



River Ecology & Governance Task Force

June 6, 2023 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Agenda

- I. Task Force Goals and Objectives Review
- II. Our Great Rivers Progress
 - I. Continuous Riverfront Trails / Easy Access from all Neighborhoods
- III. IEPA Triennial Review of the State's Water Quality Standards
- IV. Chonkosaurus
- V. Upcoming Meetings + Adjourn

Task Force Objectives

Transforming Chicago's unique waterway system into a **thriving and ecologically integrated natural asset**, capable of accommodating the needs of people, requires **coordinated planning**, investment and management

Aspire to, and realize no later than 2040, inland waterways in Chicago that are **inviting, productive and living**, that **support wildlife in-stream and on their banks**, and that **contribute to our city's resiliency**

Role of the Task Force (a space for)

- Coordination between government agencies, civic, and nonprofit organizations, private developers, and local communities to achieve common goals for the betterment of Chicago River system
- Dialogue on ongoing issues and challenges impacting the Chicago River system as well as sharing successes in advancing progress
- Creating recommendations and resources for improvements

Short-Term Goals: 2021 - 2022

1. Create principles for a system-wide and neighborhood focused approach to Chicago's waterways
 - a. Adoption of principles by government partners participating on Steering Committee
2. Review current policies and create recommendations to strengthen them

Short-Term Goals: 2021 - 2022

3. Inform near-term planning opportunities to advance collective priorities
 - a. We Will Chicago
 - b. CDOT Access Study
 - c. USACE PAS Restoration Framework Plan
 - d. Industrial Corridor Modernization Process
4. Develop criteria to prioritize projects for identified funding opportunities
5. Standardize process for reviewing riverfront development projects

Short-Term Goals Survey Results

Goal	Met or nearly met goal
1: Principle Creation	80%
2: Review and strengthen policies	75%
3. Inform near-term planning opportunities	80%
4. Criteria for project prioritization	60%
5. Standard process for riverfront project review	80%

Short-Term Goals Revision Recommendations

- **Identify Policies for Goal #2:** Review current policies and create recommendations to strengthen them (*ex. USACE navigable channel recommendations*)
- **Update Opportunities for Goal #3:** Inform near-term planning opportunities to advance collective priorities (*ex. CDOT access study, industrial site guidelines*)
- **Keep Short-term Goal #4 as is:** Develop criteria to prioritize projects for identified funding opportunities

Our Great Rivers Progress

OUR GREAT RIVERS

An aerial photograph of a river park in Chicago. The foreground shows a paved walkway with large rocks and a modern building with a red facade and white columns. A wooden pier extends into the water, where two kayakers are visible. The middle ground features a green lawn and a bridge. The background is dominated by the Chicago skyline under a clear blue sky.

A vision for the Chicago, Calumet and Des Plaines rivers

Goals of Our Great Rivers



INVITING

GOALS

Activities to draw people to our rivers

Safe rivers and riverfronts

A unified brand and comprehensive wayfinding

Real-time water quality information

Water quality plans for all river stretches

Continuous riverfront trails

Easy access from all neighborhoods

Access for people of all ages and abilities

Fully litter- and odor-free rivers

Goals of Our Great Rivers



PRODUCTIVE

GOALS

- New visions for modern working rivers
- New tools to support riverfront productivity
- A clear path forward for the Port District
- Integrated transit on land and water
- Local tourism and jobs
- Iconic riverfront destinations
- Productive use (and reuse) of water
- Revitalized and reimagined infrastructure

