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## YELLOW RIVER BANK IMPROVEMENTS COMMENCING IN STARKE COUNTY

STARKE COUNTY — This week, the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission commenced reconstruction of an entire mile of failing Yellow River banks in Starke County. The \$1.6 million project, which lies immediately downstream of the Marshall-Starke County Line, is expected to continue through November.

“Last year, we saw an impressive start to this long-term project in Marshall County,” said Commission Treasurer and Starke County Surveyor Bill Crase. “The scope of this year’s work in Starke County is twice as large, and just as challenging. Fortunately, we’ve already seen how this multi-county effort directly benefits not only Starke County, but our entire region of Indiana.”

The mitigation of severe Yellow River erosion upstream of Knox is a top priority for the Commission. Since the straightening of the Kankakee River over a century ago, the Yellow River continues to release major sediment deposits into both rivers. These mounting accumulations in turn reduce the rivers’ water capacity during both major and minor flood events.

“The Commission is attacking channel-clogging sand at the watershed’s single-largest source of erosion,” said Commission Executive Director Scott Pelath. “This initiative will take several years, but we’re off to an aggressive start. If weather conditions permit, more than a mile-and-a-half will be reconstructed in just over fourteen months.”

In September 2021, the current project began a half-mile upstream of the Marshall County line, and was completed within three months. The 2022 effort resumes where previous work ended, and continues downstream though Starke County. Project tasks include 1) reducing bank grades, 2) using stone and repurposed wood to direct water velocities away from the banks; 3) increasing channel capacity; and 4) reseeding banks with native erosion-control vegetation.

“This method has been tested in both Starke and Marshall Counties, and it is effective,” said Crase. “As more work is completed, we can expect to see an overall reduction in the amount of sand that inhibits the natural flow of our water through Northwest Indiana.”

The purposeful reduction of Yellow River sediment is a key facet of the Commission’s forty-year work plan, which was adopted under state law in 2019. Another stretch of Yellow River reconstruction is currently in the design phase, with work slated to take place in 2023. Earlier this year in Bremen, the Commission completed a separate bank reconstruction in partnership with the Marshall County Soil and Water Conservation District.

“No single effort is by itself a solution to every issue along the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers,” said Pelath. “But this Yellow River work undeniably is a lynchpin.”

Cardno, now Stantec, in Walkerton designed the Starke County project, and The Stanger Group from Goshen is tasked with construction. For further information regarding Commission initiatives, please contact Executive Director Scott Pelath at [sdpelath@gmail.com](mailto:sdpelath@gmail.com), [kankakeeriverbasin@gmail.com](mailto:kankakeeriverbasin@gmail.com), or (219) 861-7999.