



**Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee  
MINUTES  
05.18.2020**

Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting (virtual)

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Meeting called to order at 9:05am

Present:

Voting Members: Jenn Greiser, Bill Hughes, Becky McCleary, Dan Brown, Elaine Marsh, Elaine Price, Elizabeth Hiser, Joe Hadley, Kevin Kratt, Kate Chapel, Kristin Hall, Marty Hilovsky, Judith Shaw, Meiring Borchers (for Frank Greenland,) Pam Davis (for Grace Gallucci,) Pat Gsellman, Robert Brand, Savannah Tracy (for Bryan Stubbs,) Scott Hardy, Whitney Long Jones, Shannon Conway, Jordyn Stoll  
Ex Officio/Resource: Melanie Barbis, Mark Loomis, Lynn Garrity, Curt Wagner, Deborah Millsap,  
Guests: Matt Hils, Heather Ullinger  
Staff: Jane Goodman

**Approval of Minutes of January 13, 2020 meeting**

J. Grieser noted discrepancy in description of SWCD update – John Nagy project was in Big Creek  
B. Hughes moved passage with corrections. P. Davis seconded the motion, which then passed.  
E.Price – Asked to get minutes within a couple weeks of meeting.

**Presentation**

Grieser introduced Matt Hils of OHM Advisors to give a presentation on the Vision for the Valley project. She indicated how this can contribute to the “life after delisting” work.

Matt showed a map of the study area and described the Vision for the Valley as primarily a transportation planning study, funded by a NOACA Transportation for Living Communities Initiative (TLCI) grant. It’s a big project that covers the area from the lake to Harvard and including adjacent neighborhoods. It’s an effort to look at how we can help the valley be a stronger economic engine, and get all the entities in the area – business, developers, recreation interests, public housing, etc. – how to help all work together for the greater good.

He described the phases involving organization, vision, recommendations, and the series of meetings, public input, and planning. He invited all to participate in an upcoming community event that he’ll give information to as it comes. They’ve done many ways to engage people, through charrettes, community events, surveys, online and individual outreach efforts.

Results of the engagement efforts showed people interested in connectivity along the river and to the valley, access, beauty, safety, productivity, recreation, environmental restoration, embracing the history, and facilitating industry.

They have been developing a position statement: “To support and protect our river and lake so these natural resources can continue to positively shape our community and position Cleveland as an innovative waterfront city.”

Hundreds of ideas have come from outreach, involvement.

He described how they structured a framework of components, principles, initiatives, and strategies.

The six plan components making up the framework are Land Use, Mobility & Connectivity, Public Space, Environment & Nature, Community, and Brand & Marketing. He noted that Environment/Nature weren't originally part of the project, since it came to be as a transportation project, but is extremely pleased that it has been included.

He focused on the Environment/Nature component, with existing conditions and what to look at moving forward. High water is a challenge. A lot of people still think the river is as dirty as it was decades ago, a lack of environmental progress and lack of knowledge are holding back progress.

They want the river to be a national model for sustainable industrial river stewardship and restoration, and to have that as the valley's reputation.

Key initiatives involve developing river stewards and education, phytoremediation at former industrial sites, and pilot shoreline remediation and restoration projects. Need more restoration, without supplanting viable industrial uses, but there are opportunities.

The study area is broken into districts, have public space and environment focus in sections, and conceptual design recommendations for areas for public use and environmental enhancement.

The initial draft design posits a continuous green river edge at least from the mouth to the Hope Memorial bridge and up through the peninsulas. They propose fish habitat and greenspace all around Collision Bend, with safe harbor areas for boats/people and fish, including the shoreline across from Scranton Flats. Zaclon ownership has offered their space beside the turning basin for reuse. He showed potential greening from Kingsbury Run to the turning basin. The southern end proposes redevelopment and greening at the Big Creek confluence.

Next steps – community events as virtual offerings - podcasts/video/panel discussion

Also feedback via facebook

Final report will be presented to the Cleveland planning commission.

