



Environmental  
Protection  
Agency

Lake Erie  
Commission

# Delisting Guidance and Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern



*Ashtabula River*



*Cuyahoga River*



*Black River*



*Maumee River*

Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water  
and Ohio Lake Erie Commission  
Areas of Concern Program  
Version 6.0 - June 2026

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## Table of Contents

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Table of Contents .....	3
Acknowledgements.....	5
Disclaimer.....	5
Summary of Updates in Version 6.0 .....	5
Introduction .....	5
Purpose.....	9
How to Use this Document .....	9
The Path to Delisting: Recognizing Progress & Maintaining Momentum.....	11
The Path to Delisting: Recognizing Progress & Maintaining Momentum.....	12
Tracking Restoration of Beneficial Uses.....	12
Locally Developed Beneficial Use Restoration Targets .....	13
Interim Restoration Milestones .....	13
Management Actions .....	14
Removing a BUI (Beneficial Use Impairment) .....	14
Delisting a Subwatershed .....	16
Partial Target Restoration.....	16
Designating an Area of Concern in Recovery .....	17
Delisting an Area of Concern.....	18
Restoration Targets for .....	20
Beneficial Use Impairments.....	20
Restoration Targets for Beneficial Use Impairments.....	21
BUI 1: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption.....	22
BUI 2: Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor.....	26
BUI 3: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations .....	28
BUI 4: Fish Tumors or Other Deformities.....	38
BUI 5: Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems.....	42
BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos .....	44
BUI 7: Restrictions on Navigational Dredging Activities .....	51
BUI 8: Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae.....	54
BUI 9: Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste & Odor Problems.....	59
BUI 10: Beach Closings (Recreation Use).....	61
BUI 11: Degradation of Aesthetics .....	66
BUI 12: Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry.....	69
BUI 13: Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations .....	71
BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat .....	73
Appendices .....	85
Appendix A: Ohio Water Quality Standards (Ohio Administrative Code 3745-1) .....	86
3745-1-01 Purpose and Applicability.....	86
3745-1-04 Criteria applicable to all waters.....	88
3745-1-07 Water Use Designations and Statewide Criteria .....	89
3745-1-35 Aquatic Life and Wildlife Criteria .....	93
Appendix B: Ecoregional Biological Criteria.....	95
Appendix C: HUCs in Ohio’s Areas of Concern .....	99
Maumee Area of Concern .....	99
Black River Area of Concern.....	100

Cuyahoga River Area of Concern .....	100
Ashtabula River Area of Concern .....	100
Appendix D: Recreational Waters Water Quality Standards and Designated Waters.....	101
Appendix E: Acronyms and Abbreviations .....	104

## Acknowledgements

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This document was originally developed by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA), Division of Surface Water Lake Erie Program staff in 2005. Since then, it has undergone several revisions, with the most recent revisions being done with the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC). This report supersedes all previous versions.

How to reference this document:

Ohio Lake Erie Commission and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, 2026. Delisting Guidance and Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern, Version 6.

## Disclaimer

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*This document is intended to be used as beneficial use impairment (BUI) restoration target guidance when determining the status of BUIs in Ohio's Areas of Concern (AOCs). These targets can be adopted in total or part for an Ohio AOC; however, any locally defined targets cannot be any less restrictive than the targets presented in this document and must be endorsed by the Ohio AOC Program. This document does not carry the force of law. Also note that some targets may change as various Ohio EPA rules and regulations are updated or new research becomes available.*

*This guidance is non-regulatory in nature and should not be construed as standards.  
This guidance does not impose any regulatory requirements.*

## Summary of Updates in Version 6.0

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Version 6.0 of the *Delisting Guidance and Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern* (June 2026) includes the following updates.

- General updates and edits (pp. varies), including references and links.
- Table 1: Status of Ohio AOC Beneficial Use Impairments (p. 3).
  - This table has been updated to reflect the current status of BUIs as of publication.
- Management Actions for Ohio AOCs with Table 2 updated.
- BUI: 3 Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations and BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat, nearshore areas redefined as shoreline areas.
- BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos, clarified guidance related to contaminated sediments.
- BUI 7: Restrictions of Navigational Dredging BUI, updated definition of routinely dredged areas.
- BUI 10: Beach Closings (Paddling Streams), Paddling Streams component of target updated to include Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails.

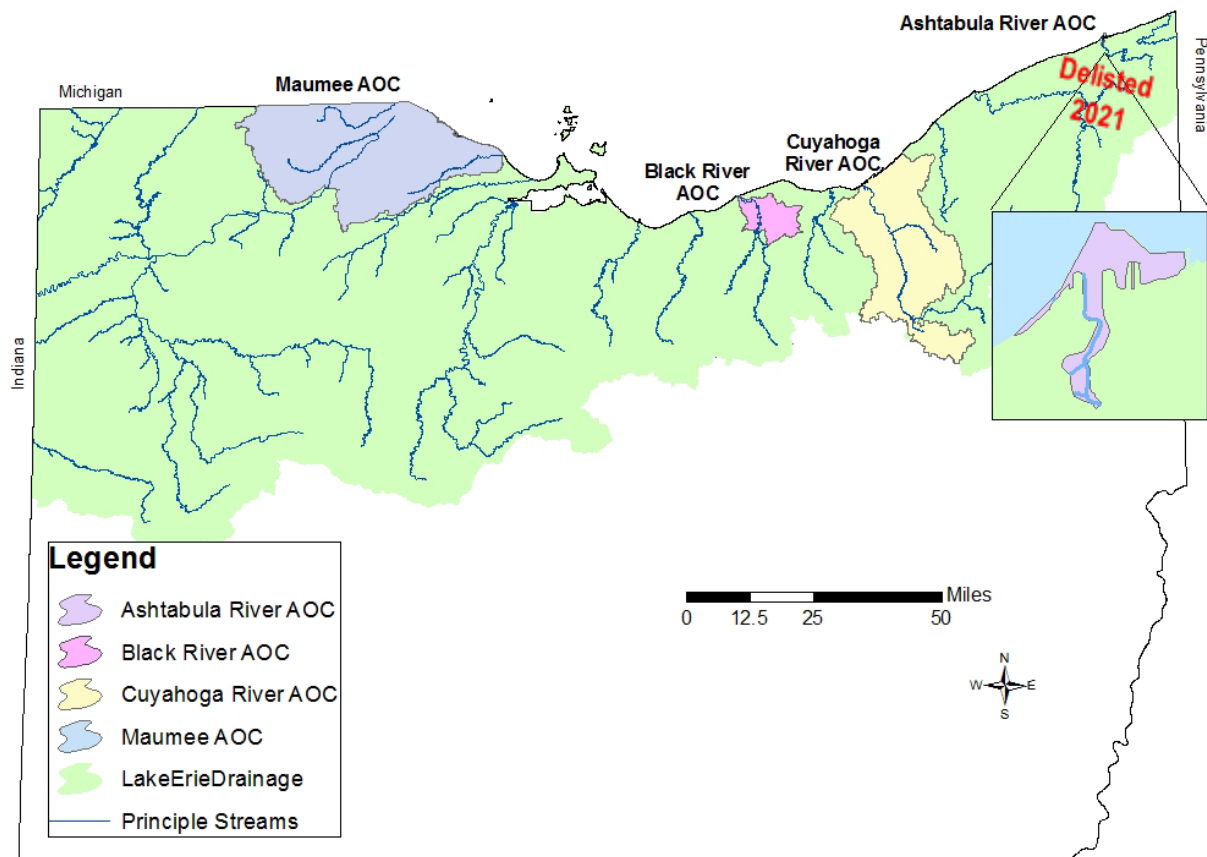
## Introduction

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The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) is an agreement between the U.S. and Canada to address key environmental health issues in the Great Lakes. The most recent Agreement (September 7, 2012) reaffirmed actions necessary to restore and delist Areas of Concern (AOCs). The Great Lakes Water Quality Protocol of 2012 specifically addresses Areas of Concern in Annex 1 (the 1987 GLWQA addressed AOCs in Annex 2). The GLWQA identifies fourteen different beneficial use impairments (BUIs) which are defined as a reduction in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the Waters

of the Great Lakes. The GLWQA requires development of Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) to identify the BUIs and causes, development of criteria for restoration of the beneficial uses, implementation of remedial measures, monitoring of the effectiveness of remedial measures and confirmation that restoration of beneficial uses is being achieved. When designated each of the 43 AOCs contained at least one BUI that represents an extraordinary problem that was measurably worse than most waters in the Great Lakes. The 2012 GLWQA requires progress reporting every three years on the status of BUIs in each AOC, the actions completed or initiated in each AOC during the reporting period, and the remaining actions required in each AOC for removal of the BUIs.

There was originally four AOCs in Ohio: the lower two miles of the Ashtabula River (delisted); the lower 15 miles of the Black River and drainage areas and French Creek watershed, including the Outer Harbor and nearshore Lake Erie area; the lower 46.5 miles of the Cuyahoga River, including all tributaries and the adjacent shoreline; and the lower 23 miles of the Maumee River, including several adjacent watersheds that discharge directly to Maumee Bay and Lake Erie. Figure 1 shows the location of Ohio's AOCs.



**Figure 1 – Location of Ohio Areas of Concern (AOCs)**

The Ohio AOC Program is administered by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in partnership with Ohio EPA. This document refers to the partnership as the Ohio AOC Program. The Ohio AOC Program, in collaboration with U.S. EPA, is responsible for ensuring that RAPs are implemented in Ohio. Additionally, restoring AOCs requires a collaborative effort with the local businesses, industries, and

governments. Local advisory committees in each of the AOCs coordinate the development and implementation of the Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) and Management Action Project lists in collaboration with their local facilitating organization.

