



WABASH RIVER ENHANCEMENT CORPORATION
200 North 2nd Street Lafayette, IN 47901

Wabash River Corridor Enhancement Project History

The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation was formed in August, 2004, and it began active operations in July, 2005 when it hired its first Executive Director. Following is a brief synopsis of efforts and accomplishments from its formation through 2011.

2004

The Wabash River Enhancement Corporation (WREC) is formed by the cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette, Tippecanoe County, and Purdue University, with formational leadership provided by North Central Health Services (NCHS). North Central Health Services committed to funding WREC's first five years of operations with a five year, \$500,000 operations grant. NCHS also committed to assisting with support for future planning, land acquisition, and development projects.

2005

1. WREC receives its 501c3 nonprofit agency status from the IRS.
2. WREC received its first \$100,000 NCHS operations grant.
3. WREC becomes operational when it hires its first Executive Director.
4. WREC initiated its ongoing partnership with Purdue University.

WREC partnered with the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture to conduct a design study of the Lafayette West Lafayette (LWL) urban corridor. The Senior Urban Design Studio divided into 5 "firms" and worked collaboratively to conduct a resource inventory and analysis of the entire 4.5 urban corridor, and then worked independently as separate firms and developed 5 different design studies for the LWL downtown urban core. Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, Kim Wilson led this effort.

5. WREC applied for and received a \$10,000 education and outreach grant from Alcoa. Grant funded LA 416 Urban Design Study Project, printing of WREC agency brochure and presentation equipment.

2006

1. WREC worked with the Indiana University- Purdue University Center for the Environment and Urban Policy to develop a WREC agency Strategic Plan.
2. Began Phase One of a three Phase Wabash River Hydraulic Study. Total project cost - \$100,000.

WREC worked with Indiana Fourth District, United States Congressman Steve Buyer to obtain \$50,000 in funding from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), through the Planning Assistance to States program (PAS) to fund Phase One of a three phase Wabash River Hydraulic Study to update flood mapping for the Wabash River in Tippecanoe County. WREC applied for and received a \$50,000 matching grant from North Central Health Services to match the 50:50 USACE funding.

3. WREC partnered with Purdue University to create the Living Laboratory on the Wabash River Research Center.

WREC further developed its Purdue University partnership by partnering with LA Associate Professor Kim Wilson to apply for a Purdue University, Discovery Park - Center for the Environment \$75,000 Start Up grant to create a multi-disciplinary Research Center within the Center for the Environment – The Living Laboratory on the Wabash River (LLOW). The LLOW start up grant enabled the following efforts to be initiated:

- a. Begin water quality monitoring of the LWL section of the corridor, and also collect existing data from other sources, including the State, to begin to accumulate data to support future research efforts.
 - b. Conduct a public survey of Tippecanoe County residents (1,000 surveys were sent with approximately 400 returned) to collect base line data on attitudes towards, and awareness of the Wabash River Corridor. This has been done utilizing graduate students under the direction of LLOW team member, Assistant Professor Linda Prokopy, through the Dept. of Forestry and Natural Resources. Data was analyzed in the summer 2007 from this effort.
 - c. Begin the process to develop a community vision for the corridor in preparation for the upcoming Corridor Master Planning process. This community vision process was completed in November, 2006 utilizing graduate students under the direction of LLOW team member, Linda Prokopy, through the Dept. of Forestry and Natural Resources. A summary report of this effort is done, and this report will serve as the initial starting point for the CMP process.
 - d. Plan for conducting a series of symposiums to look at various aspects of the river:
 - i. Scientific Study of the Wabash River Corridor
 - ii. Wabash River Corridor study as a K-12 educational Component
 - iii. Wabash River Corridor and its role in Economic Development
 - iv. Wabash River Corridor and its role in Economic Development
4. Completed and submitted the Indiana Department of Transportation application to designate River Road as a State Scenic Byway.

The application project had been initiated by the Vision 2020 project committee and turned over to WREC upon its formation. The Byway route consists of: Division Road starting at Ross Hills County Park connecting to River Road South, turning north onto SR 231/43 and ending at the I65 Interchange on River Right (running through West Lafayette).

2007

1. WREC/LLOW conducted a series of symposiums to look at various aspects of the river as a part of the WREC/LLOW startup grant project it received in 2006:
 - a. **Scientific Study of the Wabash River Corridor.**
Review/assess the existing scientific study of the WRC to identify potential gaps in it. This forum was held in the spring of 2006. Scientists from Purdue University, Notre Dame, University, Ball State University, and Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis participated in this forum. The health of the WRC was identified as an area in need of further study, and this issue was selected to be the focus for the LLOW project.

b. **Wabash River Corridor study as a K-12 educational Component.**

Review/assess the existing, and, or potential for developing and including, WRC educational resources and curriculums in the local K-12 educational programs.

c. **Wabash River Corridor and its role in Economic Development.** Discuss the role and significance of Quality of Life (QOL) and Place of Choice (POC) in economic development efforts to attract the bio-life science and high technology sector (B-LS & HT), and focusing on WRC enhancement as the key strategy to improve QOL and create a POC to attract and retain this economic sector in LWL.

