

**Middle Cuyahoga River Watershed Plan
Draft Meeting Notes March 20, 2009**

Attendees:

Claude	Custer	
Ray	Flasco	Akron Water Supply
Pat	Gsellman	City of Akron
Genny	Hanna	City of Akron
Russell	Kring	City of Cuyahoga Falls
Becky	McCleary	City of Cuyahoga Falls
Bob	Brown	City of Kent
Mark	Bregant	City of Ravenna
Don	Brooker	City of Stow
Brad	Kosco	City of Stow
Marie	Sullivan	Cuyahoga River RAP/Community Planning Organization
Jessica	Hickey	Davey Resource Group
Elaine	Marsh	Friends of the Crooked River
Carmine	Torio	Home Builders Association, Portage & Summit Counties
Dave	Herpy	Kent State University Adventure Center
Eric	Akin	NEFCO
Scott	Kenreich	NRCS
Steve	Tuckerman	Ohio EPA
Bryan	Ford	Portage County Engineer
Claudia	James	Portage County Regional Planning
Christine	Craycroft	Portage Park District
Kirsten	Peetz	Portage Park District (volunteer)
Dave	Roberts	Stow Parks
Tim	Gott	Summit County DOES
Ryan	Pruett	Summit County Health Dept.

1. Introductory comments:

Maia asked those who wish to be on the steering committee and help build the document to please take a binder. The WAP outline & some guidance documents are in the binders. Additional hard copies are available for those who already received their binders, and all the guidance documents are on the website under Action Plan.

Maia noted that some of the comments following the kick-off meeting focused on implementation. Some expressed the need to do something rather than having a plan sit on a shelf. Others did not want to be committed to do something that was not in their means. Maia noted that it is the task of the group to put together their own "to do" list of implementation items, commitments each takes on that they are willing and able to accomplish, with whatever help the coordinator/group can provide.

Maia noted that during the next couple of months, she will be gathering data and existing studies/reports to start filling in the outline. We will be going over the WAP outline in April. The next couple of months will be used to hear about some recent studies that will provide a lot of the background data and preliminary recommendations to build a WAP from.

2. **Main Discussion Item:** Steve Tuckerman's comments on the middle Cuyahoga Points from the presentation include:

- Ohio EPA, in implementing the Clean Water Act, seeks to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Many factors affect the integrity of water resources. Ohio EPA evaluates the biological community, which responds to environmental stressors.

Dam Removals and Water Quality Assessment:

- A summary of the dam removal projects and subsequent water quality assessment is on-line at the Ohio EPA website:
<http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/documents/MiddleCuyahoga2007final-amended2.pdf>
In the former dam pools, which used to contain mostly carp, Ohio EPA is finding smallmouth bass, river chubs, which are sensitive to pollution, and insectivorous fish like hogsuckers, which are extremely sensitive. The Index of Biotic Integrity has not yet fully responded at Munroe Falls simply because there has not been enough time since the dam removal, but fish populations are recovering more rapidly than anticipated. The river has gone from largely non and partial attainment to partial and full attainment. Removal of the dams resulted in aggradation downstream but did not substantially affect the fish populations downstream, which is in the dam pools of the two smaller Cuyahoga Falls dams. The QHEI in the former dam pool has improved, the dam removals are considered extremely successful restoration projects.
- Chemical data indicate that BOD (Biological Oxygen Demand) 5 day values are higher in the upper watershed. Ammonia – generally low, but higher at Twin Lakes near the Akron water plant.
- Phosphorous and orthophosphate are higher at Breakneck Creek, correlating with total suspended solids. Lead is also correlated with total suspended solids, indicating the importance of sediment input
- Phosphorous is not a problem in the mainstem and is well below water quality standards
- Nonpoint source and sediment control are key!!
- The Ohio EPA evaluated low flow conditions and found that at low flow, 53% of the river's flow is treated effluent. Dissolved oxygen still exceeds water quality standards. Diurnal swings in dissolved oxygen indicate the impacts of nutrient input from land use and wastewater treatment plants, which increase algal productivity. The nutrients are not yet affecting the biology, so there is (currently) not the need to require more phosphorous to be removed.
- Unexpected effect of dam removals: temperature increased in shallowed river, drop in water removed the river from wooded riparian zone. As trees grow in, this effect should decrease.

