



Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
MINUTES
1.12.2026
Virtual

Annual General Elections

Welcome

Attendees:

Voting Members: Sarah Barrow, Carly Beck, Zach Cebula, Donna Friedman, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Tom LaPlante, Whitney Long Jones, Pamela Davis (Alt. for Joe MacDonald), Erica Matheny, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, Megan Conklin (Alt. for Mike Sekerak), Megan Shaeffer, Mike Toth (Alt. for Megan Smith), Jordyn Stoll, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Heather Ullinger, Kate Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff), Hannah Boesinger, Ed Kender, Suse La Gory, Kris Patterson, Beth Sparks-Jackson, Emily Bacha, Laura DeYoung, Steve Holland, Samantha Martin, Elaine Marsh, Samantha Miller

Guests: Laura Bonnell, Mia Compton-Engle, Gabriella Eisel, Emily Kao, Mackenzie Kaser, Bruce Kole, Mark Matteson, Lisa Merenti, Sarah Mulligan, Josh Reuck, Jim Ridge, Dave Ritter, Josh Reuck, Sarah Stanzi, Justin Telep, Paul Triolo

Election of Members (see proposed resolutions on page 5) – K. Wells

A motion to approve the slate of candidates presented for election to the Advisory Committee was made by K. Wells and seconded by B. Hughes.

In favor: Sarah Barrow, Carly Beck*, Zach Cebula, Donna Friedman, Scott Hardy*, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Tom LaPlante, Whitney Long Jones*, Pamela Davis*, Erica Matheny, Elaine Price*, Bryce Pulley, Megan Shaeffer, Jordyn Stoll, Heather Ullinger, Kate Wells, Christina Znidarsic*

*Abstaining from their own election.

Approved by a majority of voting members.

Appointment of Subcommittee Leadership (see proposed resolutions on page 5) – J. Grieser

A motion to approve the appointment of subcommittee leadership presented for recognition to the Advisory Committee was made by B. Pulley and seconded by E. Matheny. All in favor with no abstentions.

Recognition of Retiring Members: Stephen Love, Joe MacDonald, Mike Sekerak, Jordyn Stoll – J. Grieser

Adjourned

Attendees:

Voting Members: Sarah Barrow, Carly Beck, Zach Cebula, Megan Conklin, Pamela Davis, Gabriella Eisel, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Emily Kao, Tom LaPlante, Whitney Long Jones, Samantha Martin, Erica Matheny, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, David Ritter, Megan Shaeffer, Mike Toth (Alt. for Megan Smith), Meghan Tinker Paynter, Heather Ullinger, Katie Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff), Hannah Boesinger, Ed Kender, Suse La Gory, Kris Patterson, Beth Sparks-Jackson, Emily Bacha, Laura DeYoung, Steve Holland, Elaine Marsh, Samantha Miller, Jordyn Stoll

Guests: Laura Bonnell, Mia Compton-Engle, Donna Friedman, Mackenzie Kaser, Bruce Kole, Mark Matteson, Lisa Merenti, Sarah Mulligan, Josh Reuck, Jim Ridge, Josh Reuck, Sarah Stanzi, Justin Telep, Paul Triolo

Approval of Minutes of October 20, 2025 – *A motion to approve with the edits suggested by B. Hughes, seconded by C Beck. All in favor with one abstention from S. Martin.*

Public Comment – Josh Reuck shared a brief synopsis of his ongoing project, *Portraits of Adventure*.

Old Business

- Cross-Agency Partnership Summit (Sept. 16-18 @ Toledo, OH) – Multiple Members

New Business

- Newly Elected Members Short Introductions – All New Members
 - Megan Conklin, Pamela Davis, Gabriella Eisel, Emily Kao, Samantha Martin, David Ritter
- Review of Advisory Committee Member Commitments and Requirements – J. Grieser (see addendum pg. 6)
 - Submission Required: Conflict of Interest Form and Signed Alt. Appt. Letter
 - New Member Orientation: TBD
 - Hosted by B. Hughes. N. Lopez will coordinate the best date with new members and share invitation with all members.
 - New members can also reach out to J. Grieser for a one-on-one conversation about the AOC.
- Biennial Symposium – N. Lopez
 - SAVE THE DATE: March 12th, 2026 at the Slovenian National Home in Cleveland, OH.
 - The keynote speaker will be Jessica Jock who is the Program Manager of the St. Lawrence River AOC and a representative of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe.
 - A request was made for additional speaker suggestions, local organizations to engage, catering recommendations, and sponsorships.

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office Update – S. LaGory

- The Muskegon Lake AOC was delisted on October 1st, 2025.
- Gorge GLLA Sediment Cleanup and Dam Removal project updates:

- Dredging officially started in fall 2025 and sediment removal has begun by Severson Environmental Services Inc. Work is expected to resume in March.
- A public meeting is also expected to be scheduled in the Spring.
- Carla Rosenfeld, former Sediment Management Project Lead, has resigned. As such, S. LaGory will be assuming the outreach responsibilities for the project.