With the adoption of “*A Framework for Reorganizing and Implementing Ohio’s Remedial Action Program*” by Ohio EPA in October 2014 and most recently updated by the Ohio AOC Program in December 2023, what was formerly referred to as a RAP committee is now called a local advisory committee. These local advisory committees are supported by local facilitating organizations, who often receive financial support from Ohio EPA. Public involvement is critical to the AOC Program in Ohio and input and involvement from each local AOC advisory committee is coordinated with the Ohio AOC Program.

The local advisory committees (or their predecessors) have completed the initial assessment of impairments to beneficial uses (Stage 1 Reports), identified sources, defined remediation and restoration needs (Stage 2 Reports), development management action project lists, and prepared status reports/annual reports. Projects have been implemented to better define impairments and sources, remediate problems, restore habitat, remove contaminated sediments, and outline plans for strategic action. AOC Program efforts are focused on re-evaluating the status of each BUI and identifying and implementing the management actions needed to achieve BUI restoration targets.

Table 1 lists the status of the beneficial uses in each Ohio AOC as of June 2026. Several of the local advisory committees have prepared more detailed assessments that evaluate beneficial use impairment by subwatershed within their AOC, which allows tracking of incremental progress, and more precise implementation of management actions.

**Table 1 - Status of Ohio AOC Beneficial Use Impairments** (as of June 2026)

Beneficial Use Impairment		Ashtabula	Black	Cuyahoga	Maumee
BUI 1:	Restrictions on Fish Consumption	Removed 2014	Removed 2016	Removed 2019	Removed 2022
	Restrictions on Wildlife Consumption	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Removed 2022
BUI 2:	Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired
BUI 3:	Degradation of Fish Populations	Removed 2014	Removed 2025	Impaired	Impaired
	Degradation of Wildlife Populations	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Impaired
BUI 4:	Fish Tumors or Other Deformities	Removed 2019	Removed 2023	Removed 2023	Impaired
BUI 5:	Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired
BUI 6:	Degradation of Benthos	Removed 2018	Impaired	Impaired	Impaired
BUI 7:	Restrictions on Dredging Activities	Removed 2020	Removed 2022	Impaired	Removed 2024
BUI 8:	Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae	Not Impaired	Removed 2016	Removed 2021	Impaired
BUI 9:	Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste & Odor Problems	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired
BUI 10:	Beach Closings (Recreational Contact)	Not Impaired	Removed 2024	Removed 2024	Impaired
BUI 11:	Degradation of Aesthetics	Not Impaired	Removed 2021	Removed 2017	Removed 2023
BUI 12:	Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Removed 2015
BUI 13:	Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations	N/A	N/A	N/A	Not Impaired
BUI 14:	Loss of Fish Habitat	Removed 2014	Removed 2025	Impaired	Impaired
	Loss of Wildlife Habitat	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Not Impaired	Impaired

## Purpose

This guidance was developed to provide the Ohio AOC Program and the local advisory committees with statewide targets for restoring beneficial uses and to identify the steps required for BUI removal and AOC delisting. This guidance also serves to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the Ohio AOC Program and local advisory committees for BUI removal and AOC delisting. More details on the comprehensive roles and responsibilities of the local AOC Advisory Committees are explained in *A Framework for Reorganizing and Implementing Ohio's Remedial Action Program (Ohio AOC Program, 2023)*. When AOCs were originally designated in the late 1980s there were no specific quantitative criteria for listing or delisting these areas. The International Joint Commission (IJC) issued general listing and delisting criteria in 1991 (IJC, 1991), and the U.S. Policy Committee (USPC) issued general guidance on the process for U.S. AOC delisting in 2001 (USPC, 2001). These efforts, however, were not specific enough to determine the restoration targets for individual BUIs.

In order to develop Ohio-specific beneficial use restoration targets, Ohio EPA reviewed the original listing/delisting criteria from the IJC and aligned them with Ohio's State rules and regulations, State policies, or other State guidance whenever possible. This document lays out the minimum beneficial use restoration targets for Ohio AOCs. These targets were developed recognizing that delisting an AOC requires restoration to levels equivalent to the current conditions of other Lake Erie watersheds as a whole, not to pristine or pre-settlement conditions. This document is intended to be used by the Ohio AOC Program and the local advisory committees as a reference document to establish targets for each AOC. For example, a local advisory committee may select a different target sentinel species or habitat characteristics. Each local advisory committee may choose to adopt all the targets presented in this document for each BUI as their AOC-specific targets or, in collaboration with and endorsement from the Ohio AOC Program, develop other restoration targets that reflect the needs of its AOC.

## How to Use this Document

This document updates previous Ohio restoration targets (formerly known as “delisting targets”) for BUI removal and outlines the process the Ohio AOC Program and local advisory committee will follow.

The “*Path to Delisting*” section of this document outlines the process the Ohio AOC Program and local advisory committees will use to track restoration progress, remove BUIs, designate an AOC as In Recovery, and delist an AOC. This section also describes conditions where partial restoration is applicable and how local advisory committees can establish interim restoration milestones. Partial restoration can be applied through guidance set forth by the federal AOC Program (U.S. EPA, Great Lakes National Program Office) when all reasonable actions and restoration efforts have been completed, but the targets cannot be met due to current use or ongoing activities, such as routine navigation dredging and associated impacts to benthos and habitat. Interim restoration milestones are not official federal or state designations but can be established by the local advisory committee to celebrate progress.

The “*Restoration Targets for BUIs*” section provides restoration targets for each BUI. The IJC Listing Guideline from 1991 is presented first as the historical baseline for why a beneficial use was considered to be impaired. Next, the State of Ohio Listing Guideline is presented to identify the State regulations, policies or guidance that would need to be exceeded to designate any specific use as impaired. Then the State of Ohio Restoration Target is provided with recommended Potential Data

Sources, followed by the Rationale and References. Potential Data Sources have been provided to assist local advisory committees and the Ohio AOC Program by directing them toward recommended data needed to evaluate BUI status and justify BUI removal. The “*Appendices*” include excerpts from some of the documents commonly referred to in the text, the hydrologic units applicable to each AOC boundary, and a glossary of acronyms and abbreviations. Please direct any questions, requests for references, or need for additional information to the Ohio AOC Coordinator for their AOC.

## **The Path to Delisting: Recognizing Progress & Maintaining Momentum**

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## **The Path to Delisting: Recognizing Progress & Maintaining Momentum**

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The GLWQA calls for the United States and Canada to develop and implement a systematic and comprehensive ecosystem approach to restore the beneficial uses in each of the designated AOCs. The Remedial Action Plans for each AOC should identify the BUI(s) and causes of impairment, identify the criteria for the restoration of the beneficial use, identify remedial measures to be taken and the entities responsible for implementing the measures, and describe the surveillance and monitoring processes to track effectiveness of remedial measures to confirm BUI beneficial use restoration. Although the specific restoration targets to achieve BUI removal may change over time, developing statewide consistency in BUI listing and AOC delisting will provide certainty for the Ohio AOC Program and local AOC partners.

The State of Ohio is using “Restoring U.S. Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines” adopted by the U.S. Policy Committee (USPC, December 2001) in combination with the International Joint Commission’s Delisting Guidelines (1991) as guidance for the removal of BUIs and delisting Ohio’s AOCs. The USPC report was created to show how and when to formally delist AOCs as the implementation of all recommended actions for restoring beneficial uses are completed, and the uses are restored and maintained. These USPC and IJC guidelines offer various options for showing progress, maintaining momentum, and steps toward formal delisting of AOCs including removing BUIs, recognizing an AOC in recovery phase, and delisting an AOC.

Local advisory committees may also develop their own interim restoration milestones as a roadmap toward BUI removal. By following this path, local advisory committees can maintain momentum and progress toward the ultimate goal of delisting the AOC. Given the long-time horizons for fully restoring some AOCs, taking the opportunity to re-designate conditions and acknowledge successes with local communities can strengthen the program while recognizing that it may be some time before delisting can occur. To keep restoration efforts energized locally, local advisory committees should celebrate, whenever possible, that reasonable and practical efforts are being made to restore the beneficial uses and progress is being made toward delisting their AOC.

### **Tracking Restoration of Beneficial Uses**

This section describes actions and steps for tracking the status of BUIs in AOCs and documenting progress toward removal. The Ohio AOC Program is committed to a partnership with the local advisory committees and the U.S. EPA in this effort. Timely tracking and reporting of BUI status and updating the restoration needs within the AOC will allow OLEC, Ohio EPA and U.S. EPA to prioritize current resources and effectively plan future efforts. The tracking procedures and timeframes outlined below are also designed to assist U.S. EPA with the GLWQA reporting requirements.

1. The AOC boundaries are those shown on Figure 1. If the local advisory committee and Ohio EPA determine that there is rationale to change the boundary, Ohio AOC Program can submit a written request and documentation to U.S. EPA.
2. State AOC Coordinators will conduct periodic qualitative reviews of the status of each AOC’s BUIs as new data becomes available and report the findings to the local advisory committee. Review and updating of BUI status should occur at least every three years, provided new data has been collected or submitted.

3. The Ohio AOC Program maintains the official files for each AOC with all finalized AOC boundaries, BUI restoration/removal records, finalized memos/letters, finalized RAPs, approved management action project lists, and other reports and updates.
4. Annual updates prepared for each AOC are the primary tool for documenting and communicating progress to the public and agencies. These documents should be brief, user-friendly updates on recent remedial actions and assessments in the AOC. They are prepared by the local advisory committees and/or facilitating organizations in coordination with Ohio AOC Coordinators. Updates are posted on the local AOC (if available) and Ohio AOC Program websites.
5. Issues regarding either removal of a BUI or delisting of an AOC are to be jointly resolved by OLEC, Ohio EPA, U.S. EPA, and local advisory committees.

