



Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee Quarterly Meeting (Virtual)

MINUTES 07.20.2020

Meeting called to order at 9:05am

Present:

Voting Members: Jenn Greiser, Bill Hughes, Peter Bode, Robert Brand, Joe Zampino/Dan Brown, Ana Burns, Kate Chapel, Shannon Conway, Kate Evans, Grace Gallucci, Frank Greenland, Pat Gsellman, Joe Hadley, Kristin Hall, Scott Hardy, Marty Hilovsky, Elizabeth Hiser, Mike Johnson (for E. Marsh,) Whitnye Long Jones, Kevin Kratt, Becky McCleary, Elaine Price, Judith Shaw, Jordyn Stoll, Bryan Stubbs

Ex Officio/Resource: Melanie Barbis, Mark Loomis, Lynn Garrity, Curt Wagner, Chris Davis,

Guests: Mike Johnson, Heather Ullinger, Stacy Faile, Savannah Tracy, Pam Davis

Staff: Jane Goodman

Approval of Minutes of May 18, 2020 meeting

Corrections to include removal of reference to E. Price's tour company, various typos.

Committee voted to approve with corrections.

Presentation

Mike Johnson gave a presentation on the Pond Brook stream restoration project.

The project has been underway since 2003 and was just finished this year. He thanked the several funding agencies and organizations that contributed to making the project possible. Pond Brook is east of Twinsburg, close to 4,000 acres that is now their Liberty Park holding, flows about three miles north to south to join Tinker's Creek. It may not have been a stream but a ditch.

The project was done in three phases, in the brook and tributaries. Altogether 20K linear feet of brook, 5K feet of tributaries, 100 acres of restored wetlands.

Phase 1 is the northern end, straight channel was restored to meanders though original channel remained. Phase 3 most recently completed, south of Route 82, more meanders created around and through original channel resulting in a series of dollar signs, with islands in oxbow bends. They installed "LUNKERS," structures that create underwater fish shelter habitat. The hope is that trees will grow over them and their roots will replace as the structures decay.

They converted a monoculture spread to wetland, first controlling invasive plants, then plugged an existing drainage ditch so water stayed in place. The wetland recovered quickly.

Phase 1 was a mitigation project, so much monitoring was done using IBI, and showed best results of all phases. Mostly carp with many DELTs, then after restoration scores jumped considerably. Pond Brook is a modified warm water habitat, so low expectations. After work, bumped to warm water habitat, very pleased with results.

They saw a return of otters, and now otter walks are popular attractions and opportunity to talk about clean water's value to nature and people.

Lessons learned include that phased approaches have pros and cons – bidding and contracting had to go to multiple firms using different methods; they had to do aerial spraying but drift killed some button bush so would have cut that first to enable faster recovery; mitigation requirements different than restoration and they would rather have routed Pond Brook into the wetland, but mitigation regulations put wetlands above streams and sponsor didn't want stream moving into and through, so the wetland and brook had to remain separated; Phase 2 was built during a polar vortex, with frozen ground eliminating the need for erosion protection; Pond Brook was a petitioned ditch, which meant the county engineer had to vacate their easement, a process that took a lot of time; they had to acquire property and hadn't originally obtained mineral rights but now had to do so; "talk to your neighbors" should be one of the first things, but they hadn't and finally had to go back and mend fences. Pond Brook is better than it's been in many decades.

Public Comment

None.

Old Business

Grieser thanked for letter of support approval for a Metroparks soil decompaction and restoration project along Euclid Creek.

Regarding the Ohio Area of Concern Summit report at last meeting, Grieser reminded that the Governance Committee needs to review the changes in advisory committee membership categories and apply to future appointments.

New Business

Presentation from Garrity and Barbis:

Garrity shared the AOC Work Plan through 2024, showing the GLRI Action Plan III expectations – ten AOCs were identified with 2024 completion of all Management Actions; submission of all actions. Work Plan for next four years lays out how AOCs would accomplish. Lake Erie Commission, Ohio AOC program, USEPA and local implementers have been addressing budgets, implementers, scope to meet BUI targets solely with habitat-related BUIs and achievable by 2024. The list is a moving target as projects change. She showed the color-coded chart of management actions with budgets, status, progress, updates on actions. It shows when funding might kick in to reach 2024 goals. The chart includes non-habitat (other) BUIs with rough timelines for removal.

She thanked local implementers and USEPA. Because Cuyahoga has been moved to the front burner, the Ohio AOC program is putting as much staffing toward it as possible, with Barbis lead on BUIs.

She will send the chart as a pdf available to all.

Mark Loomis added thanks for Garrity, Barbis, and implementers' cooperation. This is the 5-year work plan. With ten AOCs also trying for 2024 and vying for attention, he's been pushing our needs.

