

NORTH BRANCH CHICAGO RIVER WATERSHED WORKGROUP GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES



NORTH BRANCH
CHICAGO RIVER
WATERSHED
WORKGROUP

Deerfield Village Hall Council Chambers Board Room,
850 Waukegan Road, Deerfield, IL 60015
Wednesday, August 13, 2025 * 1:00pm – 3:00pm

NBWW GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MINUTES

1. Introductions

Brandon Janes, President of the North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup (NBWW), called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm and welcomed attendees to the August 13, 2025, NBWW Annual General Membership Meeting. The meeting was held in a hybrid format. Ashley Strelcheck, NBWW Coordinator, performed roll call. A total of 17 voting members (tallying 64 votes) were in attendance, so an NBWW meeting quorum was present (see the voting quorum in the roll call sheet and meeting participants list below).

2. Public Comment – None

3. NBWW Business

a. Approve NBWW February 19, 2025 General Membership Meeting Minutes

Matt Ueltzen, Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD), motioned to approve the February 19, 2025 General Membership Meeting Minutes with a minor grammatical revision, seconded by Keeley Evans, Village of Northbrook. The motion passed with a unanimous consensus vote.

b. Financials

i. NBWW Revenues & Expenditures Review Ratification

Matt Ueltzen, Lake County Forest Preserve District (LCFPD), motioned to ratify the NBWW Revenues & Expenditures discussed at the February 19, 2025 General Membership Meeting, seconded by Mike Warner, Gewalt Hamilton. The motion passed via a 16-0-3 roll call vote (see roll call vote spreadsheet).

ii. Winter Best Practices Workshop & Lake County Calibration Event Not-to-Exceed \$500 Sponsor Approval

Strelcheck reviewed the September Winter Best Practices Workshop and November Calibration Event. Janice Aull, Skokie Consolidated Drainage District (SCDD), motioned to ratify a not-to-exceed sponsor of \$500 for these events, seconded by Keeley Evans, Village of Northbrook. Approximately \$250 will go towards the cost of the workshop, while about \$100 will go towards refreshments for the calibration event. The motion passed via a 17-0-2 roll call vote (see roll call vote spreadsheet)

iii. NBWW Budget Review

Strelcheck presented the NBWW FY25 budget. There were no questions or comments.

4. Guest Speakers

a. North Branch Chicago River Watershed TMDL Report (Approved by USEPA on August 13, 2020)

Abel Haile, Manager, Planning (TMDL) Unit, Illinois EPA & Brian Benett, Senior Project Manager, CDM Smith

Abel Haile, Manager, and Brian Benett, Senior Project Manager, went over a timeline of development for the Illinois EPA (Total Maximum Daily Load) TMDL standards for the North Branch Chicago River Watershed. Stage 1 was completed by AECOM in 2009. This stage included methodology selection, watershed characterization, and data analysis. Stage 2 was for optional data collection; no additional sampling occurred. The third and final stage was completed in 2020 by CDM Smith. This stage included model calibrations and TMDL scenarios. Bennett then presented on what a TMDL is, a summary of impairments in the watershed, a summary of TMDL analyses, and what an implementation plan could look like. A TMDL can be seen as the water's Loading Capacity, which is the maximum amount of pollution a water body can receive without violating Illinois EPA water quality standards. The main TMDL parameters for streams within the North Branch Chicago River watershed includes fecal coliform, chloride, DO, temperature and phosphorous. The main parameter for lakes in the watershed is Total Phosphorous (TP). The four main focuses for implementation are: identifying BMPs, following the nine EPA elements of a watershed plan, intending to supplement existing plans with recent TMDL data, and making implementations site specific.

