

Ela Keegan: This is Ela Keegan from College of the Atlantic at the National Working Waterfronts symposium in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I am here with Katie Clark. Today is May 15th, 2018. If you could all state your names and spell them, if that is okay. State your occupation and the town that you are coming from.

Annie Turek: I'm Annie Turk, A-N-N-I-E, T-U-R-E-K. I'm coming from Chicago, Illinois. I work for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Coastal Management Program.

Catherine Buchalski-Smith: Hi. I'm Catherine Buchalski-Smith, C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E, B-U-C-H-A-L-S-K-I, S-M-I-T-H. I'm also coming from Chicago, Illinois. I work with Annie at the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in our Coastal Management Program.

Joe Seidelmann: My name is Joe Seidelmann, J-O-E, S-E-I-D-E-L-M-A-N-N. I'm with the Waukegan Port District. I'm the general manager managing on behalf of F3 Marina management company.

EK: Thank you. So, if you could start by telling us what makes your working waterfront important in your community.

AT: So, I work with the Illinois International Port District, also called the Port of Chicago. It's located on the Southeast side of Chicago, so close to the border with Northwest Indiana. It's one of the largest ports in the Great Lakes, but it has suffered in the past from disconnection from the community. So, what makes our water working front important is that it's going through a period of revitalization and reconnection. We're thinking about how to create outdoor recreation and how to better connect communities to the port and to surrounding areas to make it a great source for the community and also for tourists who come to our area. So, how the port can help drive that connection and bring people together and offer them opportunities for recreation and enjoying working waterfronts.

JS: Waukegan is a federally-operated port on the commercial side of things. We have a recreational harbor as well. So, it's a mixed-use environment. For years it was mostly industrial, a lot of ports. That industry has packed up and left and left a lot of empty space. The port was a Superfund site for a cleanup and was just completed and is in the process of being delisted from area of concern and Superfund. We're right now like a blank slate. So, we're transitioning trying to figure out how to create a mixed-use environment between recreation and still keep some of those port activities alive because the port is a safe harbor port for the federal side between Chicago and Milwaukee. We are still maintained by the Corps of Engineers annually for dredging as a deepwater port. We are trying to keep the industry in place while still creating a recreational environment to revitalize the city of Waukegan. The city's downtown area has suffered because of the packing up of the industry and the waterfront kind of falling apart. So, right now they're trying to focus on revitalizing the waterfront first in hopes that it'll help revitalize the city.

EK: So, can I ask quickly, why did you decide to do the interview, the two groups?

AT: I would say that we decided to do the interview. Because we feel like the story of the

working waterfronts in the Chicago area are similar to a lot of our Great Lakes or East and West Coast friends in that there's a great story of revitalization and re-envisioning what these waterfronts could be and also building in our industrial past with mixed use and involving communities. So, we thought that that was a really relevant and worthwhile story to tell, and one that other folks that also work on the coast could relate to.

JS: From my side of things, the IDNR has been instrumental in creating a waterfront working group in Waukegan, and their partnership is really what's sparked a lot of the revitalization of Waukegan. So, it's a natural connection to be able to work well with the DNR in the state, to be able to facilitate and get everybody together in Waukegan and actually create that meeting space where things are finally happening. For years, there was just too much disconnection among the community, and Waukegan has really gotten together since the DNR's involvement.

CBS: I think it's really exciting too, I think, in both of the different ports there's just a lot of hope. There's people coming together, the time is right. We talk a lot about the story in the past and some of the disappointments, but now I think there's a lot of emphasis on the future and how exciting it is for us to be at this point.

EK: What are some upcoming changes in the future?

JS: So, on the port side of things, we are putting in an ADA canoe/kayak launch for public access. We have one of the only points of public access that is free for the public to use in Ogle County. We are also in the process of a beach revitalization plan. They've been redoing the entire beach area, the dunes lands, trying to put in access trails. The port is right now in the process of redeveloping our entire lakefront on our property side of things. The city of Waukegan has completed a master plan and the port has completed a master plan just combined in the last three, four years. Those two are really meshing together to redo the entire lakefront, turn it into a fully public accessible area with development of residential, recreational, retail space, trying to make it an open lakefront rather than just an industrial port.

