



## **CANAL DREDGING POSTPONED ONCE AGAIN**

The dredging of the Indiana Harbor Ship Canal has been postponed once again, this time until 2009. Based on the Army Corps of Engineers' original plans it should have been completed by 2002. Why the delay? We cannot be sure but we hope it is so they can do a better job. The citizens of East Chicago found many serious problems with the original plans, ranging from objections to choice of a site too near two schools and an inadequate risk assessment to the proposed dredging technology, and the failure of anyone to assume adequate responsibility for the impact on property values or inordinate risks to the area.

Despite the Corps' resistance to change and efforts to deal with citizen complaints through public relations instead of science, the local community has made some headway in spearheading a more serious look at the problem. Through annual parades, demonstrations and public meetings, and with solid scientific critiques from several university scientists, the original plans were delayed. But politics may well have been the turning point. Few political leaders in our country are very knowledgeable about environmental problems, but they are all concerned with business and eager to keep both tax money and campaign contributions flowing. The Pastrick administration, more than that of most of the lakeshore city administrations, seemed eager to permit if not invite polluters into the city and to ignore environmental outcomes. This same lack of

understanding and concern led to assurances to EPA and the Army Corps that there would be no local opposition to the site chosen for the CDF or their dredging plans.

Even the series of investigative reports in the Washington Post in 2000 about the Corps' failures, high expenditures and poor decisions had little effect except to cause the Corps to investigate itself and proclaim that all was well. There is currently a move spearheaded by several national environmental groups and some concerned Congressmen to reform the Corps; however, it is unlikely to come to fruition in time to affect us.

But the political change in East Chicago has made a difference. Although the new administration has had the opportunity to appoint only two of the seven members of the East Chicago Waterway Management Board, (a special entity under state control responsible for the CDF), the Board is no longer anyone's rubber stamp. Questions and discussion are now the norm. All members, both Pastrick and Pabey appointees, appear to work together with respect and concern for the local community, and have finally appointed the environmental committee which their original by-laws called for.

Equally obvious is a change in EPA's attitude toward the local Coalition for a Clean Environment. They had promised an amended risk assessment for the project several years ago in response to the Coalition's strong objections. Last spring they met with several Coalition members to inform us that EPA guidelines for risk assessment had been updated for the first time since 1986. This will allow them to make more use of the vast amount of scientific information developed since 1986. The amended risk assessment will include effects of more of the toxic material involved and more of the non-cancer effects, as well as age specific effects. These new guidelines will apply to all new projects and to some old ones. We were assured that they would apply to the Indiana Harbor dredge. They will also be more site specific. The original assessment covered only those toxins common to the entire Chicago-Northwest Indiana lake front area. While we still see some important issues that were not considered, this should be an improvement over the original. More recently, new guidelines concerning sediments have also been put in place.

Two issues are still of great concern. The canal dredge is classified as a navigational dredge based on the method of funding. This is a dredge which is limited to the needs of shipping. It means only a narrow channel within the canal will be dredged. The material on both sides will not be touched but it will move toward the center and require frequent redredging of that area, prolonging the entire process. Oddly enough the economic justification for this dredge was based on the Corps' anticipation of a great increase in

steel production in the area. The Calumet River is scheduled to have an environmental dredge, a more complete clean-up, and we feel that should take place in the canal as well. If the health of the lake is a major concern, the canal is even closer to it than is the river.

The other major issue of concern is the structure of the CDF. The Corps has told us they still plan to place TSCA level PCBs in the CDF. Those are PCBs that are above the concentration EPA considers acceptable. EPA has forbidden them to mix the TSCA level PCBs with those of lower concentration, as called for in the original plan. The Corps is planning to build a separate cell in the CDF to hold the TSCA material, but local citizens are strongly opposed to placing it in this site. It will require the CDF to be monitored forever by the Waterway Management Board instead of 30 years. Eventual failure of all structures is the norm and, depending on the nature of a failure, could be extremely expensive to repair and would result in repollution of the surrounding area. The health hazards of these higher concentrations of PCBs are significantly greater. It is possible to move this fairly small amount of material to a site further away from people and the lake.

Another problem is that the Corps will not allow independent scientific input or oversight to their planning process, nor will they share the basic assumptions on which they make decisions with “outsiders.” The public will not be informed of decisions until after total internal agreement has been achieved on the entire plan. . Only then will they hold a public hearing, but by that time the agency tends to regard its plans as carved in stone and is generally not responsive to public reaction.

Widespread expressions of public concern offer the best opportunity to achieve a real clean-up. Letters to the local press, the Army Corps of Engineers, IDEM, EPA and Congressman Visclosky could make a significant difference in this project and the lake’s future.

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## **Banquet was a huge success**

On November 18, 2005 the Calumet Project held its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Jobs and Justice Banquet at the Knights of Columbus Hall in East Chicago, IN. Over 170 people from different races, religions and industry sectors were present to witness the Calumet Project honor three local citizens and the Hispanic Women’s Forum of Northwest Indiana. Representatives from various unions, church organizations, and friends and family of the honorees were present for the gala. It was truly a night to remember.

Prior to the ceremony, guests mingled and reminisced with one another while sharing stories of the battles and triumphs of the honorees. Board of Director's President Steve Kozel officially welcomed everyone and Fr. Pat Gaza, pastor of St. Monica and Luke Catholic Church gave the invocation.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of awards to Hannah Cherry, Bob Anadell, the Hispanic Women's Forum of Northwest Indiana and Nancy Kelly.

Each awardee received the coveted Lifetime Achievement Award. The evening concluded with a raffle drawing which included a myriad of quality items donated by local organizations and businesses.