



**Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
MEETING MINUTES**

7.15.2024

The MAGNET – 1800 E 63rd St, Cleveland, OH 44103

Quarterly Advisory Committee Meeting (9-10:30a)

Welcome

Attendees:

Voting Members: Carly Beck, Peter Bode, Donna Friedman, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Tom LaPlante (Alt. for J. Hadley), Scott Hardy, Bill Hughes, Zach Cebula (Alt. for J. Kurdila), Whitney Long Jones, Stephen Love, Joe MacDonald, Elaine Marsh, Samantha Martin, Elaine Price, Mike Sekerak, Megan Smith, Jordyn Stoll, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Katie Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Amber Bellamy, Hannah Boesinger, Maureen Drinkard, Kristin Hall, Ed Kender, Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Leah Medley, Kris Patterson, Megan Shaeffer, Matt Shanks, Beth Sparks-Jackson

Guests: Kaylee Acres (CRWP), Julie Carter (GLNPO), Pam Davis (NOACA), Erin Dugan (SSWCD), Laura Gooch (DBWP), Kendra Heiser (SSWCD), Julie Kastanis (Ohio Sea Grant), Matthew Siefert (TCWP), Heather Ullinger (City of Akron)

Approval of Minutes of April 15th, 2024 – *Motion to approve by B. Hughes, seconded by J. Stoll. All in favor with no abstentions.*

Public Comment – None

Old Business

- Great Lakes Day Recap (3/6-7) – B. Hughes
- AOC Symposium Recap (3/15) – J. Grieser

New Business

- Online Voting Process – N. Lopez
 - Open discussion included a suggested online communication platform (ex. Slack, Teams, Mighty Networks).
 - Consensus is to continue the current process through email, but offer time for discussion (minimum of 48 hours, maximum of 5 days), followed by a 48-hour voting period.
- Ohio State Fish Designation – Letter of Support – P. Bode
 - Initiative by State Rep. Sean P. Brennan (D-Parma) to declare the walleye (native species) as Ohio's official state fish.
 - H.B. 599 is only a symbolic policy with no regulations or other stipulations.
 - On June 26, the bill was approved by the Ohio House by a vote of 94-2. It is expected to be discussed by the Ohio Senate in 5-8 weeks.

- Ohio is one of three states without an official state fish.
 - As a multi-million-dollar industry, its economic impact is a main driver for the designation.
- The designation would align with the mission of the Cuyahoga River AOC as it represents that Lake Erie is a healthy ecosystem that can support a robust fishing industry.
 - Additionally, it could prompt the public to research the health of the river and subsequently, learn about the work of the organization.
- *Motion to draft a letter of support for the designation of the walleye as Ohio's official state fish through public education on the mission of the Cuyahoga River AOC by P. Bode, seconded by S. Martin. All in favor with one abstention by B. Hughes.*

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office Update – L. Medley

- *Revised Management Action List (LOS Sent – 6/20)*
 - Expedited timeline due to the last quarter of GLNPO's fiscal year, thus presenting the final opportunity for funding approval until next year.
 - The *revised* MAP list was approved by U.S. EPA last week.
 - Included was the replacement of the Glenwillow Habitat Restoration with the Wood Creek Fish Barrier Removal (to be implemented by CMP) and changing the Station Road Habitat Restoration to 'design only' since it would not be able to be fully funded through the AOC.
 - Although not a common practice to modify the MAP list, it was a justifiable request. However, it would not be recommended to submit another revision.
 - It is anticipated to submit another modification to remove the Doan Brook Estuary Restoration from the MAP list.
- Currently working with the multiple dam removal projects in the Lower Cuyahoga to release for grant awarding.