Complimented on our plan being organized. Starting around November they will be doing FY 2022 planning, so this helps him allocate resources in advance. What helps is knowing when an implementer would need the funds, allowing them to schedule starting the funding request and provision process.

His goal is to get as much funding into the projects as possible.

Garrity added that the Canal Diversion Dam and Cascade projects are underway, so progress is being made.

Grieser asked if the Advisory Committee needs to approve the work plan?

Garrity: No, no approval from the AC is needed. But they'll be looking for support of the final Management Actions list by end of September.

Subcommittee Updates

Bryan Stubbs, Governance: Did not have reason to, so did not meet, but will get active as the process for annual membership engagement and appointments begins later in the summer. He invited anyone who isn't on a subcommittee to consider joining Governance.

Grieser mentioned that the committee will also be working on revisions called for in new state guidance that combines nonprofit and public member categories.

Scott Hardy, Public Outreach: Since our last call, Arrye Rosser has been sharing on our Facebook page; River Day happened with new virtual items, tours; Ohio State updated their web pages to include the fact sheet he produced; last meeting worked on new fact sheet content; he has finished his interviews for his institutional analysis, hopes to share at next meeting. Looking forward, Jacki Zevenbergen is working on AOC talks to schools for NOAA B Wet grant. He has been invited to participate in a National Science Foundation project on Coastlines for People that would focus on AOCs to do an education/outreach component, a 5-year grant where the Cuyahoga would be highlighted.

Frank Greenland, SIP: Met on June 23 to discuss the work plan, MA list. Melanie gave an overview of what's going on in each of the BUIs and all those remaining BUIs, plan for resampling fish tissue, etc. We'll be meeting before September to discuss Management Actions for the remaining BUIs. So we'll see what Ohio EPA has in mind, we can weigh in, and go to submittal. Will be reviewing certain work products by BUI, we'll review, comment, and go back to the committee for approval.

OEPA/OLEC Update

Melanie Barbis: For the Eutrophication BUI, she's wrapping up the removal document, has sent to Ohio EPA for internal review, then it will go to Lynn, then to GLNPO, goal is end of July to get to team leader for review and removal. She doesn't foresee problems, should go smoothly.

Grieser: In the past the Advisory Committee has had a chance to review the removal document before it gets submitted. At what stage will we have that opportunity?

Barbis: Once they have concurrence on the state level she will send it out to the committee, probably around the end of the month.

Grieser: So it will go to us and GLNPO simultaneously?

Barbis: Yes.

Garrity: It will still be a draft document for USEPA and their technical review, then the official comment period. They can coordinate with the committee simultaneously or when they get the comments from the public comment period. They will follow up.

Loomis: A concurrent review will work.

Grieser: We would like to review it before it gets to the public comment stage so that when it gets to public comment we're in concurrence and can provide the letter of support.

Barbis: The next BUI is dredging. They have been working with Loomis and USEPA's contractor to assemble what data they have. They're creating spatial maps and data configuration, they've submitted to the state, and the goal is to determine if there are any actions left. At the state level they hope to have concurrence around end of July, to say there are no further management actions for that BUI. They're doing this in Ashtabula now, so are mirroring that process, making it easier. Right now it's BUI evaluation, not removal just yet. This removal will probably be a year down the road.

The analysis is to check if there is need for a large scale sediment removal as a management action, to be in the MA list that's due to USEPA in September.

Goodman asked if the CROC project would qualify as that large sediment removal?

Loomis: It's already on the list.

Barbis – She has been getting Peter Bode data and information for the update of the AOC website being done through CRR.

Grieser wanted to be sure that the input of the outreach committee is included in the update.

CRR UPDATE

Jane Goodman: Peter is working on the website. It will include the outreach committee's contributions. Budget for subcontract is on track. The rest of the grant period will involve producing the annual report and fact sheet for distribution. Since we're not distributing print material at events, we'll be sending materials out to communities and usual recipients as hard copies and posting for downloads on the website.

Goodman announced that she will be retiring around the end of September, will stay around to close out the current subgrant, and is waiting to hear from Cherie Blair about whether CRR will keep the subgrant. CRR's board is considering partnering with another organization for contract staff. Blair is considering releasing an RFP for another organization to take over the AOC subgrant.

Bottom line is that changes will be coming in the fall.

Announcements pertinent to BUI delisting activities

Grieser asked if there are any Gorge Dam events we should know about. Loomis replied

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2020 Meeting Schedule:

Next will be October 19 at 9am (location tbd.) January meeting rescheduled from the 11th to the 25th.

Goodman thanked the group for all the years of help and involvement. She asked if anyone has video or other content on management action projects.

Adjourn

Bill Hughes moved to adjourn, Grace Gallucci seconded, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25am.