

Benefits of a Regional Approach: The Northwest Indiana Portion of the Calumet Region

Mark Reshkin

Emeritus Professor

Indiana University Northwest

Discovering Calumet

- Chicago Wilderness marked the beginning of a truly regional approach to our Chicago-land natural areas.
- Chicago Wilderness magazine special issue, Discovering Calumet, defined the Calumet Region as a vast urban corridor with very significant existing natural areas.
- Can we better define the future of these natural areas?
- The Nature Conservancy and others have proposed such blueprints to define, expand and manage such areas.
- The potential for significant continued natural area preservation exists.

The Corridor is Varied and Complex

- The Calumet Region is a vast urban corridor with natural areas, heavy industries, and residential communities.
- The challenge is to establish a broad enough understanding that we can strive for all three to exist in greater harmony.
- Starkly different but adjacent land uses can exist in harmony and benefit each other.

The Calumet Region

WATER



A Wetland Region

Water in the Calumet region moves slowly, if at all, and pauses to form ponds, swamps, fens, bogs, and marshes—an excellent home to an astonishing variety of plants and animals.



● = water

Photo: Bob Corli

PEOPLE



Pockets of People

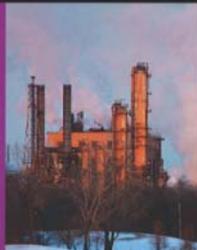
The industrial Calumet features tightly packed population clusters near mills and factories along the lakefront and the railroads. The clusters are separated by quiet swatches of wetland and farm fields.



● = 1,000 people

Photo: Jim Rouse

INDUSTRY



Industrial Powerhouse

Where rails met water, steel mills, oil refineries, auto and railcar plants, bulk materials handlers, and scores of factories developed. Dots show modern facilities reporting release of chemicals into land, water, air, and disposal facilities.



● = 1 facility

Photo: Bob Borg

RENEWED LAND



Landscape in Renewal

Volunteers and professionals work on open land to restore healthy ecosystems. (Efforts in progress are in dark green.) Elsewhere, brownfields programs bring former industrial lands back into productive use. (Projects, both underway and complete, in light green.)



● = restoration sites ● = brownfields

Photo: Alan Richardson/Chicagoans.com



Powderhorn Prairie & Marsh Forest Preserves is 182 acres where volunteers gather each month to restore the high-quality "blue-and-white" habitat.



Hammond Lakefront Bird Sanctuary is known as the "Migrant Trap" for the large number of migrating birds that stop by on their way north and south.



Indiana Dunes State Park and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, diverse in both species and landscapes, offer beaches, awesome dune vistas, and quiet woods, prairie, and wetland.

Photos: Top: Courtesy of the City of Chicago; Middle: Courtesy of the City of Chicago; Bottom: Courtesy of the City of Chicago; Right: Courtesy of the City of Chicago; Far Right: Courtesy of the City of Chicago



Sand Ridge Nature Center packs not only prairie, woods, wetlands, and beach ridge into 255 acres, but also history exhibits, gardens, and live animals.



Inwahon Dune & Swale, a 131-acre state nature preserve, hosts 60 native species, including the endangered Karner Blue.



LEGEND

- Limited Access Road
- Highway
- Major Road
- River
- Managed Open Lands
- Green Infrastructure Vision
- Chicago Lake Plain
- Valparaiso/Tinley Moraines
- Current Drainage Boundary
- Historic Drainage Boundary