Q/A:

- a. What was the timeframe for collecting fecal coliform data?
Data was collected between 2000-2018. CDM Smith tried to pull all available monitoring data from the past 20 years.
- b. Was the timeframe for collecting chloride data the same as fecal coliform data?
Yes.
- c. Is the NBWW's monitoring data considered for the 303(d) list?
Yes, the Illinois EPA does use the NBWW's monitoring data for considerations for the 303(d) list. However, the Illinois EPA must approve of any data and the methodology used to collect said data before it is applied to the 303(d) list.

**b. NBWW Nutrient Assessment & Reduction Plan (NARP) Update and Public Survey Demonstration
Brian Valleskey, Senior Professional, Geosyntec Consultants, Inc.**

Brian Valleskey, Senior Professional gave a brief overview of the NBWW NARP management plan. He began with a timeline for the NARP project from 2021-2026, including progress that has been made since the last NBWW General Membership meeting in February 2025. Valleskey stated Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) plan to meet the NARP requirements by 2030, while the NARP itself is due December 2025. He then gave an overview of 6 management scenarios chosen by the NBWW Monitoring Committee for review out of 8 proposed scenarios. He further discussed 2 management scenarios (lagoon bypass and Hybrid 1-2 with WWTPs capped @ 0.5 mg/l plus 25% reduction in non-point source (NPS) TP & lagoon bypass). Some of the key takeaways from the new management scenarios are the Hybrid 1-2 NARP scenario reduces the most phosphorous, with about 6,700 lbs. being removed, while the lagoon bypass removes 1,800 lbs of phosphorous. He also gave an estimate of what each scenario could cost, as well as pros and cons. The next portion of the presentation focused on the implementation of the NARP. He showed the structure of the ongoing NARP draft. The workgroup's final responsibilities in the remaining schedule for the NARP include: 1. Assessing and streamlining the existing Implementation Plan and 2. Considering recent MS4 guidance from the EPA. Members can use SMC's document showcasing changes in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Valleskey concluded the presentation by sharing how some segments of the North Branch Chicago River watershed have been delisted from the 303(d).

Q/A:

- a. What are the mechanisms for reaeration of waterways?
The use of best management practices (BMPs) is the most effective. For example, you could break up low flow areas by putting in additions like J-hooks, cross vanes, (in-stream reaeration practices).
- b. Is there enough flow in the watershed and its tributaries to successfully apply reaeration mechanisms?
Data is still being collected. It will likely not be a universal fix but could be helpful in areas violating the dissolved oxygen (DO) standard. The type of BMPs being used will be decided by the workgroup according to the NARP Implementation Plan and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) guidance from the Illinois EPA.

5. Old Business

1. Executive Board Update – Brandon Janes, NBWW Executive Board President

Brandon Janes gave the NBWW Executive Board update to the meeting attendees. Janes emphasized the importance of MS4 communities' input on the draft NARP implementation plan. The implementation plan will impact the future of NBWW efforts, including membership dues. The remaining Executive Board 2025 meetings will be in a joint session with the Monitoring Committee, as this will allow both groups to focus on NARP related items collectively. The NARP deadline for submission is the end of the year.

2. Monitoring Committee Update – Rob Flood, NBWW Monitoring & Water Quality Impairment Abatement Committee Chair

Rob Flood gave a NBWW Monitoring Committee update that the 2018-2023 Water Quality Summary Report is posted on the workgroup's website. Members were encouraged to use the report as a tool for their MS4s. Flood then discussed the microbial source tracking being done by Grand Valley State University within the watershed. The NSWRD selected 5 with the highest E. coli levels to conduct this additional testing for this year. Finally, Flood discussed the Dissolved Oxygen study

being carried out in conjunction with the Skokie Consolidated Drainage District. The sampling will be conducted before November 1, 2025. After November 1, construction and tree clearing in the district will begin. Flood emphasized the E. Coli and DO studies align with the MS4 permit's overall goal of targeting specific pollutants, which also coincides with the NARP's goals. Additionally, the NBWW will be sending out emails to jurisdictions within the watershed or contain tributaries of the watershed which were identified as chloride hotspots from February 2025 monitoring. The NBWW would provide them resources for Winter Best Practices and ask them to consider their chloride output.

