near Thunderbird Lake in 2014, IDOT will also survey for EPFO in conjunction with that survey.
  - Skrukud asked what impacts are proposed to the existing oak trees along IL 31. Dreher and Jeannine Smith (Village of Prairie Grove) stated that the project team should use GIS files from McHenry County, notably files that show stream buffers, aquifer protection areas, and remnant woodlands. The project team will obtain these files and add to project maps. Cory Horton (McHenry County) stated the project team could contact him for files.
  - Smith continued that the Village of Prairie Grove has ideas for reuse of trees removed as part of the IL 31 project. She asked that IDOT provide the village notification of when trees will be removed so the trees may be removed by others and reused rather than removed and chipped by IDOT contractors. Novak added that a volunteer acorn collection effort in the project area could be started, and the acorns can be used to develop seedlings for replanting impacted trees here.

A copy of the presentation and exhibits from the meeting are available for review on the project website: <http://ilroute31.com/othermeetings.html>

Illinois Route 31 Environmental Assessment  
 Environmental Resources Meeting  
 January 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 2:30 PM

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