

Minutes
Environmental Advisory Board
21 August 2019
Ogden Dunes Town Hall

The Environmental Board met on 21 August 2019 at 5:30 pm at the Ogden Dunes Town Hall. Attendees were, Susan MiHalo, Sue Adams, Jim Biancotti, Kristine Sandrick, Chelsea Overholt, Vicky Albritton, and John Morris. Sharvari Dalal and Federico Gallo were present as a guests. Scott Lehmann also attended.

Sue moved to accept the minutes of the last meeting of the Environmental Board, for 12 June 2019. Vicky seconded. The motion carried.

The timeline of the contamination of the East Branch of the Little Calumet River and the Burns Waterway was outlined first. On 11 August 2019, approximately 900 lbs of ammonia was released from Outfall 001 of the Burns Harbor Arcelor Mittal mill. This is most likely the immediate cause of the fish kill observed by boaters. This was probably due to a failure at a blast furnace water recirculation system, causing a subsequent failure at the plant treatment facility. On 12 August 2019, when the first laboratory results were obtained, it was learned there was an exceedance for cyanide as well. IDEM apparently did not know until 15 August 2019. That morning, Scott Lehmann and Mike Teeling discussed closing the beach. NPS at the same time closed the Portage Lakefront beach. It was asked whether, if the town had contacts on a national response center listing, we could have been notified sooner. Indiana American Water was apparently not notified by Arcelor Mittal. They learned of the situation from the press. Consequently, the water source was switched to the Gary intake. By 17 August 2019, it was determined that 3000 fish had been killed in the incident.

In addition, on 20 August 2019, hydraulic fluid leaked from an outfall of US Steel Midwest plant into Burns Waterway. This was quickly contained with a boom. That same day, an oil sheen was observed in the port, and eventually traced back to Arcelor Mittal.

Communications need to be established between the town and other involved parties. Scott Lehmann and Dan Plath of NPS should exchange information, and setting up a community right-to-know contacts list is imperative. This would involve setting up a local emergency planning committee (LEPC). A chain of notifications must be detailed, in case one or more contacts are unavailable.

Sampling has been done by the town and analyzed by ALS for cyanide. Those sample results were non-detect. The beach will remain closed until three consecutive day's data is found to be clean. Notice will be given to town residents by multiple avenues. The electronic sign used by the police department can be programmed to point to the town web page, where updates are posted. Notices can be posted at

the mailboxes for the less web savvy. A FAQ sheet can be prepared, with some of the proposed questions listed below:

Is my drinking water safe?

What information did you use to re-open the beach?

Is there any residue in the sand?

Is it safe for the kids to swim?

Could this happen again?

How are we getting information from officials?

What was the impact on animals and other aquatic life?

For legal reasons, including recovering some costs incurred by this incident, Scott Lehmann is writing a letter to IDEM to give us standing. A National Resource Damage Assessment would evaluate how our town and environs have been affected by this event. Scott asked for assistance in reviewing the mass of data he is receiving. John volunteered to help.

In other business, Chelsea said we plan to hold the beach cleanup again this year, even though there is very little beach. The national day is 21 September 2019.

Jim asked if Anne Muntean was going to attend the Septic System Coordination Workgroup meeting. He said there was one coming up, but she had not attended the last one. She probably should as Town's clean water ambassador.

There was discussion whether to hold the 28 September workshop as planned, or convert it to an overview of the spill events. It was also suggested that a public forum be held in a couple weeks. No date was discussed.

Sue moved to adjourn and Jim seconded. The motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Submitted by John Morris.