WREC and LLOW planned this Symposium to position this issue as an integral part of local/state economic development planning efforts. Locally there was wide spread support for enhancement of the Wabash River Corridor, but the understanding of its importance to the success of current economic development efforts was not as entrenched.

2. Purdue University Landscape Architecture 326 Class (spring 2007) worked with WREC and the Wabash Avenue Neighborhood Association to conduct a second riverfront design study. This study was focused on the southeast section of the corridor on the Lafayette side of the river in the Wabash Avenue neighborhood.
3. WREC partnered with the Purdue University Forestry and Natural Resources Department's 489 - Senior Capstone class (spring 2007), to develop a natural resource management plan for the entire 31 mile Wabash River corridor in Tippecanoe County
4. Began the second phase of a three Phase Wabash River Hydraulic Study. Total project cost - \$100,000. WREC worked with Indiana Fourth District, United States Congressman Steve Buyer to obtain \$50,000 in funding from the USACE through the PAS program to fund Phase two of a three phase Wabash River Hydraulic Study to update flood mapping for the Wabash River in Tippecanoe County. WREC applied for and received a \$50,000 matching grant from North Central Health Services to match the 50:50 USACE funding.
5. WREC/LLOW applied for an Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) 319 Storm Water Program grant to develop a watershed management plan for the Region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River water shed (includes most of Tippecanoe County and parts of Warren, Fountain, White, Montgomery and Benton counties)
6. WREC partnered with Purdue University, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, and various entities from around the state to co-host the first Indiana State River Rally on Purdue University's campus.
7. Began fund Raising effort in support of upcoming corridor master planning process.
8. WREC distributed an RFQ for selecting a design team/firm for the corridor master planning process.
9. The Wabash River Parkway Commission, an existing local Wabash River related organization merged with WREC. The commission became a WREC committee focused on education and outreach activities. It had created and led the annual Wabash Riverfest festival and continues under WREC to lead this annual event.

2008

1. Selected the Corridor Master Plan Phase One Project Consultant Team: Wallace, Roberts and Todd (WRT) - primary firm; HNTB/Engineering; ERA/Economic and Marketing and Economic Development Assessment; and CDF/Environmental Engineering.

2. WREC finalized the corridor planning project work scope during a planning charette led by WRT. Corridor planning would consist of two immediate phases – Phase One would develop a master plan for the Lafayette-West Lafayette urban section; Phase Two would develop a master plan for the Tippecanoe County Rural section.
3. Completed Phase Two of the Three Phase USACE Wabash River Hydraulic Study.
4. WREC worked with local government to amend the Indiana State Law authorizing the collection of an Innkeepers Tax in Tippecanoe County to designate a portion of the tax revenue to be permanently allocated to WREC for use in projects to enhance the Wabash River Corridor.
5. Completed fund raising for Phase One of Corridor Master Plan (Lafayette-West Lafayette Urban Section). Total project cost - \$64,000. WREC raised \$664,000 locally or Phase One.

WREC matched a \$250,000 North Central Health Services grant with \$68,000 in local private and public sector grants and \$346,000 in funding from local government (City of Laf. - \$105,000; City of West Laf. - \$50,000.; Tippecanoe County - \$55,000./Wabash River funding & \$136,000./Innkeepers Tax Rev.)

6. WREC received \$246,000 from the USACE, PAS program to match local funding for Phase Two of the corridor master plan. WREC and the USACE began the process to finalize the USACE's project initiation process and approve WRT to work with the USACE consultant firm, Stantec on the project. Phase Three of the USACE Hydraulic Study would be completed as a part of this project also.
7. Completed fund raising for Phase Two of the Corridor Master Plan (Tippecanoe County rural Section). Total Project Cost - \$492,000. WREC raised \$250,000 locally through a North Central Health Services Grant to match \$246,000 in USACE, PAS program funding.
8. WREC received a \$749,000 IDEM 319 Storm Water Program grant submitted in 2007 to develop a watershed management plan for the Region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River watershed. The project was planned to start in 2009 upon completion of the IDEM contract process.

The grant consisted of funding to hire a watershed coordinator, develop a watershed management plan, conduct weekly water quality monitoring, and develop education and outreach programs. Grant breakdown: IDEM - \$400,000/ Local fiscal and in-kind - \$349,000. Purdue University conducted the water quality monitoring program, and the watershed coordinator over saw the entire grant project and would write the plan.

9. Received INDOT approval for the State Scenic Byway designation for River Road In Tippecanoe County/West Lafayette.

10. WREC began working with the Tippecanoe County Area Plan Commission to create urban and rural riverfront zone districts.

11. WREC partner, North Central Health Services (NCHS) purchased a key property in the Wabash Avenue neighborhood for \$1.5 million dollars – the former boxboard paper mill site. The 17 acre site was cleared and received an IDEM Letter of No Further Action required for the site also as a part of NCHS's purchase. This is a one of only two sites along the urban riverfront with developable land out of the 100 year flood plain but still adjacent to the river.

