

Upper Wolf Creek Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
Monday, September 12th, 2005
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:** Andy Troutman – Wolf Creek Vineyards; Rick Perry – Medina County Park District; Jeff Pritchard – City of Norton; Terry Palmer & Jim Cota – City of Barberton; Patrice Theken & Tom Russell – Medina Planning; Tom Davis – Summit County Dept. of Environmental Services; Eric Akin – NEFCO; Chris Hartman – Medina County SWCD

- **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.

- **Meeting Goal:** To determine a clear direction for the Watershed Plan update.

II. Review of Previous Work

- The Upper Wolf Creek watershed covers 18,062 acres in eastern Medina and western Summit Counties. The area includes Sharon Township, Copley Township, the City of Norton, Granger Township, and part of the City of Wadsworth.

- The headwaters are primarily located near State Route 18 and flow south and southwesterly into Barberton Reservoir. Barberton Reservoir serves as the primary drinking water supply for the City of Barberton. The watershed is also located on the mid-continental divide meaning water in the watershed to the north of Wolf Creek (Yellow Creek) flows into Lake Erie, while water in the Upper Wolf Creek eventually flows into the Ohio River and the Gulf of Mexico. This means the watershed is not eligible for special grants for watershed in the Great Lakes Basin.

- According to Ohio EPA's latest water quality assessment report, no section of the Tuscarawas River, which includes the Upper Wolf Creek, is fully meeting State water quality standards. So there is a need to address water quality in the watershed.

- In 1997, NEFCO completed the Upper Wolf Creek Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) – Phase I. This diagnostic report contains sections on physical geology, potential point and nonpoint pollution sources, a riparian inventory, and potential best management practices. The final section has ten recommendations for future work in the watershed. The meeting attendees were given handouts of the plan's contents.
- Phase II of the Upper Wolf Creek CWMP summarized the results of yearlong water quality monitoring effort by NEFCO. NEFCO's staff collected monthly chemical samples from eleven locations throughout the watershed in 1998 and 1999. Parameters tested for included phosphorous, nitrogen, suspended solids, biological oxygen demand (BOD), bacteria, temperature, and pH. NEFCO also conducted one sampling of the macroinvertebrate community at four locations. In general, the chemical results show no consistently high levels for any of the parameters. The sampling did show elevated nutrient and bacteria levels after rain events at some locations. The macroinvertebrate sampling had three "excellent" scores and one "fair" score at the sites sampled. The report can be viewed at www.uptuscwatershed.org/upper_tusc.html.
- The Upper Wolf Creek CWMP was used by NEFCO to secure an Ohio EPA Section 319 grant that was completed in 2001. The grant's goals were to reduce phosphorus loading into the creek by 1,000 lbs./year and preserve 25 acres of riparian habitat. Phosphorus reduction was to be accomplished by repairing and replacing failing home sewage treatment (septic) systems and implement manure management practices on "hobby" farms in the watershed. Riparian habitat preservation was to be done by establishing conservation easements along the Upper Wolf Creek and its tributaries. Other objectives of the grant were to establish watershed monitoring and to conduct environmental education in the watershed.
- Partners in the Ohio EPA grant were NEFCO, the City of Barberton, the Medina County SWCD, the Medina County Health Department, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and the Medina Summit Land Conservancy. The results of the grant were mixed. Twenty-six septic systems were repaired or replaced, the City of Barberton implemented a monitoring program, and environmental education occurred. However, no manure management practices or riparian conservation easements were established during the grant. The primary reason for this was the lack of financial incentives for private landowners to implement these two practices.
- Water quality monitoring during the grant did not show a change in the Upper Wolf Creek's water quality resulting from the repair and replacement of septic systems. However, the Health Department's sampling of discharges from septic systems before and after repair or replacement

locally showed a significant reduction in nutrients and bacteria entering the creek.

- The City of Barberton's water treatment plant has continued chemical monitoring of the eleven sites in the watershed since the end of the Section 319 grant. Terry Palmer said that they have not seen any noticeable trends in the water chemistry.
- Ohio EPA is currently in the process of re-assessing the water quality of Upper Wolf Creek through its total maximum daily load (TMDL) program. The TMDL report will identify sources and causes of poor water in the creek and determine the amount a pollutant needs to be reduced to meet State water quality standards. The TMDL report is scheduled for completion in early 2006.
- The last assessment of Wolf Creek by Ohio EPA was completed on 1993. Causes of poor water quality from that assessment were metals, habitat alterations, and unknown toxicity. Sources of these causes were determined to be from urban storm water runoff, industrial discharges, contaminated sediments, channelization, and development. Fortunately most of these sources and causes of poor water quality occur in Wolf Creek below the Barberton Reservoir.
- Despite NEFCO securing an Ohio EPA grant for the watershed which successfully fixed failing septic systems, established a monitoring program, and provided environmental education to watershed residents, the plan needs to be brought up-to-date so the area and its stakeholders can remain competitive for limited outside funding.
- Several programs, initiatives, and guidelines have come about since the completion of the Action Plan in 2000. These include:
 - Summit County's Riparian Setback Ordinance
 - Storm Water National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase 2
 - Summit Metro Parks Wetlands Survey
 - NEFCO's Clean Water Plan Ohio River Basin Update
 - Medina County's Natural Resource Inventory
 - Ohio EPA Water Quality Survey (TMDL)
 - New State Watershed Planning Guidelines
 - Summit County's Natural Resources Inventory
 - Ohio EPA Source Water Area Assessment and Protection Plan for Barberton Reservoir
- The update needs to incorporate all of this new data into the plan and bring it up to the new State standards for endorsement.