Goals of Our Great Rivers



GOALS

Active stewardship of every park and preserve

Ecologically sensitive shoreline development

Aggressive management of invasive species

Expanded Chicago Park District Natural Areas

Our rivers as parks

Expanded preserves and parks

Coordinated prevention of water pollution

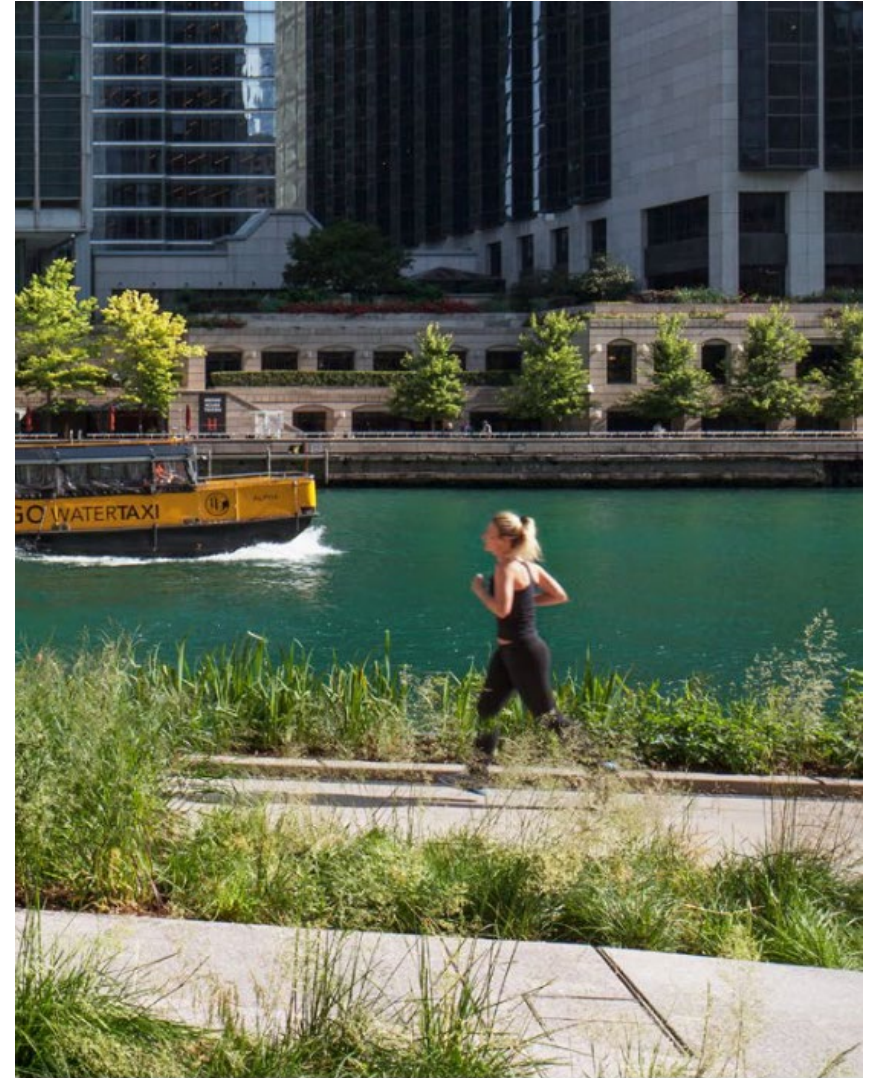
Rivers we can swim in

Thriving river ecosystems

Our Great Rivers: Two Goals for Updates

Inviting Goals:

- Continuous Riverfront Trails
- Easy Access from all Neighborhoods



Goal Progress Since 2016 (non exhaustive)

- Network and trail gap assessment
- Chicago River Design Guidelines adopted in 2019
- Privately funded, publicly accessible riverwalk rails have opened along the North and South Branches (ex. Cougle)
- Des Plaines River Trail Improvements underway
- Improvements to community assets and access to Beaubien Woods
- Opening of phase 1 of the Wild Mile in 2022
- Lake Calumet Trail Feasibility Study
- Big Marsh East Side Neighborhood Plan and Recreational Access
- Lake Calumet Bike Network Study
- 100th Street Calumet River Access Concept Plan
- Improvements to Major Taylor Trail and Framework Plan

Project Updates

- Chicago Department of Transportation
 - South Branch Parks Connectivity Study
 - Riverwalk Extension
 - Northside Underbridge Connections
- Big Marsh Connectivity Plan
- Mckinley Park Development Council Framework Plan

IEPA Triennial Review of the State's Water Quality Standards

What is the Triennial Review

- Purpose is to assess, develop, update, and revise water quality standards every three years in accordance with the clean water act
- Conducted by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Project topics include guidance for Chicago Area Waterway System and Illinois' surface waters

Triennial Review Public Engagement

- Online Survey
 - Active through August 7, 2023
- Public Comment Period
 - Written comments accepted through August 7, 2023
- Online Public Hearing
 - Held on July 6, 2023

Chonkosaurus



2023 Meeting Dates + Adjourn

2023 Upcoming Task Force Meeting Dates

- Development Review Working Group:
 - June 13, 2023: 6 pm – 7:30 pm
- System Plans Working Group:
 - July 19, 2023: noon – 1 pm
- Task Force Meeting
 - September 12, 2023: 3 pm – 4:30 pm