Upper Tuscarawas River Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Thursday, April 20th, 2006
2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

New Franklin Administration Building
5611 Manchester Rd.
Akron, OH 44319

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome

- **Meeting Attendees:**
  Nick Lautzenheiser – Summit County Planning; Barry Ganoe – City of New Franklin; Mark Kochheiser – City of New Franklin; Jeff Pritchard – City of Norton; Susan DeChant – Summit County Planning; Edith Chase – Citizen; Chris Bunch – Western Reserve Land Conservancy; Tom Davis – Summit County D.O.E.S.; Eric Akin – NEFCO

- **Purpose and Goals:**
  Purpose: Update the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed Action Plan so it is more beneficial to local stakeholders in protecting and restoring local water resources. The plan will include up-to-date information, be more user friendly, be locally driven, endorsable by the Ohio EPA and Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and have focused and prioritized actions.

- **Recap and Events:** Eric Akin thanked everyone for coming and apologized for the last minute cancellation of the January meeting due the early birth of his daughter. Since the last meeting in August 2005, NEFCO has been in the process of collecting and updating information about the Upper Tuscarawas River and tributaries. The meeting will review the collected information, have presentations about ongoing projects from Summit County and the Western Reserve Land Consevancy, and begin looking at the next steps in the planning process.

II. Summit County General Plan – Susan DeChant and Nick Lautzenheiser

- Susan DeChant gave a presentation outlining the Summit County General Land Use Development Plan. DeChant summarized portions of the Plan pertaining to natural resources and environmental quality goals for the southern portion of Summit County.

- The document is a long range planning tool that establishes the goals and vision for the future land use and policy decisions in Summit County.

- The benefits of the General Plan include promoting of good planning, coordinating regional issues, establishing intergovernmental cooperation, and providing broad policy guidance to planning commissions.

- Summit County established a diverse Steering Committee composed of various local and regional organizations and agencies. The County also held four public meetings since 2004 for outreach and participation in the planning process.

- Results from a Community Survey indicated that natural areas, open space, parks, recreation, a sense of community, small-town atmosphere, and local schools were the positive qualities most commonly identified for Summit County.

- Almost half of Summit County's remaining vacant land (approximately 50,000 acres) was developed between 1979 and 2004. Approximately 6,600 acres of farmland was lost during this time, and some communities are likely approaching build-out (no more vacant land left to develop).

- The General Plan recommends reversing sprawl by encouraging infill development, downtown revitalization, and neotraditional designs like New Urbanism and smart growth.

- Smart growth principles include creating a wide range of housing opportunities, fostering walkable neighborhoods, preserving open space, and providing a variety of transportation options. Other aspects of smart growth include compact building design and directing development to existing communities instead of spreading out into new areas in the County.

- The General Plan also identifies existing and proposed trails and priority greenways. One of the priority greenways runs along the Upper Tuscarawas River.

- Natural resource topics covered in the General Plan include open space preservation, green infrastructure, storm water management, groundwater resources, wetlands, and ecologically sensitive areas.

- Low Impact Design (LID), a new approach to development and storm water management, is highlighted in the General Plan. LID incorporates natural features to store storm water, reduce runoff, increase groundwater recharge, and enhance water quality.

- The General Plan also identifies areas with high potential for ground water pollution, wetlands, and ecologically sensitive regions.

- Implementation of the strategies outlined in the General Plan will include incorporating the goals of the plan into existing planning documents like NEFCO's 208 Clean Water Plan and sewer master plans. Other strategies include encouraging the low impact development principles and limiting unnecessary expansion by utilizing existing infrastructure.

- Ms. DeChant was asked what the response has been from the building community and if current subdivision regulations allow for LID construction.

She said that they have presented the plan to the Home Builders Association and that the County's subdivision regulations were updated in 2002.

III. Western Reserve Land Conservancy – Chris Bunch

- Chris Bunch gave a presentation on the newly formed Western Reserve Land Conservancy. It came about as a merger between eight land trusts, including the Medina Summit Land Conservancy. It was the largest ever merger of land trusts in the nation.

- The Medina Summit Land Conservancy is now the Medina Summit Chapter of the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. The Chapter also covers efforts in Stark County.

- In total, the new conservancy covers 14 counties in Northeast Ohio containing more than 4,000,000 acres, 4,000,000 residents, 350 municipalities, and all or part of 16 watersheds.

- The rationale behind the newly formed regional land trust is that natural resources and land are being consumed at a rate greater than population growth. Since the population of the region peaked in the 1970s, more than 40% of the land has been developed.

- The Conservancy uses a GIS mapping based prioritization system to locate land parcel for acquisition. The system uses parcel and natural features data to rank individual parcels for various natural resource characteristics and/or threat levels from development.

