



MINUTES

Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee Meeting, July 23, 2015 Natatorium, Cuyahoga Falls

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Grieser at 9:00am

Present: Jennifer Grieser, Meiring Borchers, Pat Gsellman, Bill Hughes, Elaine Price, Howard Simon, Rob Curtis (for M. Johnson), Babette Gowda, Derek Schafer, Ellen Brown-Armstrong, Amy Brennan, Roger Kalbrunner (for B. Gardin), Tom Denbow, Elaine Marsh, Joe Gregory, Joe Hadley, Claire Posius, Frank Greenland, Jan Rybka, Rebecca McCleary, J. Goodman; via phone: Bryan Hinterberger, Pam Davis (for G. Gallucci), Jenita McGowan; Ex-officio: Ed Wilk

Absent (voting members): Bryan Stubbs, Kathleen Bradley

Guests – Sierra Wick, Nick Morocco, John Peck, Chris Biro, Aritree Samanta, Peter Bode, Kacey Zeiser, Ed Stewart

Quorum

With 23 of the 25 voting members present, a quorum was reached for any actions requiring a vote.

Welcome

Becky McCleary welcomed the Committee on behalf of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and introduced Ed Stewart, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, who talked about improvements at Waterworks Park. Access to the river is offered at three locations – a temporary takeout under the Portage Trail bridge upriver of the rapids; two others in the flats, one of which was a boat dock which will be repurposed and a ramp added.

Minutes

The minutes of the April meeting were approved unanimously upon a motion from M. Borchers and a second from J. Goodman.

Public Comment

The meeting was opened to public comment. No comments were given.

Presentation

Chairwoman Grieser introduced Dr. John Peck of the University of Akron Department of Geosciences, who gave a powerpoint presentation entitled “Effects of Dam Removals to the Cuyahoga River: Past, Present and Future”, which had been developed with input from Masters students and undergraduates.

Dr. Peck described the importance of the study area as a place for access to the river, and the quantitative, geological effects of dam removals related to erosion, sediment movement, and

settlement regimes. Removal of the dam at Munroe Falls in 2005 increased slope, erosion, and changed the system from one depositing material to moving sediment. Erosion, he said, will slow over time. New habitat has been created and the middle Cuyahoga now attains warm water habitat conditions. About half of the material at the Lefevre dam removal site has eroded, and the river will continue to become wider and shallower. He noted that the rate of increasing erosion correlates directly with the rate of increased development in the area. Regarding the future Gorge Dam bypass, he estimated that after the sediment in the dam pool is removed and the dam opened, the lower river will receive an 8% increase in sediment load.

Website Review

No comments were offered, though Ms. Goodman was asked about the difference between the old and new site, which she did, noting that the AOC and Cuyahoga River Restoration websites are now separate, with cuyahogaoc.org containing AOC delisting-specific information only, and the CRR site including more information on the watershed as a whole.

Subcommittee Reports

Education/Outreach - C. Posius gave an update on the Subcommittee, which is working on strategies for education re delisting goals. They gathered some good outreach ideas, one focusing on faith-based entities, who own a lot of land and could be encouraged to go to their local stewardship groups for help in greening up their properties. Goals include continuing the search for funding, and outreach to municipal leaders to support stewardship and watershed groups.

Strategic Implementation – F. Greenland reported that the subcommittee met on May 12 with the charge to review the May delisting draft guidance to decide whether to recommend that the Advisory Committee adopt the targets as-is or recommend changes. There was no push not to adopt the guidance, but the issue of impervious surfaces as a major factor in keeping from hitting targets needs to be considered in terms of requesting delisting. E. Wilk noted that the Black River AOC is still meeting its goals with 59% impervious surface, and it could be noted as an issue not solely within the AOC. The committee will address site-specific conditions that may preclude meeting targets at the time when a request for delisting is made. They recommended requesting removal of Shoreby beach from the criteria for the Doan/Dugway HUC, since it's not a public beach. The new version that was sent by E. Wilk contained some minor number adjustments and clarifications, but none that would preclude adoption.

F. Greenland will draft a letter recommending endorsement of the guidance. The letter will be distributed to the Advisory Committee for comment, then go to Ohio EPA. Ms. Grieser and staff will organize an email vote to approve sending the letter of adoption on to OEPA.

T. Denbow suggested that it would help if OEPA could provide a simple graphic diagram that links actions to additional monitoring periods when and after a delisting request is made. B. Gowda suggested having a one-pager to distribute.