### **Locally Developed Beneficial Use Restoration Targets**

Ohio's beneficial use impairment restoration targets are applied to all BUIs except where locally developed targets have been developed and endorsed by the Ohio AOC Program. The local advisory committees have the ability to establish restoration targets that are functionally equivalent to the statewide targets. Each local advisory committee will review the updated beneficial use restoration targets presented in this document and provide the Ohio AOC Program with a letter stating that they intend to utilize the statewide targets in whole or will develop local targets that are functionally equivalent. Ohio AOC Coordinators will work with the local advisory committees to establish appropriate timeframes for the review and will be directly involved in development of any local restoration targets.

If a local advisory committee elects to establish local targets, then they are expected to demonstrate how those targets are equivalent to the statewide targets. Any local targets that require assessment beyond what is required for the statewide targets (e.g., more frequent, different parameters) are the responsibility of the local AOC, including reporting results to the Ohio AOC Program. Ohio AOC Coordinators will assist as resources allow.

### **Interim Restoration Milestones**

While U.S. EPA and the IJC officially recognize and support only BUI removal, recovering AOCs, and delisting entire AOCs, local advisory committees may choose other methods of showing and celebrating incremental progress. For example, a local advisory committee may want to acknowledge when beneficial use restoration targets have been achieved for individual BUIs in a subwatershed or when all management actions have been completed for a single BUI and the ecosystem needs time to recover to meet restoration targets (BUI In Recovery). The local advisory committee may develop interim restoration measures or milestones in consultation with the Ohio AOC Program. These milestones will be officially acknowledged by the Ohio AOC Program and can be publicized on the AOC websites.

## Management Actions

Management Actions have become a primary measure of progress for the U.S. EPA AOC Program. Each AOC must establish and submit a management action project list to U.S.EPA that will assist in meeting the restoration targets for BUIs within an AOC. These lists can be submitted partially or wholly for a specific BUI or for multiple BUIs. Three milestones that the Ohio AOC Program will track with U.S. EPA are as follows;

- 1) Submission of Management Action Lists – COMPLETED for all Ohio AOCs
- 2) Confirmation of a Management Action Project list for an AOC – COMPLETED for all Ohio AOCs
- 3) Completed implementation of all Management Action Projects - ONGOING

Each of these milestones will be coordinated by the Ohio AOC Program with the local AOC advisory committee and U.S. EPA. A tally of management actions for each Ohio AOC is listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Ohio AOC Management Actions**

Ohio AOC	Submission of Management Action lists	Confirmation of a completed Management Action List	Completion of Management Actions*	Number of Management Actions^
Ashtabula	Prior to management actions - 2010	2014	2014	6
Black	2017	2018 (Revised 2022)	2024	7
Cuyahoga	2018	2018 (Revised 2024 & 2026)	TBD	16
Maumee	2017-2020	2020	TBD	87

\* as of June 2026

^ starting in 2017, except Ashtabula River AOC, which was 2014

Upon completion of all Management Actions for a particular BUI within an AOC, the Ohio AOC Program will evaluate that BUI in relation to the associated restoration targets to determine if the BUI has achieved the restoration target and can be removed.

## Removing a BUI (Beneficial Use Impairment)

This section describes the actions and steps for removing a BUI and documenting these activities in Ohio AOC Program files. The BUIs can be removed individually, in groups, or all at the same time. The Ohio AOC Program EPA is committed to working with the local advisory committees and U.S. EPA in this effort.

1. The Ohio AOC Coordinator, in consultation with the local advisory committee, determines when/if a BUI is believed to have achieved the restoration target and is eligible for removal consideration.

2. With the local advisory committee's support for removal, the Ohio AOC Coordinator requests a technical review by relevant State Agency staff.
3. With concurrence of the above, the Ohio AOC Coordinator coordinates a review by U.S. EPA's Great Lakes Program Office AOC Program Task Force Lead (TFL) and their designated Technical Review Lead (TRL) for the specific BUI(s) under removal consideration.
4. Upon satisfactory completion of these reviews, a Draft BUI Removal Report is developed by the Ohio AOC Coordinator with support by applicable State Agency technical staff members and the Lake Erie Program Administrator.
5. The Draft BUI Removal Report is provided to the local advisory committee for a two-to-three-week review period prior to release of the report for general public comment.
6. The Ohio AOC Program announces a 14- to 30-day public comment period and makes all draft documents available on its website and by request of the local AOC Advisory Committee, may host a public meeting in the AOC or virtually, and responds in writing to the public's comments in the final BUI Removal Document under the Response to Public Comments section of the document.
7. When the public review is completed, the Ohio AOC Coordinator will update and finalize the BUI Removal Report and request a letter of support from the local advisory committee for the removal of the BUI.
8. A final review of the BUI Removal Document, with the letter of support, is reviewed by the Lake Erie Program Administrator for the Ohio AOC Program to assemble the full BUI Removal recommendation package for final state concurrence by OLEC and Ohio EPA.
9. With the technical and public review is complete, a letter is sent from the Executive Director of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission to the Director of U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office, along with the BUI Removal Package including the support letter from the local advisory committee, to request federal concurrence with the Ohio AOC Program's recommended removal of the BUI(s).
10. U.S. EPA notifies the Ohio AOC Program and IJC of their concurrence.
11. The Ohio AOC Program notifies the local advisory committee upon receipt of the federal notification.
12. Once the BUI is documented as removed, there is no further assessment of that BUI in order to delist an AOC. After BUI removal, waters of the state will continue to be monitored as part of Ohio EPA's regular cycle of watershed monitoring and other state monitoring programs. After removal of a BUI, if additional problems are found in an AOC during routine or other program monitoring, it will be addressed on a case-by-case basis by Ohio EPA or the appropriate state agency under other existing programs.

13. The BUI Removal Package, letters from Ohio AOC Program and the local advisory committee, along with the response letter from U.S. EPA are placed in the permanent Ohio AOC Program records.
14. All local, state, and federal partners cooperate on publicizing the BUI removal, as appropriate. Coordination on publicizing BUI Removal is led by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission program administrator with Ohio EPA, US. EPA, and the local advisory committees.

Beneficial use impairments can be removed under any of these scenarios:

- Restoration targets have been met and follow up monitoring or other evaluations confirm that the beneficial use has been restored;
- It can be demonstrated that the BUI is due to natural rather than human causes;
- It can be demonstrated that the impairment is not limited to the local geographic extent of the AOC, but rather is typical of lake-wide, region-wide, or area-wide conditions (*under this situation, the beneficial use may be incorrectly recognized as impaired*); or
- The impairment is caused by sources outside the AOC. The impairment is not restored, but the impairment classification can be removed or changed to “impaired-not due to local sources.” Responsibility for addressing “out of AOC” sources is assigned to another party or program (e.g., Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP), TMDLs, health department).

### **Delisting a Subwatershed**

For AOCs comprised of multiple subwatersheds there may be instances where all beneficial uses are restored for an individual subwatershed. In this instance, the Ohio AOC Program, in consultation with the local advisory committee, may submit a request along with supporting documentation to delist a subwatershed because all its beneficial uses have been restored. Subwatersheds will be 10-digit HUs or Large River Assessment Units (LRAU); an alternate subwatershed unit may be used, provided the Ohio AOC Program concurs with that determination. The procedure to delist a subwatershed follows the same steps outlined above for Removing a BUI. Delisting a Subwatershed (as defined here) could also be considered a boundary change request, as the delisted subwatershed will no longer be addressed by the Ohio AOC Program.

### **Partial Target Restoration**

As referenced in the 2001 USPS Guidance document, the IJC has explicitly recognized that there may be some impaired uses that cannot be fully restored for justifiable reasons and that this should not prohibit the delisting of an AOC. For example, this condition could be used when a portion of the target has been achieved, but the remaining portion cannot be reasonably attained due to possible sources outside of the AOC, natural factors (e.g., sedimentation) or social or economic factors. This decision must be based on a combination of timeliness, reasonableness, and “common sense.” In these special cases, the Ohio AOC Program and the local advisory committee will need to document the practical and specific reasons why the impaired use(s) cannot be fully restored. The BUI Removal Package should clearly state and be fully supportable when requesting a BUI removal recommendation under this condition. For these areas, the impact of such a decision on the adjoining waters and associated management plans and targets (e.g., LaMPs) must be addressed.

If applicable, documentation to support partial target restoration should be provided when pursuing designating an AOC in Recovery or when delisting an AOC.

### **Designating an Area of Concern in Recovery**

This section has been updated to reflect the *Area of Concern in Recovery (AOCiR) Guidance (March 2016)* created by the Annex 1 Area of Concern in Recovery Task Team. This team was comprised of members representing both the United State and Canada. The concept of AOC as “in recovery” was identified in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 2012 (GLWQA) and adopted by the USPC (2001). Annex 1 of the 2012 GLWQA outlines this Area of Concern in Recovery (AOCiR) designation. An AOCiR designation is a mechanism for demonstrating in a transparent manner the progress that has been made to restore an AOC. The documentation needed to support the designation can serve as the foundation in the subsequent delisting process for an AOC.

Although the AOCiR was mentioned in the USPC (2001), it is now more clearly defined in the *Area of Concern in Recovery (AOCiR) Guidance (March 2016)*. The AOCiR designation reflects the status of an AOC after all the management actions believed to be necessary for delisting have been completed, but before all the beneficial use impairments (BUIs) have been removed. It is an interim, temporary designation that allows time for ecosystem chemical, physical and biological conditions to improve following cleanup and restoration actions that address BUIs. To be designated an AOCiR, five factors should be considered including implementing all necessary cleanup and restoration actions to remove BUIs, monitoring progress and taking additional actions as needed within a 5 – 15-year time period.

Becoming an AOCiR must be accompanied by a commitment of governments or other partners to maintain their responsibilities. These actions outline the steps necessary to designate an AOCiR in Ohio.

