



NEWS

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Cuyahoga River Area of Concern to celebrate first steps in delisting at May 5 event

CLEVELAND – The Cuyahoga River Area of Concern (AOC) will host a media event and celebration at 3:00pm on Saturday, May 5 at Merwin's on the river to celebrate the removal of 2 impairments, the first official steps toward delisting. The public is invited to join in the celebration.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency has approved the removal of "Degradation of Aesthetics" from the list of Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs,) in the Cuyahoga River AOC, acknowledging that aesthetics have improved dramatically in the decades since the Cuyahoga and nearby Lake Erie tributaries were named one of the 27 federally-designated U.S. waterways that have experienced environmental degradation.

The second impairment approved for removal is "Lack of Public Access," which recognized that, while 30 years ago the ship channel was inaccessible for most recreational uses, now the area is used regularly for fishing, paddling, and is enjoyed via new trails and amenities.

In a letter to Ohio Environmental Protection Agency Director Craig Butler, Great Lakes National Program Director Tinka Hyde said "Removal of this BUI will benefit not only the people who live and work in the Cuyahoga River AOC, but all the residents of Ohio and the Great Lakes basin as well." Butler said. "In fact, the removal of the aesthetics impairment is about more than just appearances; it reflects a strong state and community effort to restore the river. The Cuyahoga is becoming a national symbol of recovery – showing what can be accomplished through public and private efforts, regulation and focused research."

Surveys and observations over the past few years have shown that persistent "occurrences of sludge, oil, scum or other objectionable materials that produce color, odor or other nuisances," which are the measure of aesthetic quality set forth in the Remedial Action Plan, are now either nonexistent in the Area of Concern or are being remediated by long term control plan. Litter and woody debris are not considered persistent impairments.

"This is a significant step forward on the path to delisting the Cuyahoga. It's great to know that the progress we're making to restore the AOC can now be recognized. With lasting support from state and federal agencies, and local partners, we can see a future when we reach all our restoration goals," said Jennifer Grieser, Chair of the Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee.

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About the Area of Concern Advisory Committee

The Cuyahoga River Area of Concern Advisory Committee consists of thirty representatives of organizations, businesses, agencies, and the public, dedicated to removing impairments to beneficial use in the lower 46.5 miles of the Cuyahoga River and the tributary watersheds that drain to that section of river and ten miles of Lake Erie shoreline. <http://www.cuyahogaoc.org>