

I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to summarize the results of meetings held by NEFCO staff, between May 16 and May 31, 2000, with local officials from Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed communities. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the Watershed Action Plan, as amended by the Cost Analysis Table (NEFCO, April, 2000), and to identify activities or groups of activities from the Plan which would help address specific water quality concerns within the communities.

The Action Plan is a result of meetings held by the Portage Lakes Task Force (PLTF) from June to October, 1998. The PLTF was made up of representatives from state and local governments, citizen groups, and community members and identified seven goals for achieving higher water quality in the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed through protection and restoration of beneficial uses (safe drinking water, recreation, and habitat). Each goal can be achieved by a series of objectives which, in turn, can be achieved through a series of actions.

The Action Plan covers a multitude of possible actions and Best Management Practices that could conceivably be implemented in this or any given watershed to address major nonpoint source pollution problems. However, it is not realistic to expect that adequate funding could be procured to carry out such a vast implementation program. Instead, the result of conducting the meetings described in this document is a group of key, common elements addressed by the Action Plan, as identified by the communities, that can be applied within the watershed with limited available funding and resources. With these selected actions, and an interest in implementation expressed by the communities, it is hoped that the process of successfully seeking funding and service commitments will be facilitated.

II. Methodology

Each of the eleven communities within the watershed (see map in Appendix A) were contacted by phone in May, 2000 for the purpose of obtaining information from them regarding the important water quality issues and concerns they see in their local areas. The intent was to set up meetings with as many communities as possible to discuss, face to face, the Watershed Action Plan and develop an understanding of local needs and desires. Because community leaders interact closely with the public, they presumably would have the best sense of what issues need to be addressed most.

Appendix B shows one of the letters that were sent out to the communities within the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed, along with a list of all contacts to whom letters were sent. Included with each letter was a copy of the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed Action Plan and Cost Analysis Table (NEFCO, 2000), along with the Executive Summary of the Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan (CWMP) Phase I (NEFCO, 2000). Not all communities were available to meet with NEFCO staff. However, because it was deemed important that each community provide input as to their specific needs and concerns, those communities were requested to review the

CWMP and Action Plan/Cost Analysis, and to contact NEFCO with any ideas, questions, or comments regarding the Plan or possible future actions.

III. Results and Discussion

This section summarizes the discussions at five meetings held between May 16 and May 31, 2000 and examines how that information can be used to guide implementation of the Watershed Action Plan.

Community Name: Lake Township

Attendees, Positions: Don Myers and Sue Ruley, Township Trustees (met individually)

Date and Location of Meeting: May 16, 2000 Lake Township Building

Don Myers -

About one third of the Township lies within the watershed. Direct discharges into the ditches throughout the Twp. are minimal.

Sewers: Sanitary sewers would alleviate many of the problems currently seen regarding unreliable soils where home sewage disposal systems (HSDS) are being put in. Development in the western part of the Township is primarily connected to sewers, south along Metzger's Ditch. Most residences are not very far from lines and tying in should be possible but is very expensive. The Stark County Sewer District has held information meetings to discuss sewer lines. There needs to be a minimum percent sign-up in order to hook up an area on sewers.

Currently, soils are poor for HSDSs, especially in the Uniontown area. Some homeowners have been recalcitrant until forced by the Health Department to repair/replace their systems. Education about maintenance of HSDSs may be useful because many people are moving in from urban areas and are unfamiliar with the workings of and problems associated with HSDSs.

Agricultural pollution: Farming is not of much concern in the community because there is little left. One sod farmer has wells on his property for irrigation. There is concern that he is pumping water that may be contaminated from the Industrial Excess Landfill (IEL). If so, this water could possibly run off and contaminate other areas (it drains into Metzger's ditch).

Storm Water/Flooding: Flooding has been occurring with increasing frequency into backyards abutting the Tuscarawas River. The river fills in with muck and debris and backs up onto the adjacent land. One landowner is unable to mow his property, despite complaints from neighbors, because of the saturated soil. Dredging the River even a foot or so would help drain water from the area more efficiently.

Soil Erosion: This is not a chronic problem in the watershed, however there is erosion that occurs with new development. Julie Barbari of the Stark Soil and Water Conservation District monitors developments and makes sure silt fencing and other practices are in place.

Roadside Ditches: Don said It would be helpful to contact Rick Criss, Roads Superintendent for more information. People are using weed killers in ditches to keep down plants because it is hard to mow in a ditch. However, this contributes to erosion.

Riparian Habitat: For the most part, ditches and streams are vegetated at the banks with not much problems with sedimentation.