5. New Business

1. North Branch Chicago River Watershed Project Webapplication Survey

Strelcheck gave an overview of an ArcGIS online Webapplication survey for projects within the North Branch Chicago River watershed. Strelcheck also provided a demonstration on how to add projects to the webapplication. Members were encouraged to add both completed and in-progress projects.

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/c63ee08c71ac43478f4a22ea04dff2eb/>

6. Watershed Project Updates & Announcements

a. Open Discussion & Watershed Updates

1. The Illinois EPA currently has two Request for Proposals open on two grant funding opportunities. The first funding source is Illinois EPA Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunity (FY 2026), with proposals due 11/5/2025 at 1:00pm CST and the second funding source is the Section 604(b) Water Quality Management Program (FY 2024), with proposals due 10/8/2025 at 1:00pm CST.
2. The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission is accepting proposals for the Watershed Management Board (WMB) grant until September 30, 2025. Please contact Ashley Strelcheck for any potential project submissions in the watershed.
3. The Lake County Stormwater Management Commission has posted updated resources on their site for the new NPDES permit as well as the updated process for Notice of Intents (NOIs). New NOIs will need to be submitted by October 30, 2025, unless permittees submitted an NOI in 2021. It is recommended to contact the Illinois EPA (Karlee Garskee, Karlee.Garskee@illinois.gov) to confirm they have a copy of your NOI from 2021.

b. Next NBWW General Membership Meeting: February 11, 2026 (Location: to be determined)

7. Adjournment – 2:47 pm

Rob Flood, NSWRD, motioned to adjourn, seconded by Janice Aull, SCDD. The motion passed with unanimous consensus vote.

North Branch Chicago River Watershed Workgroup Meeting Attendees

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Alana Bartolai	Lake County Health Department
Anna Niedzinski	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
Ashley Strelcheck	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission; NBWW Coordinator
Alexandria Ulloa	City of Waukegan
Ashley Warren	City of Evanston
Brandon Janes	Village of Deerfield
Brian Valleskey	Geosyntec Consultants Inc.
Chris Johnson	Illinois Sierra Club
Chuck Bodden	North Shore Water Reclamation District
Elise Blinn	Illinois Department of Transportation
Hayley Frank	Village of Winnetka

NAME	ORGANIZATION
Higinia Jasso	City of Waukegan
James Fitzgerald	Lake County Health Department
Janice Aull	Skokie Consolidated Drainage District
Joanna Colletti	GRAEF
Jonathan Happ	Libertyville Township
Josephine Meincke	North Shore Water Reclamation District
Justin Vick	Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
Kate McDonnell	Village of Wilmette
Keeley Evans	Village of Northbrook
Linda Dahl	City of Lake Forest and City of Lake Bluff
Mac McKavanagh	Union One West Fork Drainage District
Mark Olszewski	Village of Deerfield
Matt Ueltzen	Lake County Forest Preserve District
Michael Warner	Gewalt Hamilton; representing the Village of Northfield (and the Village of Riverwoods)
Patty Werner	Skokie Consolidated Drainage District
Rob Flood	North Shore Water Reclamation District
Robyn Flakne	Village of Glenview
Sam Barghi	Village of Bannockburn
Sarah Skolozynski	Lake County Stormwater Management Commission
Tracy Gastfield	Vernon Township

PDHs are self-reporting. If attendees want to apply NBWW meetings towards their professional license, keep the certificate, agenda, and minutes with sign-in sheets. Acceptance of these materials for credit is at the discretion of the licensing authority.

MS4 Program BMP fulfillment. If attendees want to apply NBWW meetings and education towards their MS4 Program BMP Measurable Goals, keep the certificate, agenda and minutes with sign-in sheets. Acceptance of these materials for MS4 program credit is at the discretion of the Illinois EPA.