Benefits of a Regional Approach: The Northwest Indiana Portion of the Calumet Region

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Discovering Calumet

• Chicago Wilderness marked the beginning of a truly regional approach to our Chicago-land natural areas.

• Chicago Wilderness magazine special issue, Discovering Calumet, defined the Calumet Region as a vast urban corridor with very significant existing natural areas.

• Can we better define the future of these natural areas?

• The Nature Conservancy and others have proposed such blueprints to define, expand and manage such areas.

• The potential for significant continued natural area preservation exists.
The Calumet Region Defined
The Corridor is Varied and Complex

- The Calumet Region is a vast urban corridor with natural areas, heavy industries, and residential communities.
- The challenge is to establish a broad enough understanding that we can strive for all three to exist in greater harmony.
- Starkly different but adjacent land uses can exist in harmony and benefit each other.
The Calumet Region

A Wetland Region
Water in the Calumet region moves slowly, at all and returns to form ponds, swamps, fens, bogs, and marshes—an excellent home to an astonishing variety of plants and animals.

Pockets of People
The industrial Calumet features tightly packed population clusters near mills and factories along the lakefront and old railroads. The clusters are separated by green patches of wetland and farm fields.

Industrial Powerhouse
Where salt and water, steel with oil refineries, auto and malls, placed industrial buildings, and scores of factories developed. Dots show modern facilities reporting release of chemicals into land, water, air, and disposal facilities.

Landscape in Renewal
Volunteers and professionals work to open land to restore healthy ecosystems. Efforts in progress are in dark green. Esconders, brownfield programs bring former industrial lands back into productive use. Projects, both underway and complete, in light green.
We are a Great Lakes Region
NATURAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE LEVELS OF THE GREAT LAKES
Northwest Indiana Settlement History

• The early stage when environment ruled over human endeavors
• The later stage when human endeavors drastically changed the landscape
• Company towns and Balkanization – 1870 to today
• What defines the Calumet Region in northwest Indiana?
• The critical need exists for greater sub-state regionalism in northwest Indiana.
• Environmental Quality Concerns
• Attainment of Air Quality
• Water quality and quantity concerns – The Great Lakes Compact
• Wetlands protection and preservation
• Solid waste management
• Toxic and hazardous wastes legacies
• Shoreline changes – both natural and human-induced
• Global Warming – Impacts Here?
Some Emerging Concerns

• Asian Carp and invasive species
• Cline Avenue Elevated – the future?
• The Marquette Plans I and II
• Regional Development Agency in Northwest Indiana
• Regional approaches to flooding?
• Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - Will it produce actual acquisition, restoration and protection?
The Calumet Region is Remarkable

- It is both heavily industrialized and the site of notable natural areas.
- Can natural areas thrive in this great urban and industrial area?
- Can we bridge political boundaries both in-state and bi-state?
- It is certainly worth the try.
- What better place to do so then here!