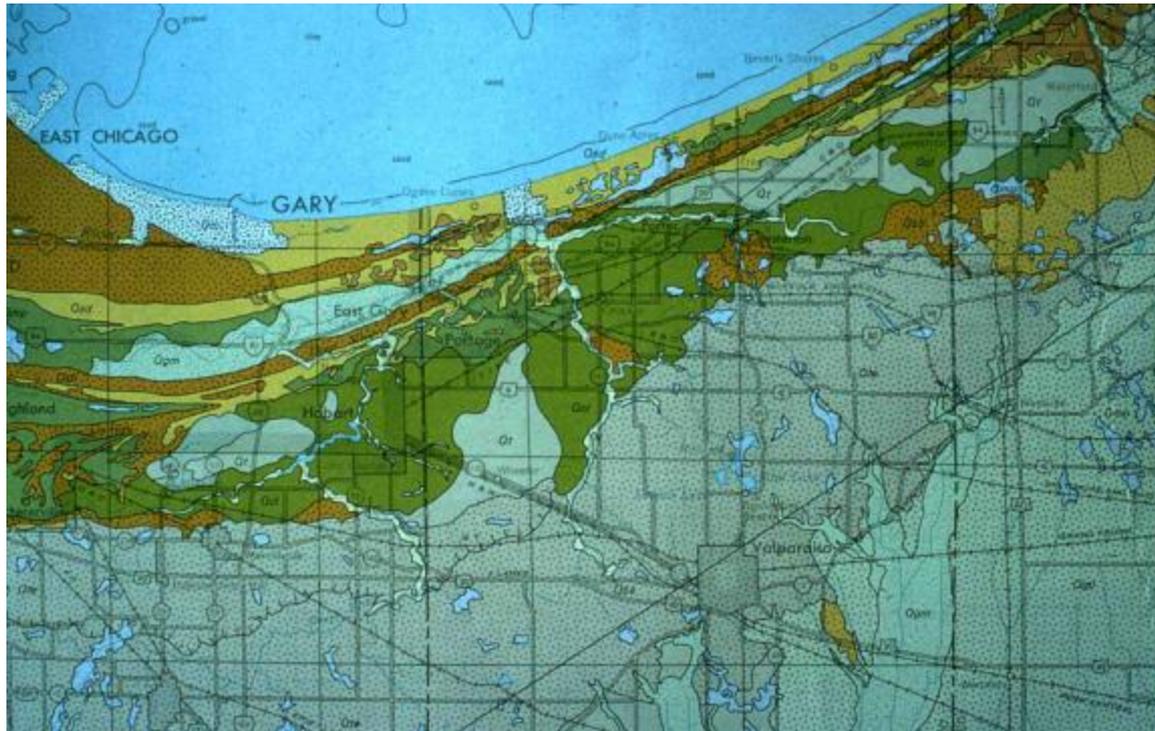
0 Miles 5

More Highlighted Natural Areas

- 1 HEGEWISCH MARSH** The City of Chicago is restoring this 100-acre parcel, future home of the Ford Calumet Environmental Center.
- 2 WOLF LAKE / EGGERS WOODS** A bi-state amalgam of picnic and play areas combined with rich nature found off the beaten path.
- 3 SEIDNER DUNE AND SWALE PRESERVE** 42-acre parcel with three "kinds" worth of rare "shore and swale" landscapes.
- 4 GIBSON WOODS COUNTY PARK** High-quality owl-and-swale plant communities on 178 acres, with a nature center.
- 5 HOOSIER PRAIRIE** 816-acre remnant prairie with a short trail (only 3/4 mile) but a long list of native species.
- 6 COWLES BOG** Extensive wetland in Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore commemorates pioneering ecologist.

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE VISION is a blueprint for planning a region in which nature is accessible to all residents, and where the built environment sustains a healthy natural environment. The Vision is not all about land acquisition—it's a call to think carefully about how people can live among natural areas in a way that benefits everyone (wildlife included), by using tools such as conservation development, conservation easements, and thoughtful land use planning.





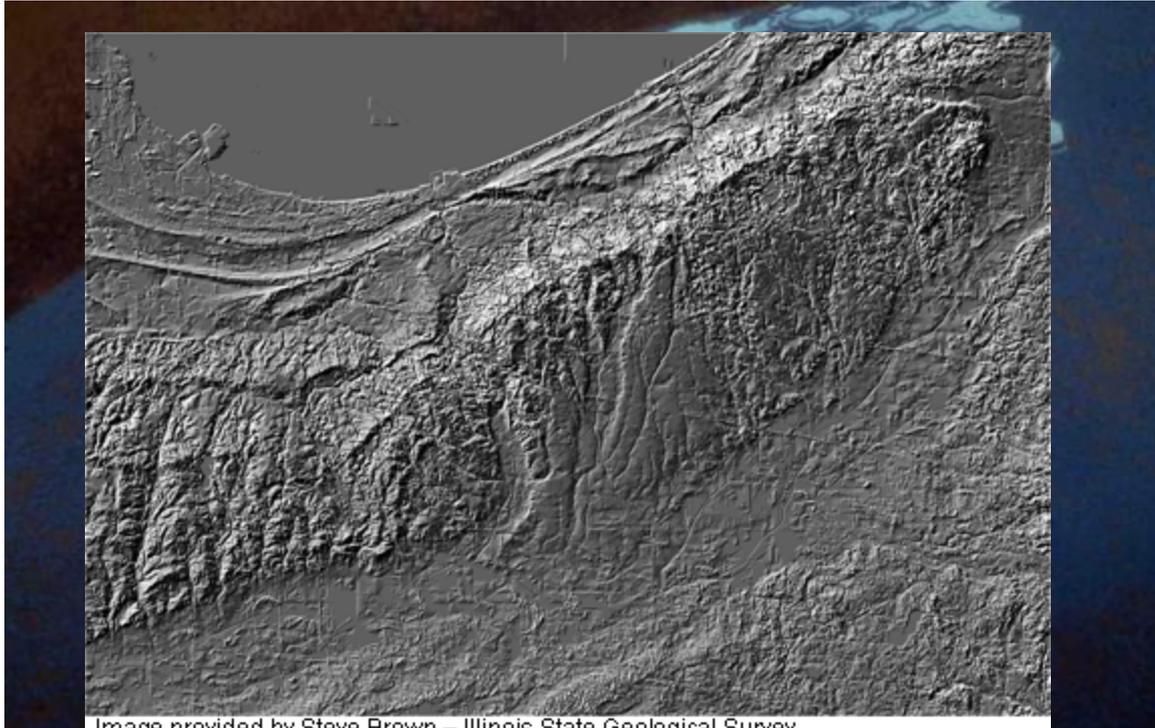
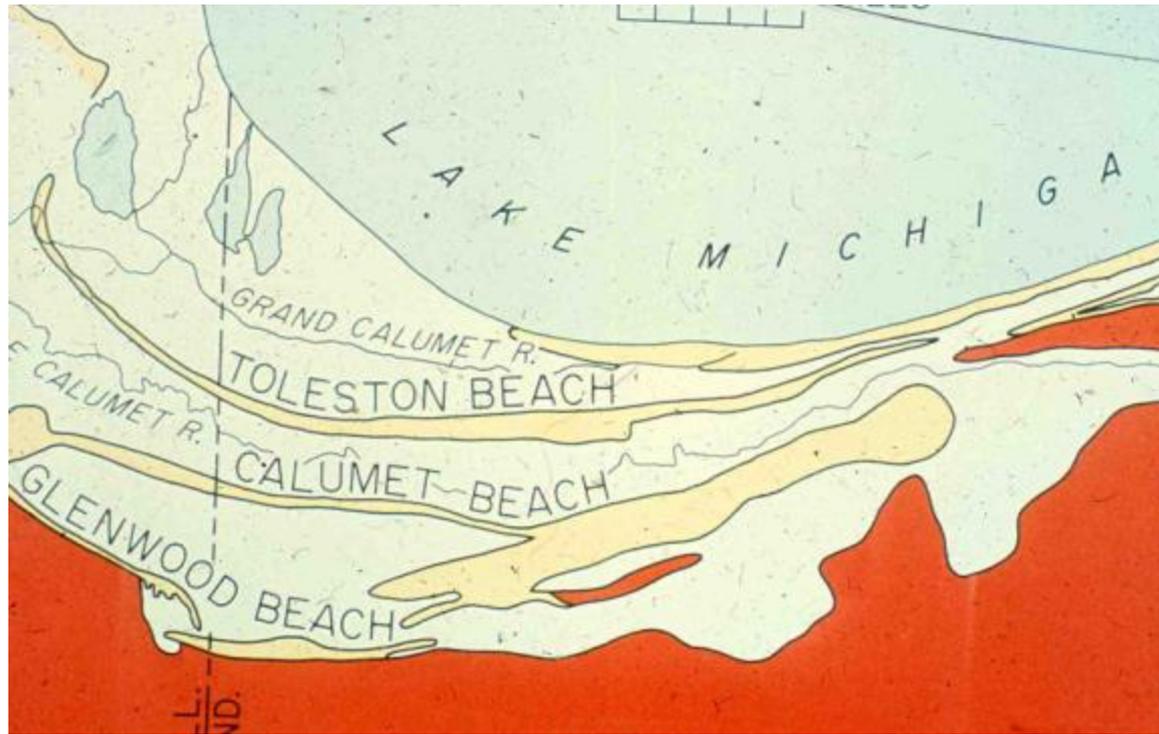
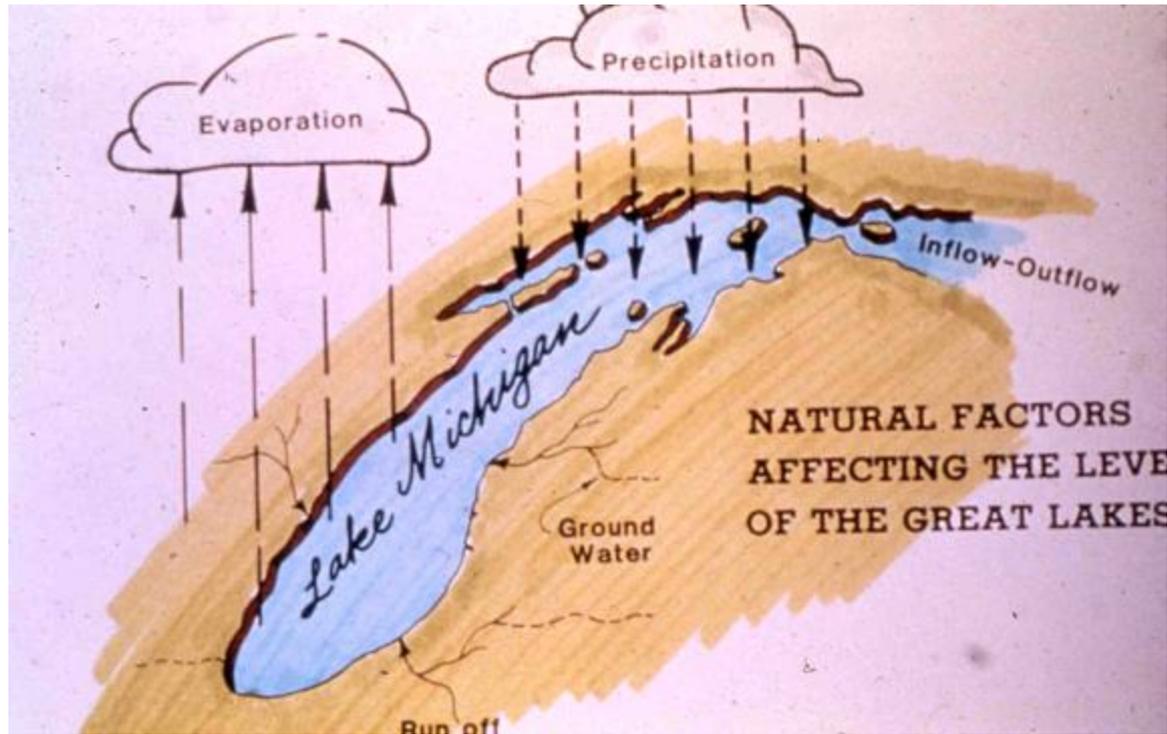


Image provided by Steve Brown – Illinois State Geological Survey



We are a Great Lakes Region





Northwest Indiana Settlement History

- The early stage when environment ruled over human endeavors
- The later stage when human endeavors drastically changed the landscape
- Company towns and Balkanization – 1870 to today
- What defines the Calumet Region in northwest Indiana?
- The critical need exists for greater sub-state regionalism in northwest Indiana.

- Environmental Quality Concerns
- Attainment of Air Quality
- Water quality and quantity concerns – The Great Lakes Compact
- Wetlands protection and preservation
- Solid waste management
- Toxic and hazardous wastes legacies
- Shoreline changes – both natural and human-induced
- Global Warming – Impacts Here ?

Some Emerging Concerns

- Asian Carp and invasive species
- Cline Avenue Elevated – the future?
- The Marquette Plans I and II
- Regional Development Agency in Northwest Indiana
- Regional approaches to flooding?
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative - Will it produce actual acquisition, restoration and protection?

The Calumet Region is Remarkable

- It is both heavily industrialized and the site of notable natural areas.
- Can natural areas thrive in this great urban and industrial area?
- Can we bridge political boundaries both in-state and bi-state?
- It is certainly worth the try.
- What better place to do so then here!