2009

1. WREC purchased two voyageur canoes for use at Riverfest and to develop a river tour program.

2. WREC worked with 4th District U.S. Congressman Steve Buyer and the USACE to receive authorization to have the USACE conduct a Wabash River Reconnaissance Study (RS). Purpose of the study is to develop a USACE corridor master plan utilizing local and all existing state and federal studies and information. The RS would also determine federal interest for participating in future corridor projects.
3. WREC Partnered with Ball State University (BSU) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to conduct a pilot Wabash River Bottom Mapping project. The goal was to eventually map the entire Wabash River to monitor bottom contour changes and also assess/study its correlation to fish community research.
4. Began the IDEM 319 Grant Project (awarded in 2008), to develop a watershed management plan for the Region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River (RGBWR). Sara Peel was hired as the Watershed Coordinator.
5. Completed USACE PAS program contractual process, and began Phase Two of the Corridor Master Plan process (Tippecanoe County Rural Section) and Phase Three of the Wabash River Hydraulic Study.
6. WREC held its first annual Watershed water testing blitz in September. 180 sites tested throughout watershed project area by over two hundred volunteers.
7. WREC continued Phase One of the Corridor Master Plan Process for the LWL urban section.

2010

1. WREC completed Phase One Corridor Master Plan for the LWL urban section.
2. WREC and USACE completed Phase Two Corridor Master Plan for the Tippecanoe County Rural section.
3. USACE began the Wabash River Reconnaissance Study.
4. WREC purchase 500 North 3rd Street, Lafayette Property through a \$150,000 grant from North Central Health Service. The site was identified in the CMP as the location for a proposed Brown Street bike/pedestrian bridge landing in Lafayette. Completed Phase One environmental assessment work as a part of the project. Potential underground storage tank (UST) was identified for future removal as a part of the project.
5. WREC completed Phase two environmental assessment work for 500 North 3rd Street Property and completed site remediation following IDEM regulations for UST removal. WREC received a final letter of no further action required from IDEM following the remediation project.
6. WREC purchased 1 South Street, former Midwest Rental site through a \$300,000 NCHS grant, and completed Phase one environmental assessment work as a part of the project. Environmental assessment identified the need for phase assessment work to be done in preparation for a future EPA remediation grant.
7. WREC developed a land use and acquisition policy and corresponding planning documents in follow up to the phase one and two corridor master planning efforts.
8. WREC/LLOW applied for an IDEM 319 program grant to begin implementing the RGBWR watershed management plan and continue water quality monitoring and education and outreach work.
9. WREC/LLOW applied for an IDEM 319 grant project gap grant to fund the watershed project between the RGBWR planning grant and the RGBWR Implementation Grant and the DC-SC Planning Grant.

10. WREC/LLOW applied for an IDEM 319 program grant to develop a watershed management plan for the Deer Creek-sugar Creek watershed of the Wabash River watershed.
11. WREC applied for, and was awarded a \$10,000 Audubon Society Environmental Fellow grant for Sara Peel.
12. WREC applied for an Indiana American Water Company Environmental grant project grant for the Water test blitz event.
13. WREC expanded the watershed water testing blitz event into a bi-annual event in the spring and fall of each year.
14. WREC worked with local government to amend the Indiana State law authorizing the collection of an Innkeepers Tax in Tippecanoe County that designates a portion of the tax revenue to be permanently allocated to WREC for use in projects to enhance the Wabash River Corridor, to now authorize it to fund agency operations also. This new authorization was to take effect with the start of the upcoming state fiscal year in July, 2011.

2011

1. USACE completed the Wabash River Reconnaissance Study.
2. WREC completed the IDEM 319 grant project to develop a watershed management plan for the Region of the Great Bend of the Wabash River.
3. WREC/LLOW was awarded the IDEM 319 program grant (applied for in 2010) to begin implementing the RGBWR watershed management plan and continue water quality monitoring and education and outreach work.
4. WREC/LLOW was awarded the IDEM 319 grant project gap grant (applied for in 2010).
5. WREC/LLOW was awarded the IDEM 319 program grant (applied for in 2010) to develop a watershed management plan for the Deer Creek-Sugar Creek Watershed of the Wabash River watershed.
6. WREC purchased the property located at 1702-1708 North 9th Street through a \$550,000 North Central Health Services grant. The property was identified in the corridor master plan process as a key property for development as a site for a corridor gateway entrance to the corridor in the northern reach of the urban corridor.
7. WREC applied for two United States EPA remediation program grants to clean up the former Midwest Rental property located at One South Street in Lafayette. Grant award notification is tentatively set for the spring of 2012. There will be 90 grants awarded in the program nationwide.
8. WREC continues to work on land acquisition planning focusing on flood plain property along the corridor, including related environmental work, and ongoing long range planning, as it transitions into the development phase of the enhancement project.