



**Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
Quarterly Meeting
April 24, 2018 • 4:00pm
Cuyahoga Falls Library**

MINUTES

4:05 call to order

Public comment

Jim Ridge from Share the River announced that the River Ramble will be June 22 at the Cleveland Rowing Foundation, gates open at 4pm, run/walk trail tours start at 6:30pm, party after.

The Cuyahoga Falls Kayak event that was postponed will take place this weekend, weather and flow permitting.

Minutes of January 23, 2018 meeting

Paper copies were not distributed, but sent to committee by email prior to meeting

Motion to approve, seconded, minutes approved

Recognition

Ted Conlin is retiring in ten days; Jenn Greiser presented him a plaque from the committee, members expressed their appreciation for his help in pushing this committee forward over the past few years.

Update on Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) from Mark Loomis, U.S.EPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) Cuyahoga AOC Task Force Leader (TFL)

Mark gave an overview of the Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) removal and AOC delisting processes and GLNPO's projected timeline for the Cuyahoga AOC:

1. Management Actions to be completed by 2023, noting that the current management actions list covers only the aquatic life BUIs.
2. BUIs would be removed within a few years after completing the management actions.
3. The AOC would be delisted after all BUIs have been removed.

He stressed that we should get used to using the proper terms when discussing the process: BUIs are removed, not delisted; AOCs are delisted.

Currently he is planning for what can be funded in federal fiscal year 2019 (note: FFY2019 ends September 30, 2019.) He has our list of 16 actions for the Cuyahoga AOC.

2021 is the target date for completing the ‘Station Road’ and ‘East of Boston Mills’ projects. Both are floodplain reconnection projects.

Legacy Act projects– Remediation of the Cuyahoga River Old Channel sediment and the Gorge Dam removal – are waiting for signatures from Ohio EPA. He expects about 10 business days to get those signatures. Once the signatures are received, those projects are active and work can begin being counted towards match (65-35 cost share.) They are at the remedial design phase, which is expected to take ~18 months.

Other projects – Mark & his team are working on getting details.

Question – Is there anything that we (project implementers) need to be doing right now, or should we wait to hear from Mark?

Mark - Project implementers can take the initiative to provide details to Mark by phone or email.

He noted that 16 projects are a lot, we’d need to knock out several projects a year to finish them all by 2023.

Question – when can BUI removal take place?

Mark – BUIs can be removed concurrently, as management actions are completed and/or targets are met.

But, for funding, if a BUI is removed before actions that are intended to target that BUI, those actions are unlikely to receive funding because they wouldn’t fund a project when its goal has already been met.

Question – what happens after the AOC is delisted?

Mark – We call that “life after delisting.” Basically, nothing. After delisting, no more reporting or monitoring, but also no more funding, at least not from the AOC funding pool – funding is still available but you’d have to compete with projects throughout the country.

Subcommittee Updates

Governance Subcommittee – Chairman Bryan Stubbs not present, but nothing happened with this subcommittee since the last meeting.

Public Outreach Subcommittee – Scott Hardy - upcoming events

May 5, 3:00 BUI removal celebration, Merwin’s Wharf – request everyone on committee to advertise through their own networks; can respond to event on Facebook – expected attendance went up from 16 to 40ish during the few minutes this was discussed as many committee members responded

October 26 (Friday) – AOC Symposium –Cuyahoga Falls Natatorium reserved.

Strategic Implementation Subcommittee – Frank Greenland - status of BUI delisting efforts

Recent IBI / ICI scores good in lower Cuyahoga, river mile 0-4

BUI 8 – Eutrophication: We’re making the case that Mogadore is an outlier, not different from other urban reservoirs.

BUI 3 – Fish Tumors: not enough data, need a study

BUI 7 – Dredging: out of our hands, depends on state guidelines

BUIs 3, 6 and 14 - Fish population, Benthos and Fish Habitat: philosophical discussion – unlikely that management actions will turn these BUIs around in urban areas. How are we different or not different from other urban watersheds?

Mark – He’s having this discussion with other AOCs.

Frank – This story has national significance, and we need to tell it nationally. Bald eagles are now nesting where the river burned.

The mainstem is great. The tributaries have problems, but for good reasons.

Ted – use the built-in exemptions and develop new exemptions to remove these BUIs

Frank – NEORSD is collecting data. Too much impervious surface in the urban areas around the tribs, leads to flash flow, which is bad for fish and bugs.

