

Wingspread Accord expands its reach

The Wingspread Accord, originally signed in 2002, was a historic agreement in which planning agencies from Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin joined forces to tackle environmental and economic issues in the southern Lake Michigan region. Recently, an updated accord was signed with a Michigan planning agency on board—encompassing more people, land, and municipalities and an even broader vision.

The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission joined the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in this new agreement to plan more comprehensively in the region.

The original accord led to a number of collaborative efforts, including research on regional integration of



modes of travel, an analysis of the region's inter-dependent economy, and the birth of the Lake Michigan Watershed

Academy, a project that brings together resources and partners to improve land use planning in the watershed. The accord also brought regional water supply planning front and center through the creation of the Tri-State Water Supply Consortium.

“In the new accord, we are focused on areas of cooperation, where staff members are already in place to move projects forward,” said Sarah Nerenberg, a NIRPC water resource engineer, who helped coordinate the accord. Regional trail development is high on the list—this effort will connect pathways across state borders, ultimately connecting the four states. Also, water resource planning continues to be a focus, both in terms of water quality and quantity.

“Agency directors are focusing efforts on regional water supply plans and other initiatives, including conservation best management practices,” said Martin Jaffe, IISG environmental planning specialist. “In fact, NIRPC has already developed a water conservation tool kit for local officials and may address other water supply issues as part of its 2040 comprehensive plans.”



The water resources working committee will also develop a riparian corridor management guide to build on existing regional initiatives regarding water quality management planning. The guide will emphasize the importance of riparian buffers for stormwater and floodplain management and will provide direction on the preservation of terrestrial and aquatic systems.

“Given the concern regarding global climate change impacts, mitigation, and adaptation, the agencies agreed that energy planning will become increasingly important over the next few years,” said Jaffe. While on sabbatical from the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he is an associate professor, Jaffe will get the ball rolling by gathering information on how municipalities handle energy planning and look for ways that the regional planning agencies might move efforts forward.

Throughout the Wingspread process, Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant has provided expertise and support. “The program’s contribution has been crucial,” said Nerenberg. “Brian Miller (IISG director) has provided vision and guidance that helped bring the agencies together. He and Martin Jaffe helped crystallize the connection between urban environments and local waterways.”