1. When the Ohio AOC Coordinator, in consultation with the local advisory committee, determines that all the management actions are complete and the time frame for recovery can be estimated, the Ohio AOC Coordinator prepares a report that details implemented actions, provides a rationale for recognizing an AOC as being “In Recovery,” provides rationale that no additional management actions are expected to be needed, and outlines the proposed monitoring plan to track the recovery. This plan should include pollution prevention or other maintenance issues to reduce the risk of future degradation and ensure that recovery can proceed. This step may be concurrent with the removal of BUIs.
2. The Executive Director of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission sends the report and a letter, along with a support letter from the local advisory committee, to U.S. EPA requesting concurrence in designating the AOC as an AOCiR. U.S. EPA reviews and either approves the request within 60 days, or requests to meet jointly with the local advisory committee, the Lake Erie Commission AOC Coordinator and Ohio EPA to resolve any issues, ultimately leading to U.S. EPA concurrence.
3. The AOCiR Package, letters from Ohio AOC Program and the local advisory committee, along with the response letter from U.S. EPA are placed in the permanent Ohio AOC Program records.

4. Ohio Lake Erie Commission reports to U.S. EPA at least every three years, provided data is available, on progress toward achieving the beneficial use restoration targets. Based on monitoring results, there could be a need to implement further action(s).
5. All local, state, and federal partners cooperate on publicizing the change in AOC status, as appropriate. Coordination on publicizing BUI Removal is led by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission with the Ohio AOC Coordinator, Ohio EPA, US. EPA, and the local advisory committees.

### **Delisting an Area of Concern**

In 2001, the United States Policy Committee (USPC) developed a document, “Restoring United States Great Lakes Areas of Concern—Delisting Principles and Guidelines” that addressed the process to delist US AOCs. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) was subsequently revised in 2012. This document outlined the revised delisting process and supersedes the “Process to Complete Formal Delisting of an AOC” section of the 2001 document.

### **The Delisting Process**

The following process is based on Annex 1, Section B of the GLWQA (2012) which specifically states:

... “A Party shall solicit a review and comments from the State and Provincial Governments, Tribal Governments, First Nations, Metis, Municipal Governments, watershed management agencies, other local public agencies, the Public, and the Commission ... prior to the removal of a designation as an AOC ...”.

The estimated time frames identified below are expressed in calendar days. The delisting process should take 7 to 9 months to complete but can be extended to resolve issues that may arise at each step.

#### **A) BUI Removal**

All Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) must be removed from the AOC prior to starting the official delisting process.

#### **B) Develop Preliminary Report**

When all BUIs have been removed, U.S. EPA will consult with the state to determine who will take the lead in preparing the report. The lead agency will develop the preliminary report in consultation with the local public advisory council (or its equivalent) and: the state (if EPA is the lead agency); or U.S. EPA (if the state is the lead agency).

The preliminary report should contain the background, data, analysis, and rationale for delisting the AOC. While not required, the state is encouraged to provide a letter of support to delist the AOC from the local public advisory council.

#### **C) Initiate Tribal Consultation and Coordination on Preliminary Report**

Upon completion of the preliminary report, U.S. EPA will initiate tribal consultation and coordination as needed, in accordance with U.S. EPA's "Policy on Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribes." (May 4, 2011).

- D) Review Preliminary Report (60 days)  
Concurrent with the tribal consultation process, U.S. EPA will request a review of the preliminary report from the International Joint Commission (IJC).
- E) Develop Draft Final Report (30 days)  
The lead agency will develop a draft final report within 30 days of receiving all comments from U.S. EPA (or the state, as appropriate), the IJC, the tribal consultation process, and the local public advisory council. If the state is the lead agency, they will submit this draft final report to U.S. EPA. If U.S. EPA is the lead agency, it will submit the draft final report to the state.
- F) Public Comment on Draft Final Report (30 days)  
U.S. EPA will post the report on the U.S. EPA AOC webpage for a minimum 30-day public comment period. The state may also wish to place this report on their webpage or other venues with a link to the U.S. EPA webpage to provide opportunity for public comments. A joint U.S. EPA and state public meeting should be held within or near the AOC during this time.
- G) Develop and Submit Final Report (30 days)  
If the state is the lead agency, it will incorporate public comments including as appropriate and submit the final report including a response to comments to U.S. EPA within 30 days after the close of the public comment period. If U.S. EPA is the lead agency, it will incorporate public comments as appropriate and submit the final report, including a response to comments, to the state within 30 days after the close of the public comment period.
- H) Concurrence on Final Report (30 days)  
If U.S. EPA is the lead agency, the state will notify U.S. EPA whether it concurs with the final report within 30 days after receipt. If the state is the lead agency, U.S. EPA will notify the state whether it concurs within 30 days after receipt.
- I) Submit Final Report to U.S. Department of State (DOS) (14 days)  
U.S. EPA will submit the final report and tribal correspondence summary to DOS within 14 days of concurrence.
- J) DOS Delisting Process (30 days)  
DOS will notify the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada (DFATD). This step does not require DFATD approval, just acknowledgement of receipt of the report. The delisting is complete once U.S. EPA receives this letter from DFATD.
- K) Delisting Complete  
U.S. EPA will transmit the DFATD acknowledgement letter to the state and the IJC via a cover letter stating that the delisting process is complete. All local, state, and federal partners should work cooperatively to publicize the AOC delisting.

## **Restoration Targets for Beneficial Use Impairments**

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## Restoration Targets for Beneficial Use Impairments

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The following pages contain the specific restoration targets for each of the 14 BUIs identified in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) Areas of Concern Annex. The write-up for each BUI follows the same format to provide consistency. The IJC Listing Guideline from 1991 is presented first as the historical baseline for why a beneficial use was considered to be impaired. Next, the State of Ohio Listing Guideline is presented emphasizing the State regulations, policies or guidance that would need to be exceeded to designate this use as impaired.

The State of Ohio Restoration Target includes the specific State criteria, standards or guidance that must be met to remove a BUI. Using these guidelines, a local advisory committee can remove a BUI from an entire AOC or develop a strategy to remove the BUI from only specific subwatersheds within the AOC. In some cases, the local advisory committee will have the option of meeting one of several targets to remove the BUI. These targets are separated by an “OR”. In other cases, there are several targets; all of which must be met if the beneficial use is to be removed. These targets are connected by an “AND”. This section also includes recommended Potential Data Sources to assist local advisory committees by identifying data needed to evaluate BUI status and justify BUI removal.

The Rationale explains in detail how the targets were chosen and how they relate to Ohio rules, regulations, and guidance. All the References consulted are listed so the local advisory committees can utilize the same references to better understand how a particular restoration target was selected.

The quality and age of data is an important consideration, and any BUI removal request must be driven by scientifically defensible data that represents relatively current conditions in the AOC.

The local advisory committees have the ability to establish local restoration targets that are functionally equivalent to the statewide targets as described in this document. If a local advisory committee elects to develop local restoration targets, they are expected to demonstrate how the local targets are equivalent to the statewide restoration target and need to be approved by the Ohio AOC Program. When a local target is approved, it will be included in this document upon the next revision.

## BUI 1: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when contaminant levels in fish or wildlife populations exceed current standards, objectives or guidelines, or public health advisories are in effect for human consumption of fish or wildlife. Contaminant levels in fish and wildlife must be due to contaminant input from the watershed.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

1) An advisory or restriction to fish or wildlife consumption issued by the Ohio Department of Health in the AOC is more stringent than one meal per month or Lake Erie advisory.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

#### For Fish Consumption:

In the riverine waters upstream from the lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), the fish consumption advisories issued by the Ohio Department of Health in the AOC are the same or less stringent than one meal per month; **AND**

In the lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), the fish consumption advisories issued by the Ohio Department of Health in the AOC are the same or less stringent than the current Lake Erie advisories; **OR**

If consumption advisories in the AOC are more stringent than the respective state-wide or lake-wide advisories and a study was conducted that demonstrates either (1) the source of contamination originates outside of the AOC or (2) the fish tissue concentrations within the AOC are not statistically different than non-AOC areas, reference sites or region-wide, background concentrations.

#### For Wildlife Consumption:

Wildlife consumption advisories issued by the Ohio Department of Health in the AOC are the same or less stringent than one meal per month.

#### Potential Data Sources

- State of Ohio Sport Fish Consumption Advisories
- Ohio EPA fish tissue data
- Other fish tissue studies

## Rationale

While most Ohio sport fish are of high quality and a good source of protein, levels of chemicals such as PCBs, mercury, lead, and other metals and pesticides have been found in some fish from certain waters. To ensure the continued good health of Ohioans, the Ohio Department of Health, in cooperation with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and Ohio Department of Natural Resources, issues fish consumption advisories per Chapter 3701 of the Ohio Revised Code. Ohio uses the *Protocol for a Uniform Great Lakes Sport Fish Advisory* (1993) and the 2005 addendum to establish fish consumption advisories for PCBs and mercury, respectively. These are the contaminants that drive most of the advisories in Ohio waters.

Ohio EPA refers to the area where river and lake water mix as a lacustrary (combination of the terms lacustrine and estuary). These areas could also be described as drowned river mouths (lake water flows into the river essentially “drowning” the river mouth). See Appendix B for more detail and a description of lacustraries within Ohio’s AOCs.

Snapping turtles are currently the only wildlife species with a consumption advisory in effect as issued by the Ohio Department of Health. This advisory was listed based on the results of a one-time study done in 1997. All turtles had high levels of PCB and mercury in fat and liver tissue and advisories stress not eating those portions of the turtle. Currently, turtles from the Black, Ashtabula and Maumee Rivers have a one meal per week advisory for mercury which is similar to the statewide blanket advisory for fish and not considered impaired.

Sources of contaminants originating outside an AOC (upstream, long-range transport of contaminants released to the air and deposited in the AOC, from open lake waters, etc.) that result in a fish or wildlife consumption advisory should not impinge on the ability to delist an AOC. In order to document that the BUI can be removed due to sources outside the AOC a pollutant source study or other investigation could be conducted. Alternatively, a comparison study of fish tissue contaminant levels can show that the fish tissue concentrations within the AOC are not statistically different than non-AOC areas or selected reference sites. If a trend analysis shows similarity between the sites, then the BUI should be considered restored. Whenever possible, Ohio EPA will attempt to ensure that another responsible party or existing regulatory program is addressing source control outside the AOC boundaries.