General discussion of water quality standards, attainment of beneficial use.

- Much of the watershed is designated warm water habitat or modified warm water habitat. Hohman Ave., essentially a no-flow stream, effluent based, is designated limited resource water. Smaller streams have no use designation, but chemical and physical water quality criteria still apply.
- Attainment is determined based on whether the water course meets its use designations. Potter Creek is in partial attainment but has a different standard than pristine sections of Breakneck Creek, can attain a different biological community. Brimfield ditch was identified as non-attaining in the 1980s and may be in attainment now. Congress Lake/Ohio Canal Fish Creek is a modified warm water habitat in the upper sections, warm water habitat in downstream sections. The downstream sections are in non-attainment.

Issues and Concerns

- Urban land use and stormwater.
- While hypolimnetic releases from Lake Rockwell could be a concern, the river is in full attainment below Lake Rockwell.
- Congress Lake has significant nutrient issues upstream – the blue green algae shown in Steve’s picture tends to lead to fish kills.
- Habitat issues – Breakneck Creek watershed.
- Flow alteration.
- Most streams meet current recreational use criteria based on fecal coliform. The new standards will rely on *e. coli*, so it is likely that many streams and rivers will not meet water quality standards for recreation.
- The specific proportion of impairments in the middle Cuyahoga River watershed that are caused by nonpoint source pollution has not been determined; however it can be assumed that it is similar to the statewide percentages. Nutrients, sediment, hydromodification, and habitat alteration are listed as high-magnitude causes of impairment in at least one stream in each of 42-61% of watershed assessment units monitored statewide.
- Sediment smothers large grain gravel and cobble, which are habitat for fish and aquatic insects.
- Legacy pollutants related to landfills, e.g., Silver Lake and Kent dump, Breakneck. These have not yet caused significant impacts, but the impacts need to be prevented.
- Dams reduce flow, trap sediment, alter habitat. This is exemplified by the Gorge dam, where water quality is in full attainment below the dam and does not attain designated use standards immediately upstream of the dam. Removal of the dams would improve water quality upstream.
- Groundwater cleanup in Cuyahoga Falls – gas stations and dry cleaners. Cuyahoga Falls is a good steward.

- Urban Land Use – Phase II is helping control nonpoint source pollution.
- Hydromodifications – there are two drinking water supplies.
- Wastewater treatment plants – they are significant contributors. So far they meet their permit requirements, it is important that they continue to do so.
- Nonpoint source pollution from construction, agriculture
- Landfills
- Dams

Questions and comments:

- How are use standards designated? Do the standards change? - All waters were assumed warm water habitat by default. Ohio EPA assesses use attainability to determine the appropriate standard.
- Congress Lake – what is the source of algae/nutrients? Can Ohio EPA control it? Septic systems, agricultural sources, sludge fields on agriculture are likely sources. Ohio EPA has limited authority to impose BMPs on agriculture. Incentives are used, SWCD & NRCS work with farmers, who are generally good stewards.
- Do the nutrients affect Lake Hodgson? Some phosphorous is assimilated before reaching Lake Hodgson.
- Where should we place our energy? Sediment reduction in the Breakneck Creek watershed. Is there a lot we can do since the soils tend to be erodible? Land use management is key to reduce sediment from agricultural use, construction, stormwater. Phosphorous comes in with suspended solids.
- Comment: We need to look at what's putting energy into the water that erodes the soils. Newly developing areas, especially with higher elevation/relief, generate more erosive water.
- We need to manage the land holistically, reduce stormwater runoff.

3. Follow-up from Kick-off meeting

About 30 people came. Maia has been following up suggestions for contacts, etc. The e-mail list now has about 70 names on it, and there are more that need to be contacted. Maia will send out the contact list.

Comments, suggestions, and areas of interest following the kickoff meeting will be posted on the website.

4. Watershed tour: The group is interested in a couple of watershed tours, possibly a couple of hours each, in the fall. Suggested areas of focus include: Breakneck Creek; Potter Creek; dams; the contrast of pristine or restored settings with problem areas; BMPs; urbanized versus natural settings. Members of the group should help come up with good examples.