Stoll – how will it happen? Funding? Implementation?

Hils – This is so big, it's the beginning of a multi-phase effort to move forward, involving a lot of groups and entities (like the AOC) who can grab a piece and make it happen. There's been discussion of a management group to coordinate these efforts, but it'll depend on who takes initiative and makes it happen.

Long Jones - how can grassroots get involved? Jane and Jenn are involved, so he asks that we forward the information we get to all here, and others pass it on. The more feedback and input the better.

Price – There's an old saying “as Cleveland goes, so goes the county”...so how are the adjoining cities at the southern tip of the project area, which is the gateway to the valley, being connected? This similar to the greenway plan, where there's an overall vision but each piece needs to be done by a project owner.

Matt – That's spot on, correct regarding relation to greenway, and it will be up to partners to move these initiatives along. For example – Newburg Hts would like to put a cycle/pedestrian way along Harvard, and as connector to the towpath and down into valley. The village has funding hurdles related

to showing connectivity to the valley, so the need is to talk to Cuyahoga Heights and have both communities work on filling that gap.

Price – We need to promote this. Our job is to make the case that natural resource are worth investment in that it all makes all the natural resource work valuable.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Old Business**

We got a request for a Letter of Support for a specific tree planting project, decided that since so many are doing trees, we'd do a generic letter of support. That LOS was approved by the Advisory Committee by email, and Jane will put it on the AC web page and send it out to everyone for their use.

OSU SeaGrant Research Update – Cuyahoga River AOC Collaborative Watershed Management  
Scott Hardy reported that he hasn't gotten as far as he'd like, but he can bring us up to date on what's been done. The first goal was to interview all the members of the AOC AC, and ex officio, about watershed governance...how we do things, make decisions, how we share information, with the goal of improving the way we work collaboratively, which will hopefully mean more sustainable outcomes  
He surveyed advisory group on top issues, interviewed all but two members. Some things jumped out from preliminary data. Some folks who've been on since the beginning, many others for more than 10 years, and some just recently. So time on the committee has a bearing on attitudes toward decision making.

Responses about the most pressing issues ranked stormwater and impervious surfaces highest, then water quality/nutrients, erosion, climate change, and wildlife habitat.

Responses to what restoration actions would be most impactful: Most folks said dam removal, stormwater management, tunnels, ecological restoration, community based stormwater management and impervious surface removal in the communities themselves throughout the watershed.

Responses included big picture items/actions and more community-centric actions.

Who makes up the AC? – Who's not here who might enhance our work? Responses: representatives from more of the actual communities who could help with impervious surface issues, biz and industry, Cliffs or ArcelorMittal, port, university, watersheds.

He expressed his thanks to all who participated, will give us the final report.

### **New Business**

Ohio Area of Concern Summit report out:

Jenn- OLEC/OEPA convened all the Ohio AOCs, spent a day with presentations from government and the other AOCs' committees and nonprofit facilitating organizations.

Bill Hughes gave a recap. The purpose of the summit was "to provide program updates and establish program goals in partnership with the local AOC advisory committees and to identify program areas for further coordination and leveraging of skills with AOC program partners."

It was attended by reps from Ohio EPA and USEPA and groups like ours from the Maumee, Black and Ashtabula AOCs. Jenn, Jane, Frank, and Bill represented the Cuyahoga AOC.

Jane will post the presentations from the summit on the AOC advisory committee password protected web page. They've asked us to share with the AC but not publicly.

There was a good presentation about the process of delisting and defining the acronyms we're used to using, and a good opportunity for us to interact with our peers from other Ohio AOCs and to give feedback. Better focused on Ohio than what we get at the national AOC conferences.

Our presentation was best, and the only one to meet the time limit.

It was a good opportunity to see what the other groups are doing. All the other AOCs have other things going on, tree planting events and other things we are doing as well. It was interesting to see the makeup of other AOCs and their nonprofit organizations. The Black River was more business-oriented with business along and using the river. Maumee's has more consultants and engineers, and the Ashtabula is winding down.