Up-to-date comprehensive fish and wildlife consumption advice is available on the ODH web page at: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-sport-fish-consumption-advisory>. In 2003, a general state-wide restriction was issued advising not to eat more than one meal per week of fish caught from any waters in Ohio due to widespread low levels of mercury. This blanket statewide advisory is protective of the most sensitive human populations and pre-empted the listing of other one meal per week advisories that were mostly due to PCBs. In order to keep the fish consumption advisory information as simple as possible, the web page now only lists the more restrictive one month or greater advisories. This does not mean the PCBs have gone away. Therefore, when conducting a study to determine if the local advisories are strictly related to sources from outside an AOC, it is important to examine the actual fish tissue data for the area in question and not just whether an advisory is listed on the web page. In the *Ohio Integrated Report*, beginning in 2006, water body impairments were included based on fish tissue concentrations related to water quality criteria. Information about fish consumption advisories and where to obtain fish tissue data are available from

ODH at: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-sport-fish-consumption-advisory>. Integrated Reports can be found at: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/surface-water/reports-data/ohio-integrated-water-quality-monitoring-and-assessment-report> . Please note that the Integrated Report data are somewhat different than the concentrations that trigger fish consumption advisories and are offered here for informational purposes only. For the BUI restoration targets, we will continue to keep the targets focused on the existence of fish consumption advisories rather than fish tissue concentrations.

## References

- Great Lakes Sport Fish Advisory Task Force. 1993. Protocol for a uniform Great Lakes sport fish consumption advisory. Council of Great Lakes Governors.
- Great Lakes Sport Fish Advisory Task Force. 2006. Mercury addendum to the protocol for a uniform Great Lakes sport fish consumption advisory. Council of Great Lakes Governors.
- International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA_2012.pdf))
- IJC. 1991. Commission approves list/delist criteria for Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Focus on IJC Activities, Volume 16, Issue 1. ISSN 0832-6673. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/WQB\\_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC\\_March1991.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/WQB_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC_March1991.pdf))
- Lambert, L. 1998. Impairment assessment of beneficial uses: Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption. Lake Erie LaMP Tech. Rept. No. 2. (Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-11/documents/lake-erie-lamp-tech-report-2-bui-fish-wildlife-consumption-1998-44pp.pdf>)
- Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008. Lake Erie LaMP Work Group. (Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/lake-erie-lamps#basics>)
- Ohio Sport Fish Consumption Advisory, Ohio EPA. (Available at: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/ohio-sport-fish-consumption-advisory>)
- Ohio EPA. 1996. Ohio Water Resources Inventory, Volume 2 - Ohio Fish Tissue Contaminant Monitoring. (Available at: <https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/documents/96vol1.pdf>)
- Ohio EPA. 2010. State of Ohio cooperative fish tissue monitoring program sport fish tissue consumption advisory program (Available at: <https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/documents/96vol2.pdf>)
- Ohio EPA. 2006. Integrated Report. Appendix A. Supplemental information on the use of fish tissue data. (Available at: [https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/tmdl/2006IntReport/IR06\\_app\\_A\\_fish\\_suppl\\_info\\_final.pdf](https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/tmdl/2006IntReport/IR06_app_A_fish_suppl_info_final.pdf))
- Ohio Department of Health. 1997. Criteria for Establishing Fish Consumption advisories in Ohio for PCBs, Lead, and Mercury.
- Restoring United States Great Lakes Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the U.S. Policy Committee, December 2001.

## BUI 2: Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when ambient water quality standards (WQS), objectives, or guidelines for the anthropogenic substance(s) known to cause tainting, are being exceeded or survey results have identified tainting of fish or wildlife flavor.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

1) Levels of compounds associated with tainting exceed Ohio WQS within the Area of Concern and/or 2) Wildlife officials indicate tainting of fish and wildlife flavor is found within the area.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

No WQS exceedances of compounds associated with tainting within the Area of Concern (phenol, 2-chlorophenol, 2,4-dichlorophenol); **AND/OR**

No reports of tainting from wildlife officials.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio EPA water quality surveys
- Ohio DNR wildlife reports or surveys

## Rationale

Phenol and chlorinated phenols are the chemicals most often associated with organoleptic (taste and odor) effects. Phenols and related compounds may be present in waste products from oil refineries, coke plants, gas plants, some chemical producing facilities, plastics manufacturing, road surfacing, dyes, disinfectants and various industries and processes that use phenolic substances as raw materials. Concentrations of pure phenol above 15,000-25,000 µg/l have been found to affect taste and odor in fish (Shumway and Palensky, 1973). Phenols react with chlorine to produce chlorinated phenolics. Threshold levels for chlorinated organics above which taste and odor may occur in fish range from 1 µg/l to 84 µg/l. This range was determined by testing rainbow trout after a 48-hour exposure period (U.S.EPA, 1980). Ohio does not have any WQS to protect against fish tainting but does have the following standards to prevent organoleptic effects in drinking water: 0.1 µg/l of 2-chlorophenol; 0.3 µg/l of 2,4-dichlorophenol; and 1.0 µg/l of phenol. Levels of these compounds below Ohio WQS for drinking water should preclude tainting of fish or wildlife flavor.

One of the best indications of impairment of BUI 2 is reports of tainting to wildlife officers and managers. While it would be ideal to have both survey information and water quality data for organoleptic chemicals, a survey of wildlife officials should be able to provide adequate information regarding the occurrence of tainting in fish or wildlife flavor.

Elevated phosphorus concentrations that cause algal blooms may in turn cause a taste or odor problem in fish or wildlife. The presence of nuisance plankton populations, such as blue-green algal

blooms, and potential impacts to fish and wildlife are assessed under BUI 9 (Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae) and BUI 11 (Degradation of Aesthetics).

## References

International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA_2012.pdf))

IJC. 1991. Commission approves list/delist criteria for Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Focus on IJC Activities, Volume 16, Issue 1. ISSN 0832-6673. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/WQB\\_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC\\_March1991.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/WQB_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC_March1991.pdf))

Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) 2000, 2002, 2004. Lake Erie LaMP Work Group. (Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/lake-erie-lamps#basics>)

Lambert, L. 1997. Impairment Assessment of Beneficial Uses: Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor. Lake Erie LaMP Technical Report No. 3. (Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-11/documents/lake-erie-lamp-tech-report-3-bui-tainting-fish-wildlife-flavor-1997-33pp.pdf>)

Lawrence, P. 2007. Assessing selected unknown beneficial use impairments for Great Lakes Areas of Concern in Ohio. University of Toledo.

Ohio EPA. Ohio Water Quality Standards. Chapter 3745-1-07 of the Ohio Administrative Code. Table 7.1 (Available at: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-3745-1-07>)

Restoring United States Great Lakes Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the U.S. Policy Committee, December 2001.

Shumway, D. and J. Palensky. 1973. Impairment of the Flavor of Fish by Water Pollutants. U.S. EPA Office of Research and Monitoring. EPA-R3-73-010.

U.S.EPA. 1980a. Ambient Water Quality Criteria for Chlorinated Phenols. Office of Water Regulations and Standards. EPA 440/5-80-032. Pp B-4, B-6 to B-12.

U.S.EPA. 1980b. Ambient Water Quality Criteria for 2,4-dichlorophenol. Office of Water Regulations and Standards. EPA 440/5-80-042. Pp. B-4, B-7 to B-13.

U.S.EPA. 1980c. Ambient Water Quality Criteria for 2-chlorophenol. Office of Water Regulations and Standards. EPA 440/5-80-034. Pp. B-5 to B-10.

### BUI 3: Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations

#### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when fish and wildlife management programs have identified degraded fish or wildlife populations due to a cause within the watershed. In addition, this use will be considered impaired when toxicity (as defined by relevant, field-validated, bioassays with appropriate quality assurance/quality controls) of sediment-associated contaminants at a site is significantly higher than controls.

#### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

##### For Fish:

Biological surveys report that the average score for a 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) (or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed) are in significant departure from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for fish community.

##### For Wildlife:

State wildlife population or another similar study indicates degraded or absent populations of selected sentinel species.

#### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

##### For Fish:

In the riverine areas upstream from the lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), when the average Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) and the average Modified Index of Well Being (MIwb) values within an assessment unit do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for fish community. (See Appendix B for additional information).

Index Type - Site Type	Riverine Fish Population Restoration Targets <sup>1</sup>							
	Erie/Ontario Lake Plain (EOLP)				Huron-Erie Lake Plain (HELP)			
	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>2</sup>	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>2</sup>
<b>IBI - Headwaters</b>	46	36	24	18	46	24	20	18
<b>IBI - Wading*</b>	46	34	24	18	46	28	20	18
<b>IBI - Boat*</b>	44	36	24	16	44	30	20	16
<b>MIwb - Wading</b>	8.9	7.5	6.2	4.5	8.9	6.8	5.6	4.5
<b>MIwb - Boat</b>	9.1	8.2	5.8	5.0	9.1	8.1	5.7	5.0

\*Wading and boat refer to sampling methodology (i.e., wading in shallow water, boat in deeper water)

<sup>1</sup>Ohio EPA has determined the WQS non-significant departure value for EWH and WWH riverine IBI to be 4 points MIwb to be 0.5 points; the BUI restoration targets presented in this table are based on the values of non-significant departure from Ohio WQS.

<sup>2</sup>Targets for Limited Resource Waters (LRW) are based on benchmarks as there are no criteria in Ohio WQS.

**AND**

In lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), when the average L-IBI/N-IBI and the average MIwb values do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for fish community. (See Appendix B for additional information and lacustrary/shoreline locations in each AOC).