Sue Ruley-

Sewers: Central sewers should be set up. Uniontown (Edison St.) has small lots and needs better systems. Stark County requires that 50 percent of people in a neighborhood express interest in sewers before a meeting will be held to discuss setting up sewer hookups. The process is slow and is not getting sewers to those who need them. Education efforts in the past (on other issues) have not been very effective. She is unaware of any use or demonstration of alternative HSDS such as "mound systems".

Storm water/Flooding: The Township can only deal with off-road drainage, not drainage on and from properties. Drainage is a big issue and results in failing HSDSs because the gradient and soils are not sufficient to move the wastewater through the system. The Township participated in a Zimber Ditch study to investigate cleaning out the ditch.

Funding Issues: The Township has received Issue 2 funds in the past for road projects and Nature Works grants for bathrooms at a park.

Residents seem to be of the mind that the landscape of the Township ought to remain natural and deter the expansion of commercial development but at the same time they want easy access to services like sewer, which in turn encourage further development.

Rick Criss-Roads Superintendent (pers com, 5/23)

The only problem with roadside ditches is ditch enclosures, many of which are put in without township permission. The problem is that they are not adequate to transport heavy flows and they back up and cause flooding problems. The Township has a program to permit the installation of such enclosures and Mr. Criss makes weekly trips throughout the township roads to check for illicit installations. Actual permission to install is rare because of the drainage problems that occur. Also, there is a ditch cleaning program, once per year that is effective in keeping the ditches free from debris.

Community Name: City of Green

Attendees, positions: Wayne Weithe, Director of Planning; Paul Picket and John Walsh, Engineers

Date and Location of Meeting: May 17, 2000 City of Green Municipal Building

Home Sewage Disposal Systems/Sewers: Mr. Weithe expressed that there needs to be better communication with the Summit Co. Health Department regarding approval of HSDSs for new homes. Right now, they are too permissive and the result is many failing systems. Currently, testing for soil suitability is being used to generalize a whole site when much of the site is actually unsuitable. Perhaps, some demonstration projects in the City would be useful to show what works best for different areas. Education is an important component in this process. Perhaps, some flyers or pamphlets about proper care and maintenance would be useful. Green is currently working with the Summit County Department of Environmental Services to extend sewers in some areas.

Storm water Runoff/Erosion: Demonstration projects that utilize filtering systems in roadside ditches may be useful. One problem is storm water detention systems. It is still necessary to let the water out and that results in higher erosion. Perhaps ditches really need to be subjected to high flows and thus greater flooding to clean themselves out better. Right now, they fill in with debris and flood often.

To address erosion, perhaps it would be useful to hold an event with the Home Builders' Association (HBA) regarding construction BMPs, because Green can enforce them in the plan but after that, it's up to the builder to do the right thing. By getting HBA on board, they can influence and inform those that look to them for guidance. Also, council members can be of help if their attention can be captured.

Regular street sweeping would be useful. Right now, it is basically done in the Spring, to clear grit used over the winter.

It is important to try to use the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II storm water program as a mode of getting some of these programs accomplished. For example, education and construction site ordinances can be used to satisfy the six requirements. School programs and education would also be useful in getting the message home to parents.

It is important to acquire more concrete data on water quality to foster support for making any real changes. Perhaps, volunteer macroinvertebrate monitoring on a larger scale would help validate existing water quality concerns.

Riparian Zone Protection: It is costly to purchase easements for riparian zone protection, particularly if the land is of a residential or commercial nature. Is it really that beneficial (for storm water and habitat) to have these zones and how big should they be? Is tree planting right at the stream's edge instead sufficient?

Community Name: Franklin Township/New Franklin Village

Attendees, Positions: Susan Cooke, Franklin Township Clerk; Frances Kalapodis, Al Bollas and Paul Adamson, Franklin Township Trustees; William Nye and Mark Kochheiser, Zoning Department; Ken Tallman, Pat Clepper and Bob Alderman, New Franklin Village Council Members.

Date and Location of Meeting: May 23, Franklin Township Firehouse

Storm Water: This is one of two primary concerns. An area at the intersections of Center, Daily and Maywood roads consistently floods after heavy rains. It would be beneficial to install retention/detention/filtering systems. Fertilizer runoff is also a concern, as is septage that is carried away in the runoff. There should be money put into a storm water management plan and the Summit SWCD should be more active in overseeing construction on sites under five acres.

Septic Systems: The areas around the Portage Lakes themselves is a large concern because of the expansion of small, old homes into large units that still rely on the old septic systems. This a great potential for failure. Recognizing that a transition to sewers will be very slow to occur, there should be money funneled into greater inspection and enforcement by the Health Department of HSDSs. The Township is unable to accomplish this on their own.

Data Collection: There was a suggestion that there needs to be a better understanding of the types and amounts of pollutants entering the Portage Lakes system, including fish sampling data and water chemistry data.

