

**Upper Wolf Creek Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Monday, April 24, 2006
1:30 – 3:30 p.m.**

**Great Room
Winery at Wolf Creek
2637 S. Cleveland Massillon Rd.
Norton, OH 44203**

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome

- **Meeting Attendees:** Rick Perry & Paul Saldutte – Medina County Park District; Jeff Pritchard – City of Norton; Terry Palmer & Jim Cota – City of Barberton; Eric Akin – NEFCO; Chris Hartman – Medina County SWCD; Al James & Kim Fueng

- **Purpose and Goals:** Update the Upper Wolf Creek Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) so that 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.

- **Introduction:** Eric Akin apologized for the last minute cancellation of the February meeting due the early birth of his daughter. Since the last meeting in, NEFCO has been in the process of collecting and updating information about the Upper Wolf Creek watershed. The meeting will review the collected information, listen to ongoing projects from the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, and begin looking at the next steps in the planning process.

II. Western Reserve Land Conservancy

- 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.

- 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. The GIS mapping program is going to be housed in the Medina County Soil SWCD office.
- 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 Medina and Summit county line in the watershed.
- Opportunities exist in the Upper Wolf Creek 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.

III. Action Plan Update – Status

- Eric Akin showed a map of the proposed subwatershed planning boundaries. The subwatersheds include the Barberton Reservoir (5,049 acres), Wolf Creek headwaters (6,206 acres), Ridge Creek/Spruce Run (4,230 acres), and Koontz Creek (2,800 acres). The stream names were taken from a previous NEFCO report that used local roads to name the tributaries, so they may not match local stream names.
- The committee discussed the inclusion of a priority planning area for the portion of the watershed along Route 18. Eric's reasoning for this

designation is that section of the watershed is unique due to the high commercial development along Route 18. Actions taken in this area will likely be different from actions taken in the rest of the watershed, which is primarily residential and agriculture.

- The Committee agreed that the area may require a different approach for water quality protection and restoration, and thought that the special planning layer for this area is appropriate. Chris Bunch said that even though it is a unique area due to its land use, the approach should be the same with these landowners as it is with the rest of the watershed residents. That is making them take ownership and responsibility for the health of the stream and watershed, and helping them become good land stewards.
- The Committee then reviewed the proposed format of the Action Plan and agreed on a format that follows Ohio EPA (Appendix 8) guidelines for watershed plans in Ohio. In addition, the format will have individual “mini” plans for each of the four subwatersheds and Route 18 planning areas.
- 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, and an evaluation procedure.

IV. Water Quality Discussion

- Eric Akin reviewed the macroinvertebrate (water insects and crustaceans) sampling he conducted on November 1, 2005, with the City of Barberton. He sampled at two sites that were previously monitored by NEFCO in 1999. The sites were along Wolf Creek at the Beach Road bridge, and Ridge Creek at the State Road bridge.
- The Wolf Creek site scored 20 and rated as “Good”. The Ridge Creek sampling also scored as “Good” with an average score of 17. However, the Wolf Creek site had a greater diversity and abundance of organisms. Ridge Creek at the sampling site was heavily silted in and it was difficult to find a suitable sampling location.

- Compared to the data collected in 1999, the Wolf Creek site improved in scoring from “Fair” to “Good”, while the Ridge Creek site dropped its score from “Excellent” to “Good”. Siltation from construction upstream of the site was given as a likely reason for decreased scores at the Ridge Creek location.
- Eric then went over the preliminary results from Ohio EPA water quality survey, known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report. The Ohio EPA has been conducting water quality monitoring in the areas since 2003.
- The Upper Wolf Creek from Ridgewood Rd. to Ridge Creek and Koontz Creek are in “good” health and attaining water quality standards for warm water habitat (WWH) streams. Ridge Creek and the rest of the Upper Wolf Creek are in “fair” health and not attaining WWH water quality standards.
- Pollution load modeling will be completed by Ohio EPA for the sections of the Creek not in attainment. These models will tell stakeholders why the creek is not in attainment and how much a pollutant(s) needs to be reduced to bring the stream back into attainment. Preliminary modeling results should be available this summer.
- Ohio EPA’s habitat rating for the entire Upper Tuscarawas River watershed, which includes the Upper Wolf Creek, shows few good habitat areas remaining. The Committee agreed that protection of remaining high quality natural resource areas in the watershed is a priority.
- A handout provided a summary of the water quality data collected by Ohio EPA at three sites in the Upper Wolf Creek watershed: State Route 162 (Wolf Creek), tributary at State Route 162 (Unnamed Tributary), State Road (Ridge Creek), and the Barberton Reservoir intake for the Barberton Water Treatment Plant.
- Results that stand out include low nutrient levels (nitrate+nitrite, total phosphorus, ammonia, etc.) at all sampling locations, and elevated suspended solids at the tributary and Ridge Creek sites.
- The final handout shows a comparison of samples collected on similar days by Ohio EPA and the City of Barberton as part of their water quality monitoring program in the watershed. Two of EPA’s sampling locations were the same as Barberton’s (Ridge Creek and Intake), while remaining two resided between two of Barberton’s sampling locations.
- The comparison of the similar sites showed similar results for most parameters. However, total suspended solids levels were consistently higher for Barberton’s samples, while ammonia levels were generally higher in EPA’s samples. Several explanations could account for these

differences include different collection techniques, different collection times, varying laboratory procedures, and sensitivity/quality of the monitoring/laboratory equipment.

V. Next Step

- Chris Bunch said that he would work with the Medina County SWCD and produce a list of prioritized land parcels for protection in the Upper Wolf Creek watershed. He and Chris Hartman thought it could be completed by the end of May. Once completed, the information should aid the Committee in focusing preservation and protection measures for the Action Plan.

- Chris Hartman said the SWCD received a grant from the Ohio Lake Erie Commission to look at balanced growth as way of protecting water resources and Lake Erie. Among other goals, the plan will outline strategies to protect critically important ecological areas. Although the Upper Wolf Creek is not in the Lake Erie watershed, the SWCD will complete work for Medina townships even partially located in the Lake Erie watershed. Therefore this work will be completed for Granger and Sharon Townships which contains portions of the Upper Wolf Creek watershed.

- The Medina County Park District would like the Park's Master Plan and Trails Plan incorporated into the Action Plan. They feel the inclusion of trails, greenways, and open space acquisition should be a significant component of the plan.

- Jeff Pritchard encouraged the Committee to look at establishing environmental impact fees in the watershed and direct the money generated to water quality monitoring and watershed improvement/protection projects.

- The City of Barberton is interested in any protection and restoration measures in the watershed because Barberton Reservoir serves as the City's primary drinking water supply.

- The next meeting will take place after the Western Reserve Land Conservancy and the Medina County SWCD complete there parcel prioritization work. The meeting will focus on setting goals, objectives, actions, etc., and will likely be held in early to mid-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.uptuswatershed.org/wolf_tac.htm.