

## **STATE WATER PLAN TASK FORCE MEETING**

April 7, 2025

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Web-Ex Meeting Minutes

### **Task Force Members Present:**

IDNR – OWR: Wes Cattoor, Megan McKinney, Rick Pohlman, Meg Kelly, Steve Altman, Wei Han, Terra McParland, Loren Wobig,  
ISWS: Laura Keefer, Glenn Heistand, Jason Zhang  
IEPA: -Christine Davis,  
IDOT: Brian McCoy, BJ Murray  
IWRC: Yu-Feng Forrest Lin  
IDNR – ORC: Brian Metzke, Nathan Grider, Mike McClelland  
IEMA: Zack Krug  
IPCB: Essence Brown  
IDOAg: Brian Rennecker  
Agencies not in attendance: DCEO, IDPH

### **Non-Members Present:**

USGS: David Dupre, Jon Lageman, Amy Russell  
IDNR – Mines: Mike Tarlton  
Surfrider Foundation: Devin McAllester  
Unfence Gillson: Jeff Axelrod  
IERG: Marissa Wesley  
Rep Tracy Katz Muhl office: Christian Sorenson  
Equitable Cities: Sam Kling  
Public IL Residents: Wren Litz, Mary Thomas, Nancy Johnson, John Weinberger, Connie Seigel

### **Welcome**

Rick Pohlman opened the meeting at 1:32 pm. He stated that he is the Acting director of the Office of Water Resources, transitioning from Loren Wobig, who has since retired. With that position, comes the chair of the Task Force so Rick will assume that role. Wes Cattoor will continue leading the meetings, and we appreciate his leadership. Attendees were asked to identify themselves in the chat if they had never been to the meeting before; we had some newcomers.

Rick stated that we had a busy agenda and that we should get started. Wes stated that the minutes were now out, and given that it was short notice, we can either go ahead and approve or we can hold it to the next meeting and vote then. No comments on the meeting minutes.

Zack Krug from IEMA motioned to approve meeting minutes, Steve Altman seconded, and no one opposed. Minutes approved.

### **BYLAW REVIEW and DISCUSSION**

Wes stated that several emails were sent with copies/drafts of the new bylaws that we are trying to implement. Wes shared the latest copy on the screen and the marked up changes were in red. Task Force members were invited to critique the document. Christine Davis suggested that under objectives, we could lose the word “include” prior to the bullets. Wes agreed and removed the word “include”. Her second one was under Representation regarding how much time does the chair need to approve someone to speak at the meeting and that we don’t want to put the Chair on the spot. Wes says there is no timeline on how early that could be approved and/or denied. Christine says she doesn’t think the Chair would ever deny anyone. But if it becomes a problem, then perhaps more specific timelines could be put in place, such as asking to speak at a meeting either before the meeting or during the public portion. Rick stated that there would be an expectation that the member would have direct knowledge of the individual’s credentials before allowing them to speak during a meeting and thus allowing the member to nominate. Chris also asked when meetings happen and whether the posting on the IDNR’s website is sufficient. Wes stated that since we are a virtual meeting, the posting that it is virtual is enough as far as he is aware.

A public member interjected and asked if we currently had a quorum. Wes said we have not approved the bylaws yet and therefore there is no defined quorum. The public member suggested that the group was not following the Open Meetings Act, or following Robert’s Rules of Order. Wes asked where the deficiency was. She said it is not open since her friends were not at the meeting. This member of the public asked when we were going to discuss lands and Wilmette Park. Wes said the agenda was posted several days ago, and those topics were not on the agenda. Wes brought up the agenda on the screen. She again stated that the meeting was not open and that we did not have a quorum. Wes said she could submit a complaint to the IL Dept of Legal Counsel at the IDNR. Rick and Wes introduced and spelled their names again for the record. Wren Lutz said that this meeting was open to the public. Wes reminded that there is a public portion of the meeting that happens later in the meeting. Brian Rennecker from the Department of Ag spoke and asked to take a member attendance. Attendance was taken, and it was discovered that a quorum, in this case, 9 out of 11, were present. (7 out of 11 were required for quorum based on the then draft bylaws under consideration.)