III. New Watershed Plan Guidelines

- In 1997, the Ohio EPA produced “A Guide to Developing Local Watershed Action Plans in Ohio” to assist local communities with watershed planning. NEFCO used this document in developing the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed Action Plan.
- However, the Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) found that many of the plans following the Guide still didn't adequately address known water pollution problems. Using the lessons learned from successful projects throughout Ohio, the Guide was updated in 2002 to include all the information that ideally should be contained in a watershed action plan. This update is located in Appendix 8 of the Guide.
- Furthermore, the Ohio EPA and ODNR developed an endorsement protocol where plans can be submitted to them for their review. If they meet Appendix 8 guidelines then the plan will receive “State Endorsement”.
- A State Endorsement results in a watershed becoming eligible for or receives higher priority for limited outside funding. Funding sources linked to State Endorsement are Ohio EPA Section 319 grants, Water Resource Restoration Sponsorship Program (WRRSP) funds, Ohio EPA's linked deposit program, and Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQUIP) through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).
- The key new components of Appendix 8 and State Endorsement standards is that an Action Plan should focus on smaller (subwatershed) areas, identify specific water quality improvement projects, link specific actions to water quality data, and calculate the pollution reduction from recommended management practices.
- The current Upper Wolf Creek Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan does not meet these new standards.

IV. Group Discussion

- Eric Akin started out the discussion by asking the committee if we should proceed with updating the Upper Wolf Creek Watershed Plan. Chris Hartman said that if it will place the watershed in a better position for grants and other funds to address water quality issues then the plan should be updated. The other committee members agreed.
- Eric asked Terry Palmer if the Barberton Reservoir's source water assessment and protection plan has been completed. Terry said the plan has been completed. Eric said that the plan should be incorporated into the update.
- Jeff Pritchard asked Terry Palmer if the construction and debris landfills near Barberton's groundwater wells were within the 5-year delineated

protection zone. Terry said those landfills were grandfathered in, but they have worked with the city to minimize the threats to their well field.

- Jeff Pritchard asked the Medina County representatives if they have implemented a county-wide riparian setback similar to Summit County. Chris Hartman says the Medina County SWCD recognizes that riparian setbacks are perhaps the best practices in protecting local streams and lakes. However, he said a county-wide ordinance mandating a setback is not currently feasible in Medina County.
- Tom Russell suggested working with Sharon Township to protect the stream corridor. The township is currently in the process of updating the comprehensive plan for the township.
- Chris Hartman said Medina County is beginning or will soon begin an update of the floodplain regulations.
- Eric Akin suggested starting out the process by looking at general watershed or water quality issues in the Upper Wolf Creek Watershed. Terry Palmer said the primary issues for the Barberton Reservoir are nutrients and algae. The committee members agreed that floodplain and riparian habitat protection/restoration is also a primary issue. Chris Hartman and Patrice Theken both thought that environmental education is one of the top issues of the watershed plan.
- Tom Russell said that there hasn't been a land use or land cover update since the plan was completed. However, he suggested using satellite photos to measure the change in impervious area in the watershed over the last several years. Eric Akin said NEFCO they did an impervious cover comparison for the Yellow Creek watershed, just to the north of Wolf Creek.
- Patrice Theken asked how the local government jurisdiction and public would be involved with the update. Eric Akin said that all the government entities within the watershed were invited to this initial meeting. Some could not make the meeting date, while others want to remain informed of the progress but not be directly involved with the update. Tom Russell suggested using an existing meeting such as the township trustees or planning commission meetings to solicit input on this update.
- Tom Davis said the Summit County Department of Environmental Services was interested in the Upper Wolf Creek watershed plan update from the standpoint on how it might impact their sewer treatment facilities.
- The committee agreed to update the watershed plan so that it meets the new planning standards and can be endorsed by the State. The attendees went over the handout with the new watershed planning guidelines on them and the current content of the watershed plan. They then went over each

category to determine who can provide or update the information for the plan.

- The group discussed on how to divide the watershed into smaller subwatersheds for planning and implementation of management practices. Eric Akin suggested trying to come up with a division based on land uses. For example, grouping the subwatershed area around State Route 18 into one area since they will all have similar water quality issues. Other group members thought at the division should be by tributaries to the Upper Wolf Creek. Eric said he would come up with a couple of options and send them out the committee members for comment.
- The discussion turned to the need for endorsement of the plan by local officials in the new planning guidelines. Eric Akin said that for the NEFCO portion of the watershed, and endorsement by NEFCO General Policy Board could be considered a type of local endorsement since its members are locally elected officials from Summit, Stark, Portage, and Wayne Counties. Jeff Pritchard suggested getting a similar endorsement from NOACA, NEFCO's sister agency covering Medina County. Tom Russell thought that since there are so few government jurisdictions in the watershed that the committee should seek their endorsement individually, and not through NOACA. He cautioned that they need to be kept informed of the progress of the update if we need their endorsement. Eric said he intended on keeping all government entities in the watershed informed on the Watershed Plan update and would be open to presenting this information directly to government entities.
- Patrice Theken asked who would be responsible for updating the report. Eric Akin said that NEFCO will be responsible for completing the update, but local assistance is essential in order for the plan to reflect local goals and initiatives. He said much of the work will be done using email and the website (www.uptuscwatershed.org/wolf_tac.htm) to distribute information, and meetings will be called as needed.

V. Next Step

- The committee members agreed that the next meeting should focus on the water quality data collected by the Ohio EPA and the City of Barberton. Eric Akin said he would contact the Ohio EPA and see when they will be available for a meeting.
- The next meeting will be announced as soon as the Ohio EPA can commit to a meeting date and time.