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CONTACT: Scott D. Pelath
sdpelath@kankakeeyellowrbc.in.gov
(219) 861-7999

KANKAKEE COMMISSION EARNS STATEWIDE HONORS

MICHIGAN CITY — Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission (“the Commission”) has earned statewide honors for recent flood protection work along the Kankakee River.

At its annual conference last week, the Indiana Association for Floodplain and Stormwater Management (INAFSM) presented the Commission with its annual “Outstanding Floodplain Project Award” for its work to manageably contain floodwaters in the Kankakee watershed. The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Division of Water and Christopher B. Burke Engineering shared recognition as consultants for the project.

“The Commission highly values innovation alongside tried and true methods of flood containment,” said Commission Executive Director Scott Pelath. “Within the past two years, the Commission has manageably reconnected the Kankakee River to existing wetlands. These grounds are ideally suited to serve as floodwater overflows, as they contain excess water that would otherwise cause safety hazards and private property damage.

The recognized work includes a series of engineered spillways and water control devices in Newton and Jasper Counties. When the Kankakee River reaches moderate flood stage levels, these structures allow excess waters to manageably flow into approximately six hundred acres of floodwater storage areas under DNR management.

“This cost-effective flood mitigation method walks together with other more traditional strategies such as bank stabilization, erosion reduction, and removal of obstructions,” said Commission Vice Chair and Lake County Surveyor Bill Emerson, who attended the conference. “We are especially grateful for the partnership of Indiana DNR. The work truly promotes the shared causes of flood mitigation and natural resources enhancement.”

Pelath noted that managed reconnection of the Kankakee River to floodwater storage areas is a component of the Commission’s forty-year work plan adopted under Indiana state law.

According to their website, INAFSM created the award in 1998 to recognize “an outstanding floodplain project studied, designed, or constructed by a firm for a local unit of government or a private entity.” INAFSM held this year’s conference at Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City. Over four hundred Indiana water policymakers from around the state attended.



INAFSM 2024 Awards Ceremony at Blue Chip Casino, Michigan City, IN. From L-R, Paul Brayton, Indiana DNR Division of Water; Scott Pelath, Basin Development Commission Executive Director; Siavash Beik, Christopher B. Burke Engineering.