AT: So, for the Illinois International Port District, it's a very similar story. I would say you definitely see collaboration and partnership as central to everything that we're doing. We're working on a master port plan for the port, and that's been an effort of a wide range of partners from state agencies, to regional planning agencies, to the local level. We've really gotten folks involved. There's been investment on everyone's side to make that happen and to really build a vision that everyone can see where there's economic vibrancy. The port is doing well. But then also the communities have this great resource and it's connected to other resources in the area. We're very lucky that Pullman National Monument is right next door. It's a historic area. It was just named a national monument recently. So, it's good to connect those places and to create a space where people feel like their history is being melded together. We're really lucky to have a really strong champion at the Illinois International Port District. In the past couple years, we got a new executive director. The board is really energized to re-envision this place. So, we've been able to work hand-in-hand with him and bring a bunch of different partners to the table to make that happen.

EK: Does it feel like the local communities are supporting the vision of the waterfront as well?

AT: I think that there has been renewed effort to involve the communities. So, as I mentioned, under past leadership of the port there was some disconnect between the communities and what mattered to them, and then the port and how the port was connected to their neighborhoods. So, I think we've involved a group that actually spans Indiana and Illinois called the ChIME Collaborative. They've been really instrumental in working with the port and working with the executive director and tying into the communities and helping to make that connection stronger, and to have the communities play a larger role in what the vision of the master plan might look like and how they can be involved and how recreation can play a part in that, and how their personal space can be better interwoven with the port and its vision for economic development.

JS: I think in Waukegan the main focus with both the master plans with the city and the port is to involve the community, to get the community using the lakefront, activating the lakefront. That's going to really be instrumental in the success of any development down at the lakefront, is the community involvement and activities. In the last few years, we've been really focusing on bringing festivals, events, things to the space of the lakefront, anywhere that we have public-use space to really get everybody from the public familiar with our section of lakefront as well as utilizing it as much as they can just to try to bring in industry, bring in revenue, and just to get the community involved.

EK: What types of festivals or events?

JS: So, in Waukegan in general, there's a large Spanish community. So, we've had *Cinco de Mayo* festivals, Spanish Independence Day festivals, as well as festivals geared towards our boating community, a harbor fest with fishing tournaments. Harbor days they set a section aside in June every year and have boating festivals. We're trying to work on getting a Venetian festival back to the harbor, there used to be one years ago, barbecue events, different community festivals, Bluesfest. There is a direct connection with the metro station between Chicago and Waukegan, so the whole North Shore community we're targeting to try to get them to Waukegan and really utilize the space there.

CBS: I think that's a really good point, Joe. Because from the coastal management's perspective, we also work with a lot of the communities just to the north and south of Waukegan. Those communities are also excited for what Waukegan is doing because they say, "As Waukegan succeeds, we're succeeding." Waukegan is bringing in tourism dollars or new businesses and that's good for all of us as a region. So, everything that the city and the port are doing together to promote their working waterfront is enhancing the entire Northern Illinois coastal region.

EK: Do you have any questions on that? So, how do you think that the NWWN can support your going forward and your vision for the future?

AT: So, we are actually first-timers to this conference. So, I think we're just excited to learn from other people's stories and their experiences and to be able to have so much expertise in the room. So, we haven't been as involved in the past, but we're excited to continue to be involved in the future and to learn from this event and to take those lessons home to our communities.

JS: I think with me it's just about making connections and trying to get a grasp of the entire picture of the national level, what other communities have done that are in our similar situation and how to move forward. We're really the starting point, because like I said we're a blank slate right now. Where do we go from here? What's the best course of action to start rebuilding the lakefront? Being a government federal port, what opportunities are available as far as funding to help facilitate some of that development?

CBS: I'm just really excited about the community of practice that we have access to now calling up, "Hey, I have this idea. Joe and I are working on developing an interpretive harbor walk at Waukegan, who else has done this?" I just looked in the pamphlet, oh, there's someone who's talking about something like this. It's really exciting, as Joe said, to have people you can call up and say, "How did this work and what didn't work?" I think that'll really be an asset to us. As Annie said, we're fairly new in all this, how do we take the enthusiasm and really run with it?

EK: It was an interpretive waterfront or an interactive?

CBS: Interpretive. I think we're trying to develop, and things have already started on the port districts and developing and telling the history and the story of the Waukegan harbor and the port district there. But then also, leading people into the future and how do we connect the harbor and the beach, and how do we get people who maybe don't have a really long history in that community to feel like it's also their place too. So, I think we're just trying to tell the story as best we can.

EK: Is there anything else you would like to add or any thoughts?

AT: I don't think so.

EK: [laughter]

CBS: Yes, thank you.

AT: If you have any questions that come up or you want to circle back to us, just let us know.

EK: That would be perfect.

AT: But thank you for the opportunity to do this.

CBS: Yes, it's been great.

EK: Thank you so much for coming and sharing your stories.

AT: All right.

CBS: Thank you.

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