

A WORD ON OUR TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Since the General Assembly established our Commission in 2019, the panel's Technical Advisory Committee has done the sometimes-arduous work of vetting projects and making formal recommendations to the Commission. Its members are essential to long-term planning, and the Commission routinely adopts its proposals.

In June, the Commission assigned essential matters to the Technical Committee for study and review. They include:

- 1) Bank stabilization within the City of Plymouth;
- 2) Other proposed bank stabilization projects;
- 3) Specific locations in need of remedial bank repair;
- 4) Maintenance priorities for existing sediment traps;
- 5) Areas in need of access maintenance or construction;
- 6) River sections targeted for logjam management or invasive species eradication; and
- 7) Support of the Kankakee River's National Water Trail status.

As always, never hesitate to review our work at kankakeeandyellowrivers.org.

Sincerely,



Scott D. Pelath
Executive Director
Kankakee River Basin and
Yellow River Basin
Development Commission



Newly accumulated debris at State Line Bridge between Indiana and Illinois (April 2025).

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COMMISSION MOVES TO RELOCATE STATE LINE BRIDGE

LAKE VILLAGE -- Lake County Bridge No. 36, better known as “State Line Bridge,” has obstructed the natural flow of the Kankakee River for decades. The Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission (“the Commission”) aims to permanently solve the problem.

“The bridge has been closed to traffic since 1999, and sits only a few feet above the channel,” said Lake County Surveyor and Commission Vice Chair Bill Emerson. “During every high-water event, it jams with new debris that impedes flow for the entire region. It is a drainage barrier and human safety hazard.”

Because the bridge is eligible for historic preservation, the Commission intends to responsibly remove it so it can be reassembled elsewhere for the public's enjoyment. This year, the Commission has applied for all federal and state permits to initiate the bridge's removal.

Indiana's Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology has acknowledged the persistent flood hazard posed by the structure, a view the agency has conveyed to federal officials reviewing the project proposals.

“The Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission deems the bridge a direct impediment to effective flood mitigation, magnet for logjams and heavy debris accumulation during flood events, and a persistent barrier to navigation and safe movement,” wrote Beth McCord, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. “For these reasons, it is not considered prudent to retain or restore the bridge in its current location.”

Pelath said the Commission has applied to remove the bridge using two cranes atop a temporary causeway structure in the river. The causeway would then be immediately removed while workers disassemble and store the bridge prior to relocation.

“With the removal State Line Bridge from its current location, we will not eliminate flood risks, but we certainly will eliminate a culprit in worsening them,” said Commission Executive Director Scott Pelath.

Current plans are to move the bridge from its current location during the 2026 work season.

PUBLIC ACCESS RIBBON-CUTTING AT ENGLISH LAKE

REMARKS OF DAVID SINN, *Starke County Park Board Member*

"Good afternoon, everyone!

"We're gathered here to celebrate a major milestone—the official opening of the first public kayak launch in Starke county!

"But this isn't just about one launch -- it's the first step in realizing the Starke County Park Board's vision for a across our waterways. Soon, this launch will be part of a network of access points along our lakes and rivers, linking our communities, supporting tourism, and giving everyone the chance to experience the natural beauty of Starke County from the water.

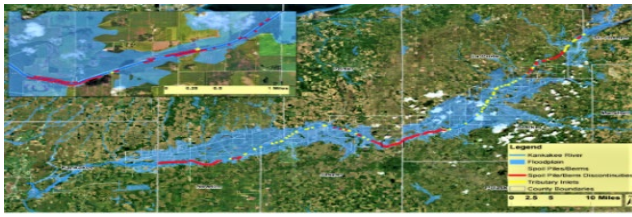
"Our goal is to create a sustainable, accessible Blue Trail that recreation, conservation, economic growth, and community connection.



"This project wouldn't be possible without the assistance of Scott Pelath and the Kankakee and Yellow River Basin Commission, the Starke County Convention and Visitors Commission board members, Jacque Ryan and the Starke County Community Foundation, Bob Aloï and Territorial Engineering, Kathy Norem, former Starke County commissioner and Park Board members, all current Starke county commissioners and council members, and the Stanger Group for the quality construction of this launch. Because of their dedication, we're not just opening a kayak launch — we're launching a new era of outdoor adventure in Starke County!

"So, as we cut the ribbon today, remember -- this is just the beginning. More launches are coming, and with your help, we'll build a Blue Trail that future generations can enjoy."





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who started the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission?

The Indiana General Assembly passed legislation to form the Commission in 2019. Once Gov. Eric Holcomb signed the measure into law, the Commission came into being on July 1, 2019.

What are the powers and duties of the Commission?

Indiana Code 14-13-9-18 gives the Commission the ability to conduct 1) bank stabilization; 2) tree removal; 3) the construction and operation of sand traps; 4) channel reconstruction; 5) sediment removal; 6) acquisition, construction, and maintenance of access roads to levees and the channel of each river; and 7) other flood control actions considered necessary. The Commission may acquire interests in land, including easements, for the commission's use in providing flood storage and constructing levees or other flood control improvements. Any acquisitions are completely voluntary on the seller's part. The law also grants the Commission an exclusive, 75-foot easement from the top of each bank of the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers to conduct flood control and sediment management activities.

Does the Commission have a long-term plan to address flooding and erosion?

Yes. In September 2019, the Commission adopted a 40-year plan to address over a century of mounting flood and erosion problems. The state of Indiana funded the plan's development, and our neighbors in Illinois contributed to a share of the total cost. The full document is available for review at kankakeeandyellowrivers.org.

How are we paying for flood control and sediment management projects?

In 2019, the state of Indiana contributed \$2.3 million to begin work. Since May 2021, capital projects are funded by a limited annual assessment of properties within the Kankakee and Yellow River Basins. Under Indiana Code 14-13-9-21, these assessments are \$7 per residential parcel; \$1 per farm acre; \$2 per undeveloped commercial acre; \$50 per commercial parcel; and \$360 per industrial or utility parcel. Funds are used for capital improvements, and Indiana workers and businesses are granted preferences for the work.

At any time, counties may choose to enact funding of their own as a substitute for these assessments. Otherwise, the amounts in state law took effect in January 2021.

MISSION

The Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission advances Northwest Indiana's safety, economic prosperity, and quality of its natural resources.

VISION

The Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission is building a region where its residents, farms, and communities prosper in concert with one of the nation's most unique natural environments.





YELLOW RIVER WORK RESUMES

The Commission's Yellow River streambank reconstruction project downstream of State Road 23 has resumed this summer.

Phase III of long-term efforts to halt Yellow River bank erosion commenced in 2024. Work includes regrading of the riverbanks, reinforcing the bank toe with rock and onsite wood, and reestablishing native grasses for stability.

Phase III is expected to conclude this fall with Phase IV commencing in 2026.

KANKAKEE RIVER BASIN: AN OVERVIEW

- The Kankakee River Basin in Indiana consists of areas that drain to the Kankakee River and its major tributary, the Yellow River.
- Prior to the 20th Century, the Grand Kankakee Marsh was once the second-largest freshwater marsh in the United States.
- A measurable increase in major precipitation events, relentless sediment erosion, and an inefficient use of flood control assets have made the Kankakee and Yellow River channels increasingly difficult to manage.
- Precipitation volatility is predicted to continue, suggesting that a management strategy for economic vitality, sustainable agriculture, and our natural resources is necessary.
- Investments in the Kankakee River Basin are intended to reduce the future costs resulting from flood frequency and size.

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