There are going to be some changes to the guidance on the makeup of the advisory committees. A lot have had a hard time recruiting public members, so they will change to group the public with nonprofits. So that's a change that our governance committee needs to meet and manage and bring back to the full AC. He suggested that we need to have more business participation.

Jenn – One thing that stuck with her from the USEPA's message was that when we all talk together we're talking about the end goal, and that's what prioritizes funding and strategies to get to that end goal, and it was interesting to see that the Cuyahoga still seems to be in the longer term bucket schedule, 2024-24 plus, and the Maumee is also there and it almost felt as if we're competing with the Maumee to get that attention and resources.

Bill – We're in that 2024 bucket with a few other outside-Ohio AOCs, but we all seemed to feel confident that we could meet that target. And that date means when all management actions have been implemented, not that everything's perfect. And the focus this year is getting those management actions with likely completion schedules. Also, wondering what folks are seeing vis a vis their projects in terms of COVID19. Some are going ahead, but it'll have an effect on our timeline.

Mark Loomis – There are many moving pieces to the scheduling, funding, priorities. Are AOCs competing? No, but we're looking at projects that can happen by 2024, so we're prioritizing to get the best bang for the buck. GLNPO is using a tier approach, so he's working to position projects since we don't know about future money. They asked Ohio for a very short turnaround, and Cuyahoga was first to give a draft management action plan. They want to empower the state to get this done.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

Governance – B. Stubbs absent, so Savannah Tracy, his alternate reported that there's nothing to report. Jenn noted that we'll have to revisit the guidance and update our operating procedures re merging public members and nonprofits.

Public Outreach – S. Hardy reported that the committee had a productive meeting at the Tech Hive. Elaine Price had good suggestions about branding ourselves for recognition as well as gaining more attention and respect of decision makers. Talked about the need for a fact sheet for the public, other than the one we use for local governments. Many followup suggestions were received in an email chain, and Jane will pull them together and produce a new fact sheet. She provided a spreadsheet of when all the local councils meet so that members can schedule short presentations. Working on this and hoping to ramp back up when things open up.

Strategic Implementation – Frank couldn't be with us. A committee meeting is set for June 23 at 10:30, on zoom. Melanie will be giving an update on the BUIs in her report.

### **OEPA/OLEC Update**

M. Barbis, Ohio EPA, gave a slide presentation of the latest status of BUI removal activities. The goal is to submit a complete Management Action list by September 30 looking at all the BUIs. They want to discuss committee participation between now and the deadline to move actions forward.

#### Remaining BUIs:

##### #7 Restrictions on Navigational Dredging:

They are working with GLNPO on compiling data, using a process similar to how Ashtabula did this. They need to determine if an additional MA is needed. Sampling and/or evaluation is planned for 2020-2023, with projected BUI removal in 2024.

##### #4 Fish Tumors and other deformities:

They recently received 2019 sampling results from USFWS, found that tumors do not meet the target, but there is a slight decreasing trend in percentages so they plan to resample next summer and reevaluate in 2021-2022. Projected removal in 2023.

##### #10 Beach Closings/Recreational Use:

TetraTech completed their evaluation report. Edgewater meets the target, but Villa Angela and Euclid Beach do not. Planning on discussing at next SIP meeting on how to move forward, need to reevaluate in 2020-2022, with projected removal in 2023.

##### #8 Eutrophication and Undesirable Algae:

Dissolved oxygen in the lacustrary meets targets. They sent out a survey but received minimal though useful responses. They're assembling other supporting data, and are currently drafting the removal document. Projected removal by this fall (2020.)

For committee participation between now and September 30, SIP Meeting will go into more depth, basically talk about MA list and milestones keeping projects moving forward.

Discussions on path forward.

For MA projects, she and Lynn are working a 5-year plan with timelines for all projected BUI removals and Management Actions.