Community Name: Coventry Township

Attendees, positions: Laurie Kieffer, Dave Bulgrin, and Val Sawhill, Township Trustees

Date and Location of Meeting: May 31, Coventry Township Hall

Water and Sewer: The issue of water and sewer lines being brought into the neighborhoods is an important one. Coventry Township is part of the Joint Economic Development District (JEDD) and Akron has extended the main lines into the Township but residents are not tapping into those lines, due to cost concerns. The area of Cottage Grove especially needs sewers. Money should be spent on determining what areas are in greatest need of sewers. The suggestion was made that NEFCO should work directly with the County and ODNR to procure funding for extension of sewer lines.

Storm Water: The Township relies on County guidelines for detention and retention. There needs to be better coordination among local agencies to deal with this concern.

Education: These needs have been met; the only missing link is the interest on the part of residents to deal with water quality issues. It would be useful to see school programs and volunteer programs dealing with cleanups on the Tuscarawas River proper.

Community Name: Jackson Township

Attendees, Positions: Chris Barnes, County Engineer; Franklin Thomas, County Subdivision Engineer; Julie Barbari, Stark SWCD; Gary Connor, Township Consultant; Ralph Boger, Highway Superintendent

Date and Location of Meeting: May 31, 2000, Jackson Township Hall

Storm Water: There was concern about the portion of the watershed that flows into Zimmer Ditch, being the most polluted waterway in the area. Currently, a project on Zimmer Ditch is planned. This will, according to Gary Connor, cost between \$10-12 million and will likely consist of up to ten detention basins to control storm water flooding. The group expressed a hope that there can be some work to build ecological amenities into such basins, like overflow areas or pretreatment (wetlands). One issue raised was the large number of sediment/storm water control basins which are privately owned by individuals or housing developments who do not know how to maintain them properly. Education on this would be helpful, to inform on what exactly a detention basin is and how it differs from a simple pond. The drainage network is in fairly good condition as it currently exists, but is not able to meet the necessary capacity.

Typically, there has been a scarcity of money to fund storm water projects. Recently, a yearly appropriation of \$300,000 from the County for ditch maintenance and construction was pulled back. This is a major loss for the Township. One possible way to fund future storm water projects is for the County to create a "storm water utility". The feasibility of this should be investigated. Stark County does not have a cohesive storm water management plan right now. There should be much greater dialogue and meetings between the townships and the County to devise such a plan, especially with the NPDES II looming large in their minds. It was mentioned that I-77 corridor development contributes greatly to excessive runoff.

Green Space/Open Space: It was mentioned that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has cost share money available to fund the purchase of riparian lands. There are signs up in some of these areas to explain what riparian zones are and why they are important to the streams. Most residents seem to support more green space, but have been unwilling to accept the kind of zoning regulations that would promote that (like cluster developments).

Construction Sites: There was a general agreement that the County needs to have a greater presence in the process through more specific and stringent subdivision regulations. The last revision of these regulations was in 1978 according to some at the meeting. Current Planned Residential Development (PRD) regulations have been developed to include some green space provisions but there could be more done. More education on open space was a popular idea. The Stark SWCD has already carried out education efforts regarding wetlands, storm water and erosion, among other issues.

There was a great interest in trying to use implemented actions to also satisfy the requirements of the NPDES Phase II storm water program.

The information gathered through these meetings can provide some insights into how best to approach watershed management in the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed. That is because it is necessary to identify and target those issues that are of greatest interest to the local communities dealing with them. The following table shows the issues that were of primary concern to the communities met with:

| Watershed Management Issues Raised | | | | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| | Lake Township | City of Green | Franklin Twp. & New Franklin Village | Coventry Township | Jackson Township |
| Communication Among Entities | | X | | | X |
| Data Collection | | X | X | | |
| Ditches | X | X | | | |
| Education | | X | | | X |
| Erosion/Construction | | X | | | X |
| HSDS Repair/Replace | X | X | X | | |
| NPDES II | | X | | | X |
| Riparian Habitat/Green Space | | X | | | X |
| Sewer Tie-ins | X | X | X | X | |
| Storm Water | X | X | X | X | X |
| Volunteers | | | | X | |

This table does not necessarily reflect all the issues that are important in a given watershed community and does not weigh the importance of each issue relative to the others. However, it does provide some insight into what some relevant common issues are that should be addressed, according to community leaders.

Storm Water

It is apparent that storm water is a primary concern in the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed. Each community expressed a need to deal with this issue. Rapid development and the associated impervious surface increases are stressing a drainage system which is old and in many places inadequate to handle large volumes of surface runoff. Frequent nuisance flooding is a common problem and more serious flooding is a potentiality as urbanization and suburbanization increase.

