

THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

At the Commission's most recent meeting, we formally did something we cannot do enough: say thank you.

This past year again saw the completion of two more major projects. Phase III of our Yellow River restoration work is now in the books. In Jasper County, the Commission and local officials partnered to stabilize over two miles of severely eroding banks.

None of these things are possible without our partners, not the least of which are:

- Local farmers
- Riverfront property owners
- Our area lawmakers
- Indiana contractors
- State, local, and federal officials

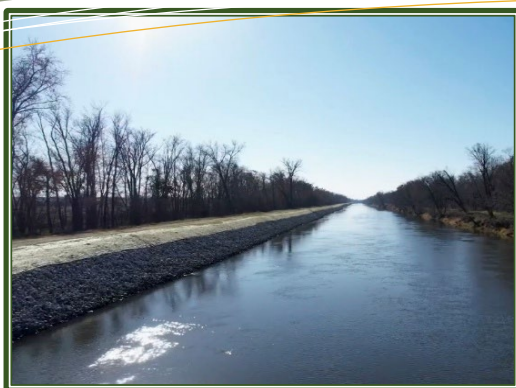
Most of all, we are grateful to our region's citizens for the means to turn plans into lasting assets.

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

Sincerely,



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



Jasper County bank stabilization immediately following completion (November 2025).

COMMISSION CELEBRATES PROJECTS, LOOKS AHEAD

KNOX — When the State of Indiana formed the Kankakee River Basin and Yellow River Basin Development Commission (“the Commission”) in 2019, Commission Treasurer Bill Crase of Starke County knew that reversing a century of mounting flood risks would take time and energy.

But nearly seven years later, he said it is hard not to see the improvements.

“When I started on this Commission, the Kankakee and Yellow Rivers were not serving anyone very well, and it did not matter if you were a farmer, a nearby resident, or a canoer,” said Crase. “Every year, more sand would fill the channel, more banks would erode, and more fallen trees would jam up the rivers. Things are changing for the better.”

This past year, the Commission wrapped up Phase III of its Yellow River reconstruction and the restoration of nearly five miles of severely eroding river channel. In Jasper County, the panel oversaw another two-mile-long stabilization of decaying banks on the Kankakee River. As always, the Commission worked to prevent logjams and remove them when identified. Indiana contractors kept bridges free from heavy debris and channel obstructions.

“We are in this for the long haul,” continued Crase. “Indiana modified the Kankakee River over a hundred years ago, and you could easily find another hundred years of work to do. But

if you look at the rivers as much as some of us, you can’t help but notice the improvements.”

Newton County Commissioner Rob Churchill, who represents his county on the Kankakee panel, agreed with Crase’s assessment while expressing even more excitement about projects slated for 2026. First among them is the removal of State Line Bridge, an objective of area officials for decades.

“Removing that bridge from its location will be huge for us in the lower watershed. As a longtime magnet for logs and obstructions, it’s a culprit in making high-water events even higher,” said Churchill. “And a lot of folks upstream have come to see that it obstructs natural water flow for everyone. Elimination of the hazard will be a lasting asset to all of us.”

Other projects planned for 2026 include the reconfiguration of water control structures at the Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Area, a test project to repurpose a flow-blocking island in the Yellow River, smaller bank repairs, and ongoing logjam and sediment management activities.

Commission Executive Director Scott Pelath reported that the Indiana DNR and Department of Environmental Management have already issued permits for the State Line Bridge project. A permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in progress.

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SCENES FROM THE COMMISSION'S PARTNER APPRECIATION BREAKFAST IN KNOX



(L-R) Ken Porter, Larry Jernas, Don Jernas, and Commission Member Dick Welsh

(L-R) Chairman John McNamara welcomes partners; Chairman McNamara and State Rep. Mike Aylesworth; Chairman McNamara and former Technical Committee Chair Tony Hendricks

(L-R) Michael Starks, Mel and Barbara Haman, and Scott Pelath; Knox Mayor Dennis Estok; State Rep. Aylesworth and former Commission Member Jim Walstra

(Clockwise from upper left)

Jasper County Surveyor and Commission Member Vince Urbano

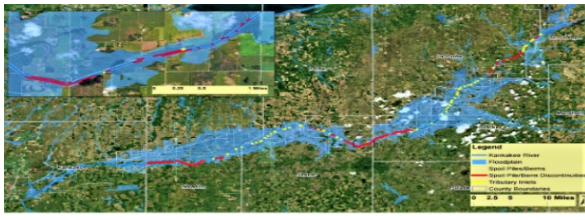
(L-R) Mike Novotney, Colby Stanger, and Angel Crawford

(L-R) Jenna Hickey, Ross St. Clair, Kim Peterson

Rep. Aylesworth and Chairman McNamara

Chairman McNamara thanks the attendees





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.





NEW RIVER GAUGE AT CRUMSTOWN

Channel 16 and Channel 22 in South Bend recently covered the unveiling for our new gauge in St. Joseph County. The television news reports are viewable on our website at kankakeeandyellowrivers.org.

The Commission intends that the gauge's data will refine predictions of the Kankakee River's behavior while providing localized information to nearby residents. The gauge's data can be viewed at the National Water Prediction Service website at water.noaa.gov.

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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