Facilitating Organization Update

J. Goodman reported that CRR used the final \$20,000 from the 2015-2016 OhioEPA subgrant in the last quarter (April – June) to carry out AOC-related activities that included:

- Coordinating AOC Advisory Committee activities and support to committee work, meetings, subcommittee meetings, membership applications, minutes, and other support activities
- Completion of the Draft Stage 2 AOC Implementation Plan and Status Report
- Managing AOC website and social media posts
- Participating in seven outside workgroups, dozens of meetings, and several events
- Developing a new general information brochure for the AOC, a new *Green Infrastructure for Commercial Properties* education piece, creating and hosting a new RiverDay website, and providing graphics services for partners, including the Great Lake Erie Boat Float and Mill Creek Partnership.
- Obtaining new grants for riparian workshops in the Cuyahoga, Black, and Maumee AOCs, and one for an October tree planting at Scranton Flats.
- Updating sampling locations and maps
- Presenting displays at Blue Heron Homecoming, CSU Earthday, and River Day at the aquarium
- Coordinating and presenting three watershed tours
- Organizing and facilitating two stream cleanups (Akron and Parma)
- Making AOC-specific presentations at Greentown Kent, ACE Mentors/East Tech, and WaterWalk at Trinity Commons
- Speaking at press conference with Sherrod Brown, Port, and ArcelorMittal re dredge issues; other media including NPR and Plain Dealer stories on river recovery

In addition to those subgrant workplan-related activities, Goodman said that CRR staff worked on projects including:

- The master habitat project implementation plan for the AOC
- new fish habitat structures that will be going in along the upper ship channel in the next couple of months, funded by Sustain Our Great Lakes, ArcelorMittal and Lake Erie Protection Fund,
- a comprehensive habitat plan for the navigation channel
- the Cooperative Weed Management Area GLRI project
- the Bright Waters Rising Water Walk

She distributed the new AOC brochure and a few samples of the GI for Commercial Properties brochures and asked that members let her know how many they would like delivered to them.

She reported on the Stage 2 plan and gave instructions on how to access the document via the AOC website: Go to cuyahogaoc.org, click the “AOC Advisory Committee” tab, click on “click to login” on the left of the page below the meeting information box, and use the password “membersonly” (without quotation marks) to get to the page to download the report.

Input is requested by mid-August, after which the document will be made available for public comment, the procedure for which will be coordinated with the Advisory Committee leadership, the AOC Coordinator and Lake Erie Coordinator, and the AOC Outreach Committee.

Comments should be directed to goodmanj@cuyahogariver.org, or by phone to 216-241-2414 x610.

Announcements

E. Price reported that the Cuyahoga County is developing master plans for communities and is seeking new opportunities to provide these services, and asked that anyone in need of services contact her.

Chairwoman Grieser raised the subject of the proposed IKEA development in the Big Creek watershed and desire that the Advisory Committee would submit a comment advocating against the disturbance of wetlands for the project.

Vice-Chair Borchers described the process, the IKEA philosophy as to location, and possibly the support of Brooklyn Councilwoman Gallagher to institute riparian and wetland setbacks or restrictions to limit the damage the development could do.

Discussion included finding a buyer for the property to protect it. E. Marsh suggested that we should keep following this, with OEPA tending to have less impact than one might wish on monitoring and protecting wetlands, and that the only way to really protect them is to buy them.

E. Wilk explained the process going forward: the Corps of engineers gets the first Section 404 notice about the proposed disturbance and has put out its public notice including potential remediation strategies, then the state Section 401 process begins. That allows two chances to submit comments.

A. Brennan noted that regarding the mitigation areas proposed in the USACE notice, The Nature Conservancy's mitigation bank hasn't heard a thing about the proposal, and she thinks that the Northcoast bank may not have either. She recommended that starting this early in the process would give the AOC time to get into the process.

The site is on the Chevy Branch of Big Creek, where a long history of major flooding is a big issue that needs to be dealt with.

E. Price made a motion to have Ms. Grieser write testimony for the public comment on behalf of the AOC Advisory Committee, and J. Rybka seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Grieser will draft the letter and distribute for comments from the committee and an email vote to approve its submission.

It was suggested that the AOC can and should alert members and others about the public hearings, and that the Committee can help by educating the public on the process.

Adjourn

Vice-Chair Borchers moved to adjourn, J. Gregory seconded.

Meeting adjourned at 10:36am