<b>Lacustrary and Shoreline Fish Population BUI Restoration Targets<sup>1</sup></b>				
<b>Type</b>	<b>EWB</b>	<b>WWH</b>	<b>MWH<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>LRW</b>
<b>IBI – Lacustrary (L-IBI)</b>	42	42	27	16
<b>MIwb – Lacustrary (L-MIwb)</b>	8.6	8.6	6.6	5.1
<b>IBI – Shoreline (hard bottom) (LE-IBI-hard)</b>	42	42	NA	NA
<b>MIwb – Shoreline (hard bottom) (LE-MIwb-soft)</b>	8.9	8.9	NA	NA
<b>IBI – Shoreline (soft bottom) (LE-IBI-soft)</b>	31	31	NA	NA
<b>MIwb – Shoreline (soft bottom) (LE-MIwb-soft)</b>	7.2	7.2	NA	NA

<sup>1</sup> Based on Thoma, 1999 and personal communication with Thoma.

<sup>2</sup> There are no specific WQS or criteria for MWH Lacustrary; however, for regular streams, Ohio EPA's general expectation for MWH is that they meet a narrative rating of Fair. Therefore, the MWH BUI restoration targets above are based on conversions from narrative equivalents.

**For Wildlife:**

ODNR's annual Wildlife Population Status Reports or another similar study shows a steady or improving healthy, reproducing population of either terrestrial or avian resident species (e.g. bald eagle, osprey, sandhill crane, and river otter) or other AOC appropriate sentinel species for at least 3 of the last 5 years.

**Notes**

- Ohio EPA has determined non-significant departure to be 4 points and 0.5 points from state WQS for IBI and MIwb values, respectively, for riverine areas. The Riverine Fish Population Restoration Targets listed above reflect the target as a non-significant departure from WQS.
- Non-significant departure for neither the L-IBI nor the MIwb lacustrary values has been determined and the Lacustrary Fish Population Restoration Targets listed above reflect state WQS values. If non-significant departure values are determined for lacustraries, these restoration targets may be adjusted.
- Assessment units for the fish populations are the 12-digit HU, Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed. If a single assessment unit has multiple criteria that apply to that unit (e.g., wading, boating, lacustrary), then the unit should be evaluated in segments based on each criteria. For the wildlife populations, the AOC should be evaluated as a whole.

**Potential Data Sources**

- Ohio EPA IBI and MIwb data
- Other IBI and MIwb Level 3 Credible Data (e.g., data collected by state certified data collectors or federal agencies)
- ODNR wildlife reports website

## Rationale

### For Fish Populations:

The Ohio Water Quality Standards (WQS; Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3745-1) consist of designated uses and chemical and biological criteria designed to represent measurable properties of the environment that are consistent with the narrative goals specified by each use designation. Use designations consist of two broad use groups: aquatic life (i.e., aquatic community status) and human health (i.e., water supply, recreational use). Every named waterbody in Ohio has an assigned aquatic use designation and there are target biological criteria for each use designation. The biocriteria for waterways are codified in the Ohio WQS.

The Lake Erie watershed falls within two ecoregions – geographic regions with unique ecological characteristics. These are the Erie/Ontario Lake Plain (EOLP) and the Huron/Erie Lake Plain (HELP). Chemical and/or biological criteria are generally assigned to each use designation in accordance with the broad goals defined by each. This constitutes a “tiered” approach in that varying and graduated levels of protection are provided by each criterion. This hierarchy is especially apparent for the biological criteria. The aquatic life use criteria frequently control the resulting protection and restoration requirements as an emphasis on protecting aquatic life generally results in water quality suitable for all uses. This is why the aquatic life use criteria are emphasized in Ohio EPA biological and water quality reports.

When measuring the status of this BUI, the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) and the Modified Index of Well-Being (MIwb) should be used to measure the fish community. The IBI is a multimetric index patterned after an original IBI described by Karr (1981) and Fausch *et al.* (1984). It should also be noted that Ohio EPA has a Low-End Scoring Adjustment as a part of its guidelines for IBI evaluations. Many of these adjustments are based on a low number of fish collected in a sample; however, even with sufficient sample numbers in some cases this metric score may still be manually adjusted. The low-end adjustments to the score may affect the assessment unit averages. The metric conditions for these sites should be consulted if the assessment unit is impaired to determine what actions are needed to improve the site. For more information on this adjustment, see the Ohio EPA 2014 references.

The MIwb is a measure of fish community abundance and diversity using numbers and weight information and is a modification of the original Index of Well-Being applied to fish community information from the Wabash River (Gammon 1976; Gammon *et al.* 1981). The modification corrects for a predominance and high abundance of fish species tolerant to environmental degradation that would otherwise produce false high readings. However, the MIwb metric is not applicable to sample locations with drainage areas of 20.0 square miles or less. When averaging the MIwb values for the assessment unit this needs to be taken into consideration. The status should be determined based on assessment unit averages for only those sites with applicable MIwb values. The absence of a MIwb value (for this reason) does not affect the status and will not make an assessment unit impaired.

There are differences in IBI and MIwb criteria between the two ecoregions where Ohio’s AOCs are located – EOLP and HELP. See the table in the target box for values in each ecoregion. Ohio EPA has determined non-significant departure to be 4 points and 0.5 points for the IBI and MIwb values, respectively for EWH and WWH. These values for the tributaries are considered criteria and adopted in Ohio WQS.

In addition to the river habitat areas, two other zones exist – the area where the river the lake water mix and Lake Erie shoreline. The Lake Erie Shoreline Area designation applies to areas of open waters/bays where the water depth is equal to or less than three meters. This area was previously referred to as the Nearshore Area; however, Ohio EPA has modified how it monitors/measures Lake Erie and its bays. Ohio EPA refers to the area where the river and lake mix as a lacustrary (combination of the terms lacustrine and estuary). The lacustrary areas could also be described as drowned river mouths (lake water flows into the river essentially “drowning” the river mouth). There are no differences in the shoreline IBI (LE-IBI) or the lacustrary IBI (L-IBI) target between the two ecoregions – EOLP and HELP. There is not a separate MIwb index for the lacustrary; however, the target is different than the riverine targets. There is no MIwb index for the shoreline area. The L-IBI, LE-IBI and MIwb values used to evaluate lacustraries and shoreline areas are guidance and are not established within State rules. No non-significant departure values have been determined for L-IBI, LE-IBI and MIwb assessments in lacustraries and shoreline areas. If non-significant departure values are determined in the future, the L-IBI, LE-IBI and LE-MIwb targets may be adjusted. (See Appendix B for more detail and a description of lacustraries within Ohio’s AOCs.). Each AOC’s site conditions will need to be evaluated using the lacustrary evaluation guidance but will need to consider its applicability and if local targets will need to be established or how and/or if conditions are similar to regional conditions.

The restoration target for this BUI was developed from WQS and guidance for fish community evaluation, but the restoration targets are not the same as the WQS or guidance. These differences include: 1) the non-significant departure values were used to set the restoration target (where appropriate) and 2) metric scores are averaged across an assessment unit for each aquatic life use. Additional information on how to calculate the average index value for comparison to the restoration target follows.

For the purpose of this restoration target, the IBI, L-IBI, and LE-IBI values should be averaged across a designated assessment unit. This process should be repeated for the MIwb values. If a single assessment unit has multiple criteria that apply to that unit (e.g. wading, boating, lacustrary), then the unit should be evaluated in segments based on each criteria. For consistency with other Ohio EPA programs, it is recommended that 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) be used. AOCs may elect to use an alternate assessment unit, provided the proposed assessment unit will result in an equivalent evaluation of the conditions and Ohio EPA concurs with that determination.

The calculated average value for an assessment unit needs to meet the restoration target set for IBI, L-IBI, LE-IBI and the MIwb for this BUI to be removable for that assessment unit. Assessment unit averages should NOT be averaged to determine BUI impairment status for an AOC.

The Ohio AOC Program recommends the following guidelines for averaging data:

1. If multiple assessments were conducted at an individual site during a single year or field season, the results should be evaluated to determine an annual average for each individual site. Otherwise, use the most current data available for each site, collected within the last 10 years.
2. The averages for individual sites (as calculated in #1) should be combined with other sites within the same assessment unit to determine the overall average value for the assessment

unit. The overall assessment unit average can be based on data from different years as long as all data is no older than 10 years.

For BUI restoration target assessments, if any single sampling site is 50% or less of the target, then the whole assessment unit may be considered impaired. These conditions may be indicative of a hotspot being present and additional investigation and, potentially, restoration actions may be needed. If a sampling site significantly lowers the assessment unit average due to site conditions that are not representative of the assessment unit (i.e., highway interchange) or are highly impacted by the surrounding land use that will likely not be removed/alterd (i.e., commercial development), then that site should not prohibit this BUI from being removed. Instead, these sites may be removed from the status determination data set and a new status calculated without these non-representative, non-restorable sites included.

#### **For Wildlife Populations:**

Healthy wildlife populations depend on good habitat, so restoration of the Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat (BUI 14) is vital for the restoration of wildlife populations. In order to reach the restoration target for wildlife populations, habitat maintenance and improvement need to be emphasized. On private lands, efforts are geared toward incentive programs to improve habitat, especially for agricultural and woodland landowners.

Habitat manipulation (i.e. creation, enhancement, etc.) is practiced more directly on public land owned by local, state and regional park districts and government agencies. Public lands are important for wildlife production and for recreation. Some of the best hunting, trapping, and wildlife observation opportunities in Ohio occur on state wildlife areas. Because more than 90 percent of the state's original wetlands have been lost to development, wetlands represent an especially critical habitat type and needs to receive special attention in order to maintain populations.

Recent state efforts have involved wild turkeys, bald eagles, river otters, and peregrine falcons. Great blue heron, bald eagle, osprey, and river otter are some of the top-level fish-eating predatory animals of the Lake Erie watershed and are good indicators of surface water-based ecosystem health. As such, they are considered to be primary sentinel species in Ohio. Population studies of these birds and mammals indicate that their numbers are increasing, due to successful reintroduction efforts and declining levels of pollution.

