



*** FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE ***

December 17, 2020

PLANS FOR YELLOW RIVER IMPROVEMENTS UNVEILED

LAPORTE — The Technical Advisory Committee of the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission today received preliminary plans to reconstruct nearly 1.5 miles of severely eroding Yellow River banks in Marshall and Starke Counties.

In 2019, the Basin Development Commission adopted a forty-year work plan to address nearly a century of increasing flooding in the Kankakee River Basin. Among a number of goals, a primary objective is to reduce sediment originating from the Yellow River. The major tributary of the Kankakee River in Indiana, the channel is identified as a significant source of accumulated sediment within the entire watershed.

“When Indiana dredged and straightened the Kankakee River over a hundred year ago, one effect was to increase the water velocity of the Yellow River,” said Basin Development Commission Executive Director Scott Pelath. “Because the Yellow runs through glacial sand deposits, faster water means more sand being carried downstream. Reversing this trend in the years ahead is essential for improving streamflow, bank safety, and water quality.”

In September, the commission selected Cardno, headquartered in Walkerton, Indiana, to design the first of five phases of the planned reconstruction beginning upstream of the Marshall-Starke County Line. The design’s goals include:

- Reducing the grade of steep and collapsing banks
- Stabilizing banks with stone, wood, and native vegetation
- Increasing the water flow capacity of the Yellow River channel
- Minimizing the entrance of heavy sediment into the waterway

“The commission and its advisors offered substantial input on the design details today, and I know Cardno will consider them as the plan is finalized,” said commission member and Marshall County Surveyor Craig Cultice. “However, the long-term project goals are valuable, not only for Marshall and Starke Counties, but for this entire region of Indiana. I’m honored to be a charter member of the Basin Development Commission and to be Marshall County’s representative for this historic endeavor.”

Starke County farmer and commission advisory committee member Dan Gumz echoed the importance of reducing sediment to the agricultural sector.

“Every year, our drainage system is clogged with more and more sediment,” said Gumz. “Our farming communities cannot maintain economic success without addressing this problem head-on. Agriculture and its contributions to our region rely on effective water management, and improvements to the Yellow River are a key to sustaining a central feature of our economy.”

Cardno expects to finalize its design by May 2021. Upon construction permits being issued by federal and state regulatory agencies, the commission then intends to proceed to the first construction phase.

“It is important to remember that this is just the beginning of a multi-year effort along the Yellow River,” said Pelath. “But the commission chose to start with particularly challenging section for a reason. Completion of this first phase will bode well and provide useful direction for the remainder of the work.”

For further information regarding the Commission, please contact Executive Director Scott Pelath at sdpelath@gmail.com, kankakeeriverbasin@gmail.com, or (219) 861-7999.