5. Outreach:

We need to bring the discussion to people whose work schedules do not permit them to attend daytime meetings.

While a simplified version of Steve Tuckerman's talk could be useful, there is limited interest now in holding a special night-time meeting. The consensus of the group is

that it is more valuable to do public outreach at events, target existing groups and events, and to bring the information to other potentially interested groups. Suggestions included Farm Bureau, conservation club/biology dept. at Kent State, lunchtime talks at large employers.

Maia will put together a 15-minute power-point presentation and fact sheet for review at the next meeting, which the members can present to other groups. Maia will present to the HBA in May.

There is interest in having a fall clean-up as a Year of the River tie-in. It is best to piggyback on existing events like the Mantua Spud Fest, where Steve Roloson (Scenic Rivers) brings canoes. Kent has an arts in the Park fest September 12. Maia will contact John Idone to see if a clean-up on the same weekend would work. Other weekends include after the APA conference (9/23-25) - Cleveland Ingenuity Fest, and 9-18, Family Stewardship Training Day at G.L. Science Center, 10/3 – Bath Parks & University of Akron host a watershed day. Tying in to other events is good, doubling up (competing) is not.

River Day is May 16. There are many activities in the middle Cuyahoga, including: Breakneck Creek Day at Breakneck Creek Preserve with hikes and electrofishing; Kent with the opening of the historic log cabin, Munroe Falls garlic mustard pulls and farmers market; and a clean-up at Cuyahoga Falls from 10-2, with volunteers getting T shirts, snacks, etc. Bags, gloves, and litter grabbers will be provided. Becky McCleary (Cuyahoga Falls) is looking for canoeists who can help clean up from the river, water levels permitting. Cuyahoga Falls is asking residents and other interested parties to help clean up between Earth Day and River Day.

6. Other requests/information:

Russ Kring noted that there is agreement in Cuyahoga Falls that the two low-head dams will be removed. They should be removed in the next couple of years.

Maia mentioned upcoming events, all of which are listed on the website.

Jessica Hickey from Davey Resources Group described a wetland mitigation bank that has been proposed along Fish Creek and Majors Rd. in Kent. This would be the first in the Cuyahoga River watershed and is also unusual in that it is an urban wetland mitigation site. The description is on the website. Ohio Wetlands Foundation has purchased 36.5 acres of degraded wetland, which currently has upland successional woods, invasives, and mowed grass. The mitigation bank would restore through rehabilitation and re-establishment 23.5 acres, and would establish vernal pools. After 10 years, if monitoring indicated that the wetland had been restored, the property would be turned over to the City of Kent Parks Dept. and would possibly be linked to the Jesse Smith wildlife parcel and would have a boardwalk. Jessica noted that wetland mitigation banks are expensive & time consuming to establish. One of the values of this project is that it protects wetlands along Fish Creek, which has flooding problems. There is potential to establish flood storage nearby, if the parcels can be purchased. Jessica also mentioned a wetland

mitigation site on Terex Road in Stow that is a good example, where flood water from Powers Brook is being connected back to the floodplain.

Funds are available for purchase of easements and stream bank restoration. Easements are even useful in public parks, as they control what the landowner can do with the parcel. This is a good time to purchase foreclosed properties for flood management.

Funds are also available to purchase land that has been flooded frequently.

Both grant opportunities are described on the project website. Both have very short response periods, as they are stimulus funding.

7&8 Homework and next meeting: Our next meeting is either April 20 or April 30, Maia will send out notices. The homework is to prepare for April's discussion by going over the WAP outline and thinking about specific examples of issues, concerns, resources, previous studies, and data that relate to the outline topics.

Examples:

- If you are interested in failing septic systems, we can use soils data in combination with sewer maps and age of housing stock to identify likely locations.
- If you wish to see more infiltration of storm water, we should look at permeable soils data to identify locations where this is most possible. We may need to document percent impervious and change in land use to demonstrate the need for this particular BMP.
- If there is an area of your community that floods or has erosion problems, think about how we will document the concern and what we need to look at upstream or downstream to determine if it's a problem with the stream system or with the land uses around it.