Conservation Work Group July Meeting
Friday July 24, 2020
Zoom Conference Call

Objective: Reconvene and discuss ongoing projects including:
- Conservation Grants Calendar survey results.
- Nature for All campaign.
- Region stewardship project.

In Attendance:
Jerry Adelmann, Openlands
Eric Bird, Shirley Heinz
Serrater Chapman, Calumet Collaborative
Tess Conway, Calumet Collaborative
Sarah Coulter, Calumet Collaborative
Cherie Fisher, U.S Forest Service
Paul Fitzgerald, Friends of Big Marsh
Matt Freer, Chicago Park District
Cathy Geraghty, Forest Preserves of Cook County
Natalie Johnson, Save the Dunes

AGENDA & NOTES

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. Conservation Grant Calendar Project
   a. Background
      - In 2019 the Collaborative staff reached out to conservation groups working within the region with a survey to identify the needs of organizations in the Calumet so that solutions could be identified. The survey results identified funding and capacity were common barriers to conservation work in the region.
      - The Calumet Collaborative Conservation Work Group (CWG) recommended a project related to connecting organizations to existing funding sources. Partners had spreadsheets of funding opportunities, but they were difficult to use so the group pursued an alternate method.
      - Collaborative staff with the help of Mike Mencarini of the National Park Service RTCA determined that creating a searchable grant database in the form of a calendar could help simplify finding grants for organizations of all sizes. From the original spreadsheets they identified funding categories for both public and private grants and some funding sources were entered into the Grants Calendar.
      - The idea was that this calendar would help users could find grants that best fit their needs more easily with enough lead time to submit high quality applications
      - This calendar would be collaboratively managed and so that anyone can submit grant announcements. Funders could submit their own grants when they are released and through the calendar reach a broader audience in the Calumet region.
      - The calendar that has been shared is a first draft and does not have all of the funding sources available in the region and the dates have not been entered but instead gives the general date of 2019.
      - The current calendar is modeled after the Calumet Heritage Area events calendar. This tool is user friendly and makes entering grants simple, but it relies on input from partners and funders.
• The current Grants Calendar has both filtering and search options for the grant categories, allows for additional information to be shared (i.e. funder websites), and can be imbedded on any partner’s website.

b. Survey Results
• A survey was distributed to a number of partners asked to review the first draft of the grants calendar. The general consensus was that the tool was helpful, but that it still needs several adjustments.

c. Next Steps
• We are asking for volunteers to form a small work group to discuss the survey results and address what modifications are needed.
• Tess will be sending out a doodle poll for a small group meeting specifically for the Conservation Grants Calendar.
• Volunteers for small work group to refine the tool:
  o Natalie Johnson
  o Eric Bird

III. Nature for All
a. Background
• The Collaborative staff have begun working on a Nature for All campaign to use the power of nature to bring health to the region by connecting people to their community green spaces and to highlight the many outdoor recreation opportunities in the Calumet.
  There are many excellent resources that have already been developed but few cover the entire Calumet region. We are looking to expand on the existing and create a map of natural areas that also shows the bike and pedestrian trails that can connect people to these green spaces.
• Current efforts and resources:
  o The first Nature for All meeting was held in mid-July with positive responses from partners. Tess has also been connecting one on one with partners to begin accessing map resources.
  o NIRPC is developing a bicycle trail map app for Northwest Indiana which could be expanded to the entire Calumet.
  o Indiana Dunes Tourism has a web-based Adventure Guide which includes a directory of outdoor activities including a map of all the natural areas in Northwest Indiana categorized by recreation activities (fishing, hiking, trails, etc.).
  o Shirley Heinze has a SHLT Nature Preserves Guidebook which includes a directory of natural areas with maps.
  o Field Museum has a pollinator mapping project underway and is developing an interactive map for their Calumet Region exhibit in which exhibit visitors will share their favorite spots and hidden gems in the Calumet. The eleven-month exhibit will open in the fall of 2021 and share the many stories and artifacts they have collected and studied from the Calumet.

b. Timeline
• Short- and long-term goals and actions are being determined. The short-term action could be creating a simple Google map or adding to Openlands Get Outside Map. The long-term goal could be a more comprehensive and interactive GIS map.

c. Next Steps
• Connect with Emily at Openlands to add Indiana sites to the Get Outside map.
  o Eric Bird volunteered to help populate Indiana sites to Get Outside map.
• Convene a second Nature for All work group meeting to determine next steps. Tess will be sending out a doodle poll to find the next meeting date.

IV. Regional Stewardship/Volunteer Best Practices
   a. Background
      • Following the Conservation Needs Assessment survey of 2019, the Conservation Work Group (CWG) also suggested creating a centralized stewardship resource that would announce volunteer opportunities, collect best practices for volunteer training, measure success and track volunteer participation.
      • Immediately after the CWG reviewed the survey results and determined direction for their work, stewardship events were added to the Calumet Heritage Area calendar and Collaborative partners were encouraged to continue to add their stewardship events to the tool.
         o Partners are the ones who know when the stewardship events are planned and their inputs into the calendar are essential to cultivate and grow the stewardship community.
         o Each event has to be submitted individually but can be reoccurring - the relatively quick and straightforward process only takes a few minutes.
         o CHA Calendar can be imbedded onto partner websites easily and updates in real time.
      • Centralized stewardship resource - Is it needed; will it increase stewardship engagement in the region?
      • Suggestions included:
         o Track volunteer hours with Google Form to help better recognize efforts of our volunteer networks. Potentially rewarding volunteers with swag bags and gift cards.
         o Developing a more uniform shared metric, Master Naturalists and other volunteers can receive credit for total hours volunteered in the region rather than 40 hours at Shirley Heinz, 30 hours at Cook County Forest Preserve, etc.
         o Create best practices resource to increase participation during COVID-19.
         o Create a webinar with agencies in the Calumet region that have volunteer programs or even a virtual volunteer summit.
         o Calumet Stewardship Initiative used to have a collective resources page where organizations could upload resources, something to consider creating again.
         o Training and education opportunities would build experience and skills.
         o It would be beneficial to get feedback from past volunteers to find out their needs and interests so that they continue to volunteer and recruit more volunteers.
   b. Timeline
      • Timeline to be discussed in small work group meeting.
   c. Next Steps
      • A small work group will be formed to discuss the regional stewardship resource and Tess will send out a Doodle poll.

5) Group Announcements & Closing
   a. Group Announcements
      • Collaborative staff are looking to collect environmental education resources for parents, teachers, individuals etc. for home schooling/remote learning during the pandemic. Please email any resources to tess@calumetcollaborative.org.
      • Suggestions included
         o Chicago Wilderness, Cathy Geragthy will send the link.
         o PBS Kids has a “get outdoors” program and science programs for kids.

Calumet Collaborative: the advancement of a thriving Calumet region through transformative sustainable development. www.calumetcollaborative.org
- Dunes Learning Center
  - Openlands has officially launched the African American Heritage Water Trail to highlight the greenways and blueways trails from Beaubian Woods to Robbins. This project showcases the rich history of abolition, Native American history, and industrial history and includes maps and stories throughout this part of the region.
  - The Cook County Forest Preserve is currently working on an effort to ensure that volunteers are properly supported. Cathy Geragthy would be happy to share the draft documentation. Currently, they are adapting the program for social distancing with smaller initiatives where individuals and family groups can volunteer. It would not go on a calendar to keep group sizes small, but they welcome volunteers to participate in small groups.

b. Closing

- Meeting adjourned 10:52AM.