Each year the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife uses various methods to monitor Ohio's wildlife species. Their annual Wildlife Population Status Report presents results of those surveys and up-to-date information about select wildlife species in Ohio. These reports or other similar studies should be utilized to determine the status of the wildlife portion of this BUI.

It should be noted that most of the suggested sentinel species require a larger area than one 12-digit HU or large river assessment unit (LRAU) to support healthy, sustainable populations. The wildlife portion of this BUI should be evaluated based on the AOC as a whole, not by assessment units or watersheds.

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## Sentinel Species for Maumee AOC

### BUI 3b: Degradation of Wildlife Populations

*(approve by Maumee AOC Advisory Committee on December 8, 2016)*

*(accepted by Ohio EPA as appropriate species for the Maumee AOC on January 9, 2017)*

#### Background

In 1987, the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement designated the Maumee Area of Concern (AOC) and identified ten beneficial use impairments (BUIs), including degradation to wildlife populations (BUI #3b). For AOCs in Ohio, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) defined methods to evaluate BUIs and established restoration targets. BUI #3b is considered impaired when a state-estimated wildlife population or a wildlife study indicates that the population of a designated sentinel species is degraded or absent (Ohio EPA 2016, p. 22). The BUI #3b restoration target requires “a steady or improving healthy, reproducing population of either terrestrial or avian resident” sentinel species for at least three of the last five years based upon Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Wildlife Population Status Reports or similar wildlife population studies (Ohio EPA 2016, p. 23). Ohio EPA left it to the AOC advisory committees to determine the sentinel species and select the wildlife data to be used to evaluate the sentinel species.

#### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

##### **For Wildlife Populations:**

ODNR’s annual Wildlife Population Status Reports or another similar study shows a steady or improving healthy, reproducing population of either terrestrial or avian resident species (e.g. bald eagle, osprey, sandhill crane, and river otter) or other AOC appropriate sentinel species for at least 3 of the last 5 years.

##### **Potential Data Sources**

- ODNR wildlife reports website

#### Process for Species Selection and Recommendation

In 2016, the Maumee AOC Advisory Committee (MAAC) convened two subcommittees to address biological and habitat BUIs: *Fish & Bugs* and *Wildlife & Habitat*. These subcommittees were composed of representatives from public agencies that manage wildlife<sup>1</sup>, public lands, and environmental quality; conservation organizations<sup>2</sup>; environmental consultants; and the general public. The *Fish & Bugs* and *Wildlife & Habitat* subcommittees met together during several meetings in the fall of 2016 and recommended the sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) as the sentinel species for the Maumee AOC. The process for selecting these two sentinel species is described in the following paragraphs.

<sup>1</sup> ODNR Division of Wildlife, The Olander Park System, Metroparks of the Toledo Area, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and Wood County Soil and Water Conservation District.

<sup>2</sup> The Nature Conservancy.

The *Fish & Bugs* and *Wildlife & Habitat* subcommittees first decided to define key terms<sup>3</sup>:

- **Terrestrial:** Amphibians, mammals, and reptiles; excludes fish.
- **Avian Resident:** A non-migratory avian species that remain within the Maumee AOC year-round or a migratory bird species that nests and fledges young within the Maumee AOC. If one or more species are similar (i.e., use same habitat, fulfill the same niche in the food web), the species that is a year-round resident of the Maumee AOC is preferable to the species that is migratory.
- **Sentinel Species:** Wildlife species indicative of riparian and upland habitat quality of the Maumee AOC. Such species need not be explicitly linked with contaminated sediments, which are a primary focus of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

The subcommittees evaluated 51 candidate species (44 species with wildlife population status reports [ODNR 2016b] and 7 species suggested by members of the subcommittees). Available data were compiled<sup>4</sup>, the candidate species were evaluated, and 38 of the original 50 candidate species were eliminated from consideration for the following reasons:

- Elusive or otherwise difficult to monitor or track or otherwise lack population or abundance data
- Present in very small populations in the Maumee AOC because they are pioneers or are at the edge of their breeding range
- Migratory or are not a resident (as defined previously)
- Indicative of urban or suburban habitat or natural niche habitat or are habitat generalists
- Dependent upon artificial platforms, barns, buildings, or cell phone towers for nesting

After reviewing additional, county- and AOCs-specific data, *Fish & Bugs* and *Wildlife & Habitat* subcommittees selected sandhill crane (*Grus canadensis*) and wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) as the sentinel species to recommend to the MAAC for the Maumee AOC. Both bird species are resident in the Maumee AOC and their populations are actively monitored by ODNR.

Sandhill cranes occur in marshes, swamps, grasslands, and agricultural fields adjacent to wetlands (ODNR 2016b); they are indicative of coastal marsh and adjacent upland habitat quality. ODNR Division of Wildlife monitored breeding pairs of sandhill cranes across the state from 1996 through 2016 and observed breeding pairs within the Maumee AOC since 2007. Sandhill cranes are endangered in Ohio, and the division will continue monitoring sandhill cranes into the foreseeable future.

Wild turkey is a non-migratory upland gamebird that are present in all 88 of Ohio's counties (ODNR 2016b). While they prefer mature forests, successful populations can persist in areas with less forest cover. ODNR Division of Wildlife reports statewide spring turkey harvest data by county and will continue to do so as long as wild turkey are a gamebird in Ohio.

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<sup>3</sup> The term "avian" was assumed to represent birds

<sup>4</sup> Wildlife population status reports (ODNR 2016), the *Ohio Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy* (ODNR 2006), *The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in Ohio* (Rodewald et al. 2016), and eBird (2016).

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## BUI 4: Fish Tumors or Other Deformities

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when incidence rates of fish tumors or other deformities exceed rates at unimpacted control sites or when survey data confirm the presence of neoplastic or preneoplastic liver tumors in bullheads or suckers.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

DELTs (Deformities, Eroded Fins, Lesions and Tumors) or bullhead liver tumor incidence levels exceed regional target values or values found in other fish populations and are due to contaminant sources from within the boundaries of the AOC.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

The average DELT values within the assessment unit do not exceed either:

- DELT values of 3% (lacustrary and boat sites), or
- DELT values 1.3% (wading and headwater sites);

#### AND

Where brown bullheads are present, the liver tumor prevalence rate in fish 3 years or older (i.e., neoplastic or preneoplastic liver tumors) should not exceed 5%.

#### Notes

- Assessment units for DELTs are the 12-digit HU, Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed.
- Brown bullhead liver tumor prevalence rates are evaluated in specified stream reaches within the AOC where populations are likely to be present.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio EPA biological surveys
- Other regional, state/federal or local fish studies

## Rationale

### For Deformities, Eroded Fins, Lesions and Tumors (DELTs):

DELTs are typically recorded when conducting fish community surveys. Information on external anomalies is noted because many are either caused or exacerbated by environmental factors and often indicate the presence of multiple sublethal stressors. Morphological abnormalities are uncommon in unimpacted natural fish populations. DELTs are one of the metrics used to determine Ohio's Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI). The metric is designed to provide a score (5, 3 or 1) as part of the overall index. The DELT target percentage of 3.0% (lacustrary and boat sites) and 1.3% (free flowing,

headwater and wading sites) are based on the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile at reference sites and is used to determine a score of '3' for the DELT metric of the IBI. The previous DELT target (2008 Delisting Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern) for this BUI utilized the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile (highest expected score) to set the DELT target at 0.5% (lacustrary/boat sites) and 0.1% (free flowing and wading sites).

The decision to revise the DELT target was based on a review of available DELT data from Ohio's Lake Erie watersheds and consideration of overall AOC objectives. For the purpose of this restoration target, the DELT values should be averaged across a designated assessment unit. For consistency with other Ohio EPA programs, it is recommended that 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) be used. Local Advisory Committees may elect to use an alternative assessment unit, provided that the Ohio AOC Program concurs with that determination. If a single assessment unit has multiple criteria that apply to that unit (e.g., wading, boating, lacustrary), then the unit should be evaluated in segments based on each criteria.

The calculated average value for an assessment unit needs to meet the target value in order for the BUI to be removable for that assessment unit. The calculated average value of each assessment unit in the AOC needs to meet the target value in order for the BUI to be removable for the AOC. Assessment unit averages should NOT be averaged to determine BUI impairment status for an AOC.

Ohio AOC Program recommends the following guidelines for averaging data:

1. If multiple samples were collected at an individual site during a single year or field season, the results should be evaluated to determine an average for each individual site. Otherwise, use the most current data available for each site, collected within the last 10 years.
2. The averages for individual sites (as calculated in #1) should be combined with other sites within the same assessment unit to determine the overall average value for the assessment unit. The overall assessment unit average can be based on data from different years.

For BUI restoration target assessments, if any single sampling exceeds a level of two times the applicable target value, then the whole assessment unit may be considered impaired. These conditions may be indicative of a hotspot being present and additional investigation and, potentially, restoration actions may be needed. If a sampling site significantly lowers the assessment unit average due to site conditions that are not representative of the assessment unit (i.e., highway interchange) or are highly impacted by the surrounding land use that will likely not be removed/altered (i.e., commercial development), then that site should not prohibit this BUI from being removed. Instead, these sites may be removed from the status determination data set and a new status calculated without these non-representative, non-restorable sites included.

#### **For Bullhead Liver Tumors:**

High occurrences of both external and internal (liver) tumors in fish have been associated with carcinogens in sediment and water at a variety of AOCs on the Great Lakes and many other locations in North America (Baumann, 1998). Numerous field and laboratory investigations have demonstrated a cause and effect relationship between carcinogens, particularly PAHs, and liver cancer in fish. As these studies have typically been conducted over a stream reach and produced data for the entire reach, rather than from specific sites within a reach, the averaging of results is not applicable.