- An anchor based strategy is used to acquire property. This entails identifying anchor parcels, protecting them, and then working to connect them.

- To aid in determining priority land acquisitions, they surveyed citizens and elected officials. They then combined the survey results with natural features data to establish initial priorities. They are now holding small meetings throughout the area to refine priorities and gather field information.

- The survey results showed over 97% felt environmental quality was the primary reason to protect land. This differs from similar surveys previously conducted in the area where scenic beauty and other aesthetical reasons were given as the primary reason for land protection.

- Also, water quality was the number one reason respondents gave as the main environmental factor to protect land.

- Chris Bunch then demonstrated how this methodology is being used with land parcels along the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor.

- Many opportunities exist in the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed to protect high quality natural areas. However, partnering among various agencies and organizations is vital to accomplish this task.

- Funding is always an issue when dealing with land conservation. Outside funding will be needed to protect high quality sites within the watershed. The watershed plan, once completed, can aid in attracting outside funding.

- Mr. Bunch was asked if Stark County has been included in the prioritization system. He said it has not and the system was currently limited to Medina and Summit County. However, Stark County will not be ignored by the Western Reserve Land Conservancy. There are plans to complete a prioritization system for the area in the future. Also, if there are known high quality natural areas in need of protection in Stark County, the Conservancy would be happy to look at the parcel to see if they could help.

IV. Action Plan Update – Eric Akin

- Ohio EPA has been conducting water quality sampling in the watershed since 2003 for their Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report. They had five sampling locations within the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed: Mogadore Ave., Pressler Rd., upstream of the waste water treatment plant, Arlington Rd., and Snyder Ave.

- The results of the chemical sampling data were summarized in a handout provided. Two things stood out in this summary. First, nutrient levels (nitrite and total phosphorus) were elevated downstream of the wastewater treatment plant. Second, the total suspended solid averages increase from upstream to downstream sites.

- A map of the aquatic life use attainment status from the Ohio EPA was also displayed. For aquatic life uses, the section of the river from Pressler Rd. to State St. is in attainment. The rest of the Upper Tuscarawas River is not in attainment.

- Ohio EPA results also show that the headwaters of the river are in “poor” health. The tributary Myersville Creek and the river from State St. to its confluence with Wolf Creek are in “fair” health.

- Sections not in attainment will have pollutant load modeling completed by Ohio EPA. These models will tell stakeholders why the river is not in attainment and how much a pollutant(s) needs to be reduced to bring the stream back into attainment. The modeling results should be available this summer.

- Other notes from Ohio EPA’s TMDL sampling show “few good” stream habitat areas within the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed. Also, it is the only section of the entire Tuscarawas River to not show improvement in fish community scores since 1983.

- The committee agreed that preservation of the remaining high quality natural areas in the watershed is a high priority.

- The discussion then turned to setting subwatershed planning boundaries. The goal is to divide the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed up into small, distinct areas in order to better focus planning and implementation efforts.

- The Committee decided to have six subwatershed planning areas: Headwaters down to the Trits Mill Pond area; Myersville Creek; Trits Mill Pond area to Tuscarawas Diversion Dam; Portage Lakes watershed; Singer Lake watershed; and the Portage Lakes outlet to the river's confluence with Wolf Creek.

- The proposed format was reviewed and agreed upon.

- The information update handout was arranged by the proposed format. Much of the information needed for the inventory section of the watershed plan has been collected. The committee was asked to review the handout and note any information that they believed was missing, and/or to provide information that is currently lacking from the inventory section.

- Data gaps include miles of channel modifications (ditches), eroded banks information, riparian buffer inventory, previous water quality projects, septic system information, biological features, sources/causes of pollution, and load reduction calculation (to be handled by Ohio EPA's TMDL study).

- Information or sections of the watershed plan that still need to be developed are the problem statements, goals, objectives, specific restoration/protection projects, implementation focus areas, a watershed monitoring plan, and an evaluation procedure.

- There was a long gap between the first and second TAC meetings because the inventory information gathering stage did not require much input from the committee. Now that this in nearly complete, the input from the TAC will be sought to help develop theses needed sections of the watershed plan (goals, objectives, actions, etc.). Therefore, the TAC will be meeting more regularly until this is accomplished.

V. Next Step

- The next meeting to begin setting goals, objectives, actions, etc. will be scheduled in late May or early June.

- If you have any questions about the watershed plan or the meetings, contact Eric Akin at 330-252-0337 or visit the update website at http://www.uptuscwatershed.org/tuscarawas_tac.htm.

Summary Completed by Eric Akin on 5/18/06