One question they wanted to bring to the committee is if anyone has information on what BUI the Old River Channel is supposed to address. Looking at fish tumors, has to be in the 5-year work plan. Asking if anyone has information on the origins of that project.

Melanie showed the spreadsheet with current management action list for aquatic life BUIs.

Discussion:

Jenn – you mentioned that the beach-related BUI and Tetra Tech report will be discussed at the SIP meeting. We don't have that report. Could we review before then? Sure, Melanie will check and share it.

Bill – You mentioned not being quite sure about the ORC. Who would have the answer?

Melanie – Not sure, assuming it was when Ted was here.

Lynn – They had it as being for the benthos BUI but some thought it was for other BUIs, so they're trying to clarify. Continuing to look in their records.

Jane – We have all the files going back maybe to 2001? As far as we were concerned, it was fish tumors.

Jenn – Wondered why, if that's the case, and the channel reaches those targets, this is a management action?

Jane – Since Mark took that project over from Bill Murray, he would have that answer, unfortunate that he had to leave the meeting.

#### **CRR UPDATE**

J. Goodman reported that things sort of “blew up” since the last meeting. Still working with the City of Cleveland on the Center St. swing bridge habitat project, and since they own the property, it's easier to move that forward than the Scranton West Project.

In terms of the grant, we submitted our reports and they were approved.

We're not getting the CMAG grant we applied for to develop a whole-channel fish habitat plan, but we'll keep trying so that we can have something to fit with the Vision for the Valley projects.

LaFarge reached out last week and said they want to integrate fish habitat into their bulkhead rebuild.

They have been very supportive and helpful, let us stage the hanging habitat installation Project.

We've been working on the City of Cleveland-CuyahogaRiver HUC NPS-IS plan with Chagrin River Watershed Partners doing the actual plan as part of our Central Basin Collaborative, for which we're grateful, and that's gone to Rick Wilson for approval.

We've been working with the Safety Task Force. Other than that, presentations have been cancelled, and we're trying to figure out what happens now.

#### **Announcements pertinent to BUI delisting activities**

Jenn wondered if Becky or Pat had anything about Gorge.

E. Marsh – They had a March 1 meeting that was cancelled, have a stakeholder meeting this week to discuss. They've completed the data analysis, working on pre-design stakeholder issues, and will be discussing how to get the word out. Would be good if those who are making presentations can share what we find as a good way to disseminate the info that we get. Moving forward, and work now isn't being impaired much by the virus.

E. Price – Brecksville dam?

E. Marsh – They're moving forward. First they'll notch the dam, then dam and pool behind will be assessed for historical reference, etc, then they'll take the dam down, see where the river goes, order and install the pump, etc. Right now it's a matter of high water levels. They have all the info and permits they need. There will be no public presentations or information disseminated. Audience for info will be limited. YAY!

Heather Ullinger (City of Akron) reported that their portion of the Gorge project is the design and construction of the actual gorge structure removal, working with Mark Loomis on their application for GLRI funding for the design of the removal.

Jane mentioned that River Day will be June 20, some live-in-the-world activities like DIY river cleanup, DIT weed-pulling, and mostly virtual activities, though kayak and canoe outfitters will probably be doing things. If anyone wants to help, call her. She's working on audio projects like a podcast and the sounds of streams.

Jordyn will be doing a DIY beach cleanup at Sims Park, will let us know. She announced that she's received a Dept of Energy fellowship to do research on biofilms at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. She'll be going down in August. Jane offered to connect her with her friend at Oak Ridge.

**Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2020 Meeting Schedule:**

We still have July 20 scheduled for the Pond Brook fieldtrip, but we'll see. We won't nix the field trip for an indoor meeting. Next will be October 19 (location tbd.)

Jenn thanks everyone for being flexible and understanding during this time.

**Adjourn**

Judith Shaw moved to adjourn, Jordyn Stoll seconded, the motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:30am.