One of the primary actions in the Plan which addresses storm water issues is 2.3b, *Implementing the NPDES Phase II Storm Water Program*. This program needs to be implemented by all of the regulated communities by March, 2003, according to current Ohio EPA guidance. This mandate should be used as a context in which to implement storm water BMPs, as many actions in the plan can be used to satisfy NPDES Phase II

requirements and may at the same time be eligible for outside funding. This may include education, mentioned as important issues by the City of Green and Jackson Township. Public participation and involvement is another requirement of the program. This might include volunteer work, mentioned as an important issue by Coventry Township, such as storm drain stenciling (action 2.3c2). Even a regular street sweeping program (action 2.3d5), such as mentioned by Green, might qualify as meeting “pollution prevention and good housekeeping” requirements.

Some other possible actions that deal with storm water problems are regulatory in nature, such as in objective 2.3c. Limiting the amount of impervious surfaces in commercial establishments, for example, can help reduce the burden of storm water runoff on area streams. Requiring catch basins or constructed wetlands for impervious areas over a specified size, as in objective 2.3d could also improve current conditions and help mitigate potential future problems.

Sewer and Water Service

A need for water and sewer lines is the second-most mentioned problem facing this watershed. Many areas are serviced by individual home sewage disposal systems (HSDS) that, in many cases, are not appropriate for the types of soils and gradients present on site. All communities but Jackson Township expressed a great desire to see those sewer lines extended to the residences. Jackson Township, by comparison, is much farther along in the process of seeing a transition to sewers from HSDSs and therefore is not as concerned by this issue. Cost is a major concern for this transition and many residents throughout the watershed appear interested in abandoning their on-site systems but are reluctant because of the high cost.

Objective 1.2e highlights a need to promote sewer extensions in the watershed through education. This is particularly important in areas that have large numbers of failing systems, or systems where soil conditions are not appropriate for proper functioning. Because of the high cost associated with setting up sewer service to a residence, about \$9,000 (estimated), it may be useful to assist with cost sharing in a limited number of cases, if resources to do so would become available.

Home Sewage Disposal Systems

In some communities, repairing and replacing failing HSDS were seen as important issues. In some cases, as in Franklin Township, the transition to sewers is said to be occurring fairly slowly and dealing with the existing, failing systems will be necessary while that process takes place. Cost is also a major impediment to seeing these systems upgraded or replaced. Inspection and enforcement (both regarding maintenance and installation) are relevant issues as well.

In the Upper Tuscarawas Watershed Action Plan, Objective 1.2 deals directly with the issue of HSDSs. While a need exists for repair and replacement of systems, education is also an important component of a comprehensive program. Some residents may need to learn about proper maintenance of their systems, particularly residents who

have recently moved from areas serviced by sewers. Researching and using alternative treatment methods, such as constructed wetlands or mound systems (raised HSDSs which elevate the treatment systems above shallow water tables) is another part of the action plan which could help alleviate potential pollution.

One issue raised by two of the communities was to encourage better communication between the county agencies and local units of government. This is particularly important for the issues mentioned above. Because county involvement is so important in the area of storm water management and HSDS maintenance and inspection, particularly where the townships are concerned, these communities believe that the counties need to take a prominent role in developing regulations and programs to effectively deal with these issues. As NPDES Phase II becomes a more active issue, such coordination and cooperation may facilitate the implementation of that program.

IV. Conclusion/Next Steps

This document summarizes the results of an investigation into how communities in the Upper Tuscarawas River watershed could benefit most from a selective implementation of the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed Action Plan. The availability of resources is always a concern in developing a program to deal with watershed issues. Community leaders and personnel, through dealing directly with residents, see firsthand the needs for action to solve potential problems.

A likely next step is to investigate specific sources of funding to address some of the issues raised by the communities in the watershed. Having been approached by NEFCO for their input, and having expressed their key concerns, these communities will hopefully be able to take part in and facilitate the process of seeking funding. For example, it will be helpful to acquire letters of support and intent from them once available funding is identified and before it is applied for. Additionally, because some funding sources require a local monetary or in-kind match, it is important that the communities be familiar with and supportive of the Action Plan. Also, some actions could require changes in operations at the local or county level (a county-wide storm water management plan, for example). This may include legislative changes. Familiarizing communities with these issues now, in the context of the Action Plan, may help in focusing and guiding their efforts later, as these changes are made.

There will have to be an ongoing process of dialogue and information gathering to help cultivate familiarity, interest and support for the Upper Tuscarawas River Watershed Action Plan and the implementations it calls for. This document, and the meetings that provided its contents can be seen as a part of that process.

Appendix A

Watershed Map

Appendix B

Meeting Letter and Mailing List