Ted – Rumor is that oversight of AOC might be transferred from OhioEPA to Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

Comments - This is the first we’re hearing of this, what’s the timeline?

Ted - Timeframe uncertain, but probably when Russ retires at end of June. Consider the challenges of onboarding a whole new group that doesn’t have the knowledge base.

Ted’s protégé, Melanie, whom he’s been training to replace him, now won’t.

At this time we don’t know who’ll replace Ted.

Jane – we were just re-organized a few years ago when Ed Wilk was still the RAP/AOC coordinator and Ted came on board. Will this mean another reorganization?

Comment that a change at the state level doesn’t mean a change at the federal level where BUI removal decisions are made.

Ted’s recommendation – Write up a road map before the transfer of oversight, so the roadmap is ready to go on the desk of the new overseer. If they see the committee has a plan, they’re more likely to let you continue without interfering or reorganizing.

Jenn - Invite AOC reps to federal-state meetings that happen every 6 months so we’re not surprised by changes like this.

There was vocal across-the-board agreement expressed in support of this request.

Mark says he will write this report (roadmap.)

Jane – You’re talking about a strategic plan for all the BUIs. That’s what a roadmap is.

Hughes – Is that SIP plan approved by the AOC committee?

Frank – Is approving the plan the responsibility of the Advisory Committee or the SIP subcommittee?

Jenn – The plan should be one document. It definitely needs to be discussed at the Advisory Committee level. The next meeting is in July, too late for a June 30 deadline if that's when a turnover could take place (when Russ retires.)

Frank – We'd consolidate the plan into one document.

Jane – That has to include actual operational steps, not just a general description of a path forward – what the action, who does it, when would it happen, who pays. That's a strategic plan.

Ted – We're just following EPA guidance.

Jane – This plan has to be more specific than just EPA guidelines – we need to write down specific steps, with no “then a miracle happens” along the way.

Frank, Ted & Mark will talk, Frank will draft this plan

Frank – when a subwatershed meets criteria for removing a BUI, what if one subwatershed meets standards in 2018, can we take it off the list even if it doesn't meet the standards by the time we're ready to remove the BUI from the entire AOC?

Mark – GLNPO relies on criteria set by the state, so you would need to make the case for how you decided that you were ready to remove a BUI.

Jane – We've been told that a BUI can only be removed if it meets targets in all HUC12s at the same time. In 2009 we tried getting a BUI (fish populations) removed in all but the ship channel and were denied based on the “all or nothing” rule. If that's changed, please let us know.

Do we need to have another meeting sooner than July to approve a roadmap before possible transfer of oversight?

Jenn – We could have a special meeting or re-schedule the July meeting. She wants clarification on oversight transfer before scheduling.

Ohio EPA Updates

Ted Conlin - Ohio EPA:

Working on brief video for celebration next year. Footage has been pretty much done, waiting for final product.

Jane Goodman – Cuyahoga River Restoration:

Report quick due to time limitations so that Ohio EPA can set up for public meeting on 2018 sampling plan.

Financial report: FY 2018 subgrant closed out March 31 with all \$40K spent, budget was adjusted for new exhibit.

New subgrant approved through March 2019, increased to \$55K, but \$15K of that is special project funds to have behind-bulkhead habitat concept designs done.

AOC Conference travel reimbursement requests have been approved; Peter, Jane, Jordyn and Meiring will attend as AOC, others may attend through their companies.

Deliverables: See first video on youtube, link is on Facebook page, will be on AOC website soon. Annual report and first batch of project cards are on the table. New Web header done, and new graphics for exhibit.

New Business/General Comment

Question – are applications for committee membership based on individual's qualifications or their organization?

Jenn – To provide continuity of personnel, we don't hold slots for organizations, since individuals move from one organization to another.

The group would like some clarification on that.

It is something the Governance Committee has said it would address this year, before the next round of applications and appointments.

Peter – He has been in touch with John Perrecone about having the 2019 AOC Conference in Cleveland, has reached out to potential venues.

Jane – She received a call from John saying that he talked to Peter but needed to confirm that CRR, as the nonprofit, would host, and manage the AOC's involvement, since GLNPO requires that both the state and the local group commit to hosting. She said yes, for the sake of expediency, so that he could move the recommendation up the ladder. He needed that confirmation in order to be able to announce the 2019 city at this year's conference.

Upcoming Meetings

July 24, October 23

5:30 Adjourned