

RECOMMENDATION 2-2020

To: Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission
From: Technical Advisory Committee
Subject: Thayer Farm Transition
Date: June 25, 2020

DESCRIPTION: In 2019, the Commission made the policy decision to transition its Thayer Farm from agricultural production to floodwater storage. The Committee and the Commission have evaluated possible changes to the property's physical structure in order to 1) maximize possible flood storage volumes; 2) ensure that the property management is coordinated with natural resource restoration at the adjacent Gus Ellicott property; and 3) protect the road at the southern boundary of the parcel.

Likewise, the Commission already has decided to allow the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to control the flow of water in and out of the Thayer Farm under its management.

The costs of further structural changes to the Thayer Farm against the additional floodwater storage benefits are ambiguous. The property as currently comprised is already a floodwater storage asset, and its ability to hold water irrespective of additional physical alterations is of value to the Commission and its mission.

LOCATION: Thayer, Newton County, Indiana

ISSUE: The Committee and the Commission have discussed possible physical improvements to the Thayer Farm such as 1) improving the berm along West 1200 North in Newton County; 2) scrapes; 3) bank relocation; 4) plantings; and 5) ditch maintenance. It is not yet clear if any of these solutions will provide a tangible or significant additional flood control benefit in return for the expected costs.

The Committee does agree that 1) placing the property under DNR management; and 2) allowing the Department to install water control structures to permit the orderly ingress of water at high river levels is of benefit to the entire basin.

RECOMMENDATION: The Committee recommends that the Commission permit and encourage the DNR to move forward with the installation of water control structures on the bank. It also particularly recommends that such structures allow the Thayer Farm to maximize the water it can safely and effectively retain during flood events and high river gage levels. Finally, it recommends that the Department be allowed to move forward with such plans regardless of any further permitted investments that the Commission may make in the berm or other flood control characteristics of the property.

ADOPTED BY COMMITTEE 6/25/2020.

ADOPTED BY COMMISSION 7/31/2020.