OLEC Update – H. Boesinger

- Management Action Projects (MAPs) updates:
 - E. 185th Spillway – all necessary real estate acquisitions are complete, allowing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to proceed with design. Final design is anticipated in March of 2026, with construction expected to begin in 2027.
 - Irishtown Bend (Green Bulkhead Project) – the project is expected to reach substantial completion by spring 2026.
 - Station Road Area – design work is anticipated to be completed this year.
- As discussed at the last quarterly meeting, the Management Action List needs to be revised again to update the following: change East of Boston Mills Ski Area to ‘Design Only’, remove the Doan Brook Estuary Restoration, and update all project descriptions and statuses.
 - OLEC requested a letter of support. The Advisory Committee discussed and made edits to the drafted letter of support shared before this meeting.
A motion to provide the approved letter of support to OLEC for the Cuyahoga River AOC’s Revised Management Action List was made by B. Hughes and seconded by P. Davis. All in favor with no abstentions.
- The Lacustrine Benthos sampling data collected last year by EnviroScience is currently under analysis. The final report will be shared in the spring. Preliminary site scores appear promising relative to BUI targets.

Facilitating Organization Update (Cuyahoga SWCD) – N. Lopez

- Financial Overview & Reporting
 - The facilitating grant of \$157,500 has expended 38% of its funds, with 42% of the project timeline remaining.
- 2025 Annual Report
 - CSWCD will be drafting the annual report to be published in March. It will be shared with the Executive Committee in February to be reviewed.
 - Members were reminded to disclose any outreach or educational presentations that occurred in 2025 to include in the annual report.

Subcommittee Updates

Overview of Current Subcommittee Assignments – N. Lopez

- Members will need to confirm their subcommittees’ assignments and note their primary choice.

Governance – K. Wells

- The 2026 Advisory Committee application process is officially complete.

Public Engagement – S. Hardy

- The Champion of the River award was announced for Dr. Julie Wolin from Cleveland State University.
- Ohio Sea Grant has funds available (if matching funds can be acquired) for a paid summer intern to further support the Advisory Committee’s public engagement and outreach. The subcommittee will further discuss it at the next meeting.
- The facilitating grant has funds that were originally designated for EJ-DEI outreach and participation. Although the guidance from OEPA has changed, the goal remains the same to engage new audiences. Members were invited to brainstorm potential uses for the available funds.
- Volunteers were requested for a new media working subgroup to support the social media, website, and advertising.
- Upcoming Events:
 - Cleveland Boat Show – Jan. 15-18 @ IX Center
 - Pints North Great Lakes Trivia – Feb. 16 @ Collision Bend Brewing Co.
 - In partnership with Interlochen Public Radio.
 - Midwest Climate Summit – Mar. 30-Apr. 1 @ Case Western Reserve University
 - J. Grieser will host a walking tour at the request of the Freshwater Institute.
 - Blazing Paddles Paddlefest – July 17-18 @ Nautica Waterfront District
- The next subcommittee meeting will be held in February.
- E. Marsh shared the book ‘Undammed: Freeing Rivers and Bringing Communities to Life’ by Tara Lohan.
 - Dam removals on the Cuyahoga River are featured in Chapter 5 *Rapids Return*.
 - American Rivers is hosting a virtual Fireside Chat with the author on Jan. 15th at 4 PM.

Strategic Implementation – C. Beck

- The subcommittee is working with H. Boesinger to update the spreadsheet of non-MAP projects within the area of concern.
- The next meeting will be scheduled for the end of the first quarter.
- A request was made to identify a Vice Chair.

Announcements Pertinent to BUI Delisting Activities

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2025 Quarterly Meeting Schedule – Apr. 13 (NEORSD), Jul. 13 (Mayfield Sand Ridge Golf Club), Oct. 19 (Cuyahoga Falls Downtown Pavillion)

Adjourned

Board Resolution of Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee

Board Appointments and Reappointment

The following resolution is proposed for adoption by the Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) of the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern:

BE IT RESOLVED, that the following individuals are hereby elected to the Committee to a two-year term, beginning at the Board’s January 12th, 2026 meeting and ending December 31, 2027:

Carly Beck, Cuyahoga Land Bank – *Non-Profit*

Megan Conklin, Cuyahoga County Board of Health – *Government*

Pamela Davis, NOACA – *Government*

Gabriella Eisel, Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority – *Government*

Scott Hardy, Ohio Sea Grant (OSU) – *Non-Profit*

Emily Kao, Doan Brook Watershed Partnership – *Non-Profit*

Whitnye Long Jones, Organic Connects, Inc. – *Non-Profit*

Samantha Martin, Cleveland Water Alliance – *Non-Profit*

Meghan Tinker Paynter, Canalway Partners – *Non-Profit*

Elaine Price, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission – *Government*

David Ritter, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District – *Government*

Christina Znidarsic, Davey Resource Group – *Industry*

Officer Appointments

BE IT RESOLVED FURTHER that, pursuant to the current elected Officers, let the AOC Advisory Committee Members recognize the appointment, by the AOC Advisory Committee Chair, of the following members as sub-committee Chairs:

Governance Chair: Kate Wells

SIP Chair: Carly Beck

Public Engagement Chair: Scott Hardy

AOC VOTING MEMBER WORK AND RESPONSIBILITIES - *include, but are not limited to:*

- Committing to a two-year term starting in January
- Attending at least 75% of the meetings each year (usually held quarterly) (average ~2 hours/meeting);
- Assisting with at least one outreach/education event each year;
- Participating on at least one workgroup or subcommittee;
- Actively participating in making recommendations and voting on issues and other Advisory Committee business;
- Staying informed about what is going on in the Cuyahoga AOC, asking questions and requesting information;
- Acting in the best interests of the Cuyahoga AOC and recusing oneself from votes where there is (or may be perceived) a conflict of interest;
- Acting in full compliance with Ohio Ethics Law;
- Interpreting the Cuyahoga AOC's work and values for the community; and,
- Working in good faith with other Advisory Committee members, the Facilitating Organization, and Ohio EPA towards achievement of the agreed-upon common goals and priorities.