A study by Baumann evaluated brown bullhead at lower Great Lakes Canadian AOCs and Interconnecting Waterways (Baumann 2010) and determined that some preneoplastic lesions never develop into liver tumors and should not be used as an impairment criterion and the study attempted to develop an impairment criterion based only on neoplastic lesions. Based on analysis of about 1150 brown bullhead, Baumann assigned a tumor prevalence of 2% as a delisting criterion for the study. However, Baumann found some AOC sites with tumor prevalence rate of 4% (Wheatley Harbor and Bay of Quinte) to a 5% tumor prevalence rate for a hypothetical site with 100 individuals were not significantly different than the assigned delisting criterion of 2%. It appeared from the Baumann report that statistically observing a difference of background values of up to 5% liver tumor prevalence was not possible.

Based on review of available data, including the Baumann report, the Ohio AOC restoration target for liver tumors in bullheads is set at a 5% tumor prevalence rate to account for the statistically observable difference value documented by Baumann plus any hepatic alterations/preneoplasms that could develop into liver tumors.

Ohio EPA has identified the lacustrine zones of the following streams and reaches for the evaluation of brown bullhead liver tumor incidence rates.

<b>AOC Stream Reaches Where Brown Bullhead are Likely to be Present</b>	
<b>Maumee AOC</b>	Mainstem/Swan Creek
	Ottawa River
	Duck/Otter Creek
	Wolf Creek
	Cedar Creek
	Turtle Creek
	Toussaint/Packer Creek
<b>Black River AOC</b>	Upper Black River
	Lower Black River
<b>Cuyahoga River AOC</b>	Mainstem/Marina
	Old Channel
	Euclid Creek
<b>Ashtabula River AOC</b>	Mainstem

The technology for evaluating tumors is continually evolving. Any studies conducted for BUI evaluation should strive to follow the current industry protocols for collection and analysis.

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Restoring United States Great Lakes Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the U.S. Policy Committee, December 2001.

## BUI 5: Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when wildlife survey data confirm the presence of deformities (e.g., cross-bill syndrome) or other reproductive problems (e.g., egg-shell thinning) in sentinel wildlife species.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:  
Bird or animal deformities or reproductive problems of sentinel species, due to sources within the AOC, are documented by wildlife managers.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

No reports of wildlife population deformities or reproductive problems from wildlife officials resulting from contaminants within the AOC.

#### Potential Data Sources

- State or local wildlife surveys or reports

### Rationale

Great blue heron, bald eagle, osprey, mink, and river otter are the top-level fish-eating predatory animals of the Lake Erie watershed and are good indicators of ecosystem health. As such, they are considered to be the primary sentinel species in Ohio. Population studies of these species indicate that their numbers are increasing, due to successful re-introduction efforts and declining levels of pollution. However, these and other animals may continue to be impacted, particularly by legacy pollutants such as PCBs, and their reproductive health may be impaired. Reproductive impairments cannot be clearly understood without considering the factors that cause them. Wildlife officials, managers, and other organizations should be able to provide adequate information regarding the status of these populations and the presence or absence of deformities and reproductive problems.

No impairments of this BUI have been identified in any of Ohio's AOCs.

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Restoring United States Great Lakes Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the U.S. Policy Committee, December 2001.

## BUI 6: Degradation of Benthos

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when benthic macroinvertebrate community structure significantly diverges from unimpacted control sites of comparable physical and chemical characteristics. In addition, this use will be considered impaired when toxicity (as defined by relevant, field-validated, bioassays with appropriate quality assurance/quality controls) of sediment-associated contaminants at a site is significantly higher than controls.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:  
Biological surveys report that the average score for a 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed) are in significant departure from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for macroinvertebrate community.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

In the riverine areas, upstream from the lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), when the average of the combined quantitative Invertebrate Community Index (ICI) values and the numerically converted qualitative values within the assessment unit do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for macroinvertebrate community; **AND**

In lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), when the average of the combined quantitative L-ICI values and the numerically converted qualitative values do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for macroinvertebrate community. (See Appendix B for additional information);

Site Type	Invertebrate Community Index (ICI) Restoration Target			
	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>3</sup>
Riverine <sup>1</sup>	42	30	22	8
Lacustrary <sup>24</sup>	34	34	34	12

<sup>1</sup>Ohio EPA has determined the WQS non-significant departure value for EWH and WWH riverine ICIs to be 4 points; the BUI restoration targets presented in this table are based on the values of the non-significant departure from Ohio WQS.

<sup>2</sup>Non-significant departure for the lacustrary ICI value (L-ICI) has not yet been determined.

<sup>3</sup>BUI restoration targets for MWH and LRW are based on benchmarks as there are no criteria in Ohio WQS. The narrative evaluation is not applicable for LRW; if other criteria exist in the assessment unit it should be used.

<sup>4</sup> The ICI target for lacustraries is based on an Ohio EPA study in 1994 that identified 34 as a value considered an attainable goal for the Lake Erie lacustraries given the current altered habitat conditions in the absence of excessive sedimentation and water column enrichment or toxicity (Ohio EPA, 1995; Thoma, 1999).

**OR**

In waters where benthic degradation has been attributed to contaminated sediments, this BUI can be considered restored in these areas when the remedial action(s) to address the contaminated sediments have been implemented to the extent practicable and the associated remediation goals have been achieved. *(Applicable in contaminated sediment areas only)*

**OR (Maumee AOC only)**

In Maumee Bay, *Hexagenia* (burrowing mayfly nymphs) measured on a three-year moving average (collected April to June) should range between 101 to 400 nymphs/m<sup>2</sup>, with the ideal range between 201 and 300 nymphs/m<sup>2</sup>.

**Notes**

- If both qualitative (narrative) and quantitative (ICI) data were collected at the same time for the same sample site; only the quantitative (ICI) data should be used to determine status.
- Assessment units can have qualitative (narrative) and quantitative (ICI) data that were collected at different sites. All sites within the same assessment unit should be averaged together when determining the overall average value for that assessment unit.
- The overall assessment unit average can be based on data from different years.
- Assessment units are the 12-digit HU, Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed.
- This BUI will not be evaluated for ICI in waters that are routinely dredged as it is unrealistic for a healthy benthic community to be restored under these conditions.
- Examples of remedial programs that could be used to address contaminated sediment impacts to benthic community health include, but are not limited to Superfund, Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) or Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA).

**Potential Data Sources**

- Ohio EPA ICI data
- Ohio EPA Mayfly data
- Other Mayfly data
- Other ICI and qualitative Level 3 Credible Date (e.g., data collected by state certified data collectors or federal agencies)
- US EPA, Ohio EPA sediment data

**Rationale**

The Ohio Water Quality Standards (WQS; Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3745-1) consist of designated uses and chemical and biological criteria designed to represent measurable properties of the environment that are consistent with the narrative goals specified by each use designation. Use designations consist of two broad use groups: aquatic life (i.e., aquatic community status) and human life (i.e., water supply, recreational use).

Every named waterbody in Ohio has an assigned aquatic use designation and there are target biological criteria for each use designation. The biocriteria for waterways are codified in the Ohio WQS.

Chemical and/or biological criteria are generally assigned to each use designation in accordance with the broad goals defined by each. This constitutes a “tiered” approach in that varying and graduated levels of protection are provided by each criterion. This hierarchy is especially apparent for the biological criteria. The aquatic life use criteria frequently control the resulting protection and restoration requirements as an emphasis on protecting aquatic life generally results in water quality suitable for all uses. This is why the aquatic life use criteria are emphasized in Ohio EPA biological and water quality reports (see Appendix B).

When measuring the status of this BUI, the quantitative Invertebrate Community Index (ICI) and the qualitative narrative evaluations should be used to assess the macroinvertebrate community characteristics.

Qualitative narrative macroinvertebrate sampling based on Ohio EPA protocol does not yield a numeric value. Since a large number of the sites only have qualitative narrative data for macroinvertebrates, a numeric equivalent has been outlined for each narrative value. The table below should be used to make a narrative to numeric conversion. Once converted, the numeric value should be averaged with any other qualitative and quantitative data for an overall assessment unit average; resulting in one value for determining status for that assessment unit.

<b>Qualitative Macroinvertebrate Narrative Conversion</b>	
<b>Narrative Evaluation</b>	<b>Equivalent Value for Averaging Narratives</b>
Exceptional	46
Very Good	42
Good	34
Marginally Good/Moderately Good	30
Fair	21
Non-significant Departure/Low Fair	13
Poor	8
Very Poor	6

The quantitative ICI is a multi-metric index patterned after an original Index of Biological Integrity (IBI) for fish communities described by Karr (1981) and Fausch et al. (1984). The ICI was developed by Ohio EPA and further described by DeShon (1995). There are no differences in ICI criteria between the two ecoregions where Ohio’s AOCs are located – EOLP and HELP. Ohio EPA has determined non-significant departure for EWH and WWH from ICI values to be 4 points. The ICI values for the tributaries are considered biological water quality criteria and adopted in the State WQS. Currently, there are no WQS for ICI in Modified Warmwater Habitat (MWH) or Limited Resources Waters (LRW) but benchmarks or narrative values were used as a basis for the BUI restoration targets in riverine and lacustrine waters.

In addition to the river habitat areas, two other zones exist – the area where the river the lake water mix and Lake Erie shoreline. The Lake Erie Shoreline Area designation applies to areas of open waters/bays where the water depth is equal to or less than three meters. This area was previously referred to as the Nearshore Area; however, Ohio EPA has modified how its monitors/measures Lake

Erie and its bays. Ohio EPA refers to the area where the river and lake mix as a lacustrary (combination of the terms lacustrine and estuary). The lacustrary areas could also be described as drowned river mouths (lake water flows into the river essentially “drowning” the river mouth). There are no differences in lacustrary ICI (L-ICI) guidelines between the two ecoregions – EOLP and HELP. A non-significant departure value for L-ICI has