Wes moved to reopen a discussion on the bylaws. He did clarify that at this time, the Members were currently only eligible to speak; public comment was later in the meeting. BJ Murray made a motion to approve the bylaws. It was seconded by Steve Altman. Steve is not a member, however, so Laura Keefer seconded. Wes asked for members to state their favor of the passing of the bylaws. The “ayes” have it, no rejections. The bylaws were officially passed as distributed with the changes proposed during the meeting. The final copy will be emailed to the membership.

### **Request for Subcommittee by Representative Muhl**

Rick summarized the request by Rep. Muhl with bill HB3685. The request asked for a subcommittee of the SWPTF to be formed to evaluate the provisions of the bill as the vehicle to do some of what is being requested in this bill. Meg Kelly is currently the topic lead for the Lake Michigan issue area of the State Water Plan and is also the director of the Illinois Coastal Management Program. The IDNR Coastal Management Program facilitates and fosters communication with several working groups in Illinois’ coastal zone. Through that work, many of the issues raised in HB3685 have been raised by coastal communities, suggesting alignment with the Lake Michigan issue area of the State Water Plan..

Brian R. motioned for there to be a subcommittee created with the Lake Michigan lead, Meg Kelly. Zack from IEMA seconded. Hearing no nays, the motion carried and the subcommittee will be created with Meg Kelly serving as the liaison between the subcommittee and the Task Force.

### **2024 Update**

The 2024 progress summary was recently published. Each year a summary of progress of recommendation implantation over the previous year is published. Rick said he thought it would be prudent to take a vote and make sure that there isn't a concern among the members on what is in this annual report. Comments were received since it's been out, and those comments have been incorporated and responded to. Rick asked for a vote to accept the summary report, and Brian M seconded. The "ayes" have it, no nays so the motion carried. It will be posted to the website.

### **SWP Recommendations Status:**

Wes asked everyone to please continue to make updates.

1. *Water Quality* – Jeff Edstrom was unavailable for the meeting; Christine Davis (Chris) provided updates on behalf of IEPA. Chris says that for the nutrient loss reduction strategy, we tentatively have a workshop scheduled for Nov 5, 2025. The agenda will be forthcoming. They are also currently watching how the financial assistance programs are working out. There is flux in the guidance currently, and they are waiting on clarification on more funding and what is happening with the federal budget. They are also working on the monitoring strategy.

2. *Climate Section*- Laura Keefer says she has notes from Trent Ford. They are continuing to develop a climate data portal that makes past and future climate information accessible to the public in Illinois. This is an ongoing collaboration between ISWS, CliMAS Dept. at UIUC, and NCSA. They expect a beta portal by early fall. Also, the Illinois 3D Mesonet initiative is moving forward with a federal earmark request. This would significantly expand the Illinois Climate Network (ICN) (at least double the # of stations) and include some new weather sensing, including drones for atmospheric profiles at multiple stations. There is a workshop planned at the I-Hotel next Monday (04/14) that multiple state agencies are participating in, where they'll develop a collaborative group to support further Mesonet advancements.

3. *Integrated Water Management*- Wes will be taking over this section from Loren. The IWIC center is coming along, and we have been in contact with the American Flood Coalition about building a data portal. Assistance has been offered from other states to assist us with creating that. Support of the State Water Plan Task Force has been 100%. The development of the IWIC center continues under the direction of the Integrated Water Management committee.

4. *Long-Term Funding*- Nidhan Singh is not on the call. Christine D. does not have updates.

5. *Water Sustainability*- Wei Han was unavailable for this meeting. No new updates.

