

Interview Dorreen Carey Grand Calumet Task Force

Dorreen Carey is Executive Director of the Grand Calumet Task Force, a Northwest Indiana-based community environmental group. NELC spoke to Ms. Carey about the group's involvement in the EPA's Common Sense Initiative (CSI) and in brownfield redevelopment.

What issues is the Grand Calumet Task Force working on now?

We're involved in protecting water quality and making people aware of local water quality issues, which include the tons of contaminated sediments underneath the Grand Calumet River. We're also very involved in brownfield redevelopment; to redesign, if we can, the relationship between our industries and our lake environment.

Then we have our pollution prevention program, which we're just now implementing. We're working with smaller businesses and with city governments, civic and community organizations and church organizations to try to get a commitment to prevention.

Tell us more about your work in brownfield redevelopment.

Our brownfields initiative grew out of an application for the federal empowerment zone program that the cities of East Chicago, Gary and Hammond submitted in 1993. The broad strategic planning required by the application was a real first for this area. We didn't get

the empowerment zone, but we did continue our brownfields initiative.

We met with businesses, community groups, environmental groups, financial institutions and government. We formulated a set of guidelines and criteria and a public participation plan. During this process, we were asked to serve on the Common Sense Initiative Iron and Steel Sector. When CSI offered a pilot program, we were able to apply for and receive a \$200,000 grant for the Northwest Indiana Brownfield Redevelopment Project. The grant was then matched by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, which is also a participant in CSI.

What stage is your project in now?

We're in the final stages of picking a pilot site and we just hired a director. We'll be identifying one site each in Gary, Hammond and East Chicago. Then we'll start the really hard part. We have to work on all aspects of the cleanup and development and we're required to do a very specific and broad stakeholder effort as well.

You mentioned CSI, in which NELC is also involved. What has gone well so far and what needs to be improved in the process?

The reason I think it worked for our group was that we came to the process with an agenda to promote. Because



brownfield redevelopment is more of a win-win issue, I think it was easier to come to agreement with the people around the table about what we wanted to achieve.

What made the CSI process less successful for the environmental community in general was that industry, through its trade groups, had already come to consensus on the agenda it wanted to promote. What ended up happening was that the environmental community was offered industry's agenda to shape and pull pieces out that they could live with. People began to think "this isn't what it was all about."

I think it is important for environmental, community and labor groups, both local and national, to work together on local-issue projects as we've begun to do in CSI. We need to continue to work together if we're going to develop a program that accomplishes justice for the communities that have really suffered from environmental degradation and protects all of us into the future. ♦

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