OLEC Update – H. Boesinger

- Introduction of Kris Patterson – Lake Erie Program Administrator, Ohio Lake Erie Commission.
- BUI 10 (Beach Closings / Recreational Contact) Removal
 - The draft report was reviewed by the Advisory Committee and comments were submitted until June 27th.
 - The draft report is currently open for public comment until July 31st.
 - A public meeting will be hosted on July 17th at the Collinwood Recreation Center from 5:30-7p.
 - Justification for removal is based on evidence that proves AOC beaches are comparable to non-AOC beaches and continued issues can be linked regionally.
 - NEORSD uses a modeling program to predict beach closures advisories.
 - Raw data from the City of Akron and NEORSD on the Cuyahoga River main stem and Lake Erie show a decline trend in beach closures due elevated E. Coli concentrations.
 - Positive trends can be attributed to CSO programs throughout Northeast Ohio, but human impairments in the beaches will continue to remain after they are completed.
 - Removal of BUI will not affect continued monitoring of beaches and water quality by NEORSD and other agencies.
 - The Advisory Committee will be expected to provide a letter of support.
 - J. Stoll (SIP Subcommittee Chair) is in full support.
 - *Motion to draft a letter of support for the BUI 10 (Beach Closings / Recreational Use) removal after the public comment period is concluded on July 31st by B. Hughes. Seconded by J. Stoll. All in favor, no abstentions.*

- Great Lakes AOC Conference will be held in Toledo, OH – Fall 2025.
- Quarterly Commission Meeting at Watershed Stewardship Center (2277 W Ridgewood Dr, Parma, OH 44134) on September 18th, 2024 from 10a-12p.

Facilitating Organization Update (Cuyahoga SWCD) – N. Lopez

- Brand Refresh & New Marketing Materials – UPDATE
 - Currently under OLEC/OEPA review for final approval. New marketing materials expected to be printed soon.

Subcommittee Updates

Governance – E. Price

- Annual Member Mid-Year Self-Reflection Survey – OVERVIEW
 - Total Participation = 75% of Advisory Committee Members
 - Major takeaways to be reviewed and shared in the next quarterly meeting.
- 2025 Election & Recruitment
 - Next meeting to be scheduled in August to discuss.
 - The process is planned to begin in the Fall. There will be direct engagement to recruit individuals from the development industry.
- J. Grieser attended River Rally in Grand Rapids, MI on May 13-16, 2024 to present “Invigorating Contributions From Your Board”. The feedback was very positive on the engagement of the Advisory Committee as led by the Governance Subcommittee.

Public Engagement – S. Hardy

- Outreach Events – COMPLETED
 - CMP Party for the Planet (4/20) – J. Grieser, K. Wells
 - Spring Into Nature STEM (4/27) – P. Gsellman
 - CLE Drinking Water Festival (5/11) – M. Paynter, C. Beck, B. Berkely
 - CSWCD Student Symposium (5/20) – E. Price, C. Znidarsic, S. Hardy, E. Matheny, B. Hughes, P. Bode
 - Cuyahoga Connects (5/22) – S. Hardy, E. Price
 - 4 Miles 4 Water (6/8) – N. Lopez
- Outreach Events – CANCELLED/POSTPONED
 - Blue Heron Homecoming Festival (6/15) – P. Gsellman, M. Smith
 - Blazing Paddles (6/22) – T. Rayburn, C. Znidarsic, S. Hardy, D. Friedman
 - Cuyahoga River Rally (6/29) – S. Hardy, S. Martin
- Outreach Events – UPCOMING
 - TCWP Watershed Family Fun Day (8/17)
 - NEORS Clean Water Fest (9/21)
- Subcommittee meeting to be scheduled soon.

Strategic Implementation – J. Stoll

- 5/2 Meeting Recap
 - Subcommittee discussed BUI 10 (Beach Closings / Recreational Contact) removal status and next steps, tabled conversation on the steelhead stocking in the Cuyahoga River (to be continued), and development of new ArcGIS story maps for the website.
 - MAPs updates included:
 - Brandywine Enhancement and Restoration Project

- Feasibility to be determined by the end of the calendar year.
- Little Cuyahoga River Dam Removals Project
 - Construction is expected to start in the late summer with completion in 2025.
- E. 185th Spillway Project
 - Waiting on easements from CSX Railroad, but construction is still expected to begin in Fall 2025.
- Next meeting is scheduled for July 25th at 11a (virtual).

Announcements Pertinent to BUI Delisting Activities

- Cuyahoga Gorge Dam Removal
 - Bids are due at the end of the month.
 - Park to be closed for 5 years during construction.
 - Sediment removal mobilization to occur during March 2025 – End of 2026.

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2024 Quarterly Meeting Schedule – Oct. 21 (Watershed Stewardship Center)

Adjourn

Site visit to Sowinski Park (10:30-11:30a)