6. *Lake Michigan*- Meg says the IDNR Coastal Management Program received 11 proposals in the most recent coastal competitive grants program, currently scoring those; waiting to hear from the federal funder on the budget, which will determine how much money is available for those projects. They are also working to finish up the Illinois North Shore Coastal Resilience Plan, which includes a new shoreline resources mapping tool. IDNR received an invitation to submit a full proposal to USEPA for a restoration of Square Marsh near Lake Calumet – partnership with The Nature Conservancy, The Wetlands Initiative, and Illinois Internal Port District. The grant would be for \$500,000 that while not guaranteed, it's a strong partnership. IDNR's Coastal team is also working on a number of education and outreach events for the summer season, including nature fests at William Powers State Park, Illinois Beach State Park and the Illinois State Fair.

7. *Flood Damage Mitigation*- Terra McParland reports that the updated rainfall related to projected climate change impacts report has been published in mid-March. This was also presented at the IAFSM conference in March. We do have a new contract set up with ISWS, and we will be collecting metadata

for H&H models from ISWS and OWR. In the future we will be soliciting information from other state and federal entities. We are continuing our work on inundation mapping and the Structures at Flood Risk (SAFR) projects. IEMA is in the process of developing mapping to help with weather projections.

8. *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat*- Brian Metzke says they made progress on increasing the diversity of streams. We can now grade streams on an A-E scale. Hopefully, this report will be published in the next few weeks or months. They are also working on a new viewer to allow the public to look at their backyard streams. Wes asked if they could correlate the old number system to the new letter grades. Brian says no, none of that will transfer.

9. *Water Use Laws and Regulations*- Steve Altman says there are new administrative rules that if any state agency builds in floodplains, there are now rules they also have to follow. They are looking to have a meeting tomorrow on this issue. Interest in water use and reuse issues are increasing; lots of communities are becoming interested, especially in water reuse.

10. *Navigation*- Brian McCoy says that the port infrastructure grant program deadline is approaching soon, and they have \$450 million available which is more than what has been available in the past. Seems our efforts are paying off and more money is coming to our region. They also received a report from the Corps of Engineers about their backlog of maintenance, which is being met now. Brian says there is a study out for updating the waterway entry and large transportation costs and a maintenance needs assessment.

11. *Erosion and Sedimentation*- No update was provided.

12. *Data Management*- Jason Zhang and Laura Keefer are on and working on an assessment at the stream gaging network. He will provide more information in July.

13. *Recreation*: Michael McClelland says that there is a new proposal for a spring stamp. They want to increase angling on private property using cooperative management agreements. Fisheries is progressing nicely with its new website, and the mobile application will be coming.

### **New Business & Public Comments**

Wes opened it up to the membership for any old or new business they would like to bring up. There was none, moving on to the public statements.

Jeff Axelrod from Unfence Gillson spoke first. He is part of a grassroots group fighting for the equitable access of our shorelines. He appreciated the membership forming a subcommittee. He apologized for the resulting disruptions about what the public thought this meeting was about. The City of Wilmette has restricted access to the beach there, especially for those not able-bodied or people of color.

Devin McAllester was next. He is with the Surfrider Foundation and working with beach access issues in the Chicago area. Surfing was illegal in Chicago for several years, but this has recently been changed, and they would like to be involved and kept abreast of any changes involving Lake Michigan.

Wren Lutz is concerned about Wilmette Beach limiting access. She is concerned about why people are being limited on the beach as well as limiting free access to the beach. Recently, she says her in-laws have lived there for a long time, and while they have an accent, people are currently asking them why are they there and what are they doing there? She feels it's very hurtful and discriminatory. Wilmette is charging people to use the beach, and residents nearby are putting up signs saying no trespassing, and she isn't even sure that is legal.

Kevin Grandfield spoke regarding his wife and her desire to walk along the beach when she became ill. He would like to make it known that the Wilmette Park Board is harming its residents. Everyone should have access to nature.

**Closing:** If anyone has any concerns, the sections and their leads were shared on the screen with emails to contact those individuals. Rick asked for any other comments or agenda items. Laura motioned for adjournment and was seconded by several people. The meeting was closed.

**Schedule:**

Future Meetings:       **July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025- 1:30 PM- virtual**  
                                  **October 6, 2025- in person (TBD)**  
                                  **January 12, 2026- 1:30 pm- virtual**