



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Jim Kreuser, County Executive

1010 – 56th Street, Third Floor

Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140

(262) 653-2600

Fax: (262) 653-2817

March 30, 2022

News release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennie Tunkieicz

262-653-2831

Kenosha County, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sign off on Pike River South Branch project partnership agreement

KENOSHA — Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser and others gathered today to mark the signing of a landmark agreement that will enable a transformative ecological restoration project.

The agreement formalizes a partnership between the Army Corps and Kenosha County, allowing for the restoration of the South Branch of the Pike River.

“This nearly \$15 million project with the Army Corps of Engineers will allow Kenosha County to move forward with the largest initiative for ecological restoration in our history,” Kreuser said. “The South Branch Pike restoration will improve our environment and bring about quality-of-life benefits for our community for generations to come.”

Kreuser said the project will address a waterway that was compromised by agricultural ditching in the early 1900s, and it will continue a restoration of the entire Pike River system that has been ongoing for several years. As part of the agreement, the Army Corps is providing nearly \$10 million in support of the first phase of the project.

“The proposed project would provide high-quality habitat for various fish and wildlife species, addressing human-induced disturbance within the watershed that dates back to the 1800s,” said Nicole Toth, project manager at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District.

The South Branch of the Pike River begins as a drainageway near Highway 50 and the Union Pacific Railroad tracks west of Highway 31 in the City of Kenosha and flows northward, largely in a straight line alongside the tracks, before it curves eastward through the Hawthorn Hollow Nature Sanctuary and Arboretum in Somers and joins up with the Main Branch of the Pike River in Petrifying Springs Park. The Main Branch then drains into Lake Michigan.

“The restoration of the Pike River’s South Branch is an iconic investment in Kenosha County’s land, air, and water, said Dave Giordano, executive director of the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network, a key project partner. “Guided by decades of planning, restoring this historic

stream channel and its stormwater-absorbing wetlands will create an incredible place where people, pollinators, and Pike want to be.”

In its current configuration, the South Branch is listed as a high contributing factor for flooding that affects the entire Pike River system and diminishes the potential for economic development in the area.

The restoration will return natural curves to the South Branch, addressing flooding and water quality concerns. The project also includes the installation of a multiuse path alongside the river, providing a safe bicycle and pedestrian link between several west-side Kenosha and Somers neighborhoods.

Phase I of the project includes the section of the river between Highway K (60th Street) and Highway S (38th Street). Future phases that remain in planning stages would continue the enhancements northward to Petrifying Springs.

The local cost share for Phase I was approved as part of the 2022 budget that the County Board adopted in November under the leadership of Chairman John O’Day. Land acquisition will occur this year, with reconstruction expected to follow in 2023 and 2024.

Supervisor William Grady, chairman of the County Board’s Public Works and Facilities Committee, said the agreement signed today is the culmination of years of work with the Army Corps and much information-gathering and review by his committee.

“The physical restoration and enhancement will take it from being a flood-prone area to being an asset to the community and the region, improving the environment and bringing real economic value,” Grady said. “And we’re bringing federal money back home, getting the better part of \$10 million in support from the Army Corps. It’s a win for everyone. And it will be a proud day for Kenosha County when friends of the environment, property owners, and especially our children and grandchildren will be able to witness the benefits of this project.”

County Board Supervisor Daniel Gaschke likewise referred to the project as a win-win for the community, and a great example of public-private partnerships and federal and local government collaboration.

“As the chair of Kenosha County’s Planning and Development Committee, I am proud to have been a part of helping move this project forward, and I am grateful to Kenosha County’s dedicated employees who have worked so hard to help plan this project and secure the necessary funding,” Gaschke said. “I am also grateful to Root-Pike WIN for its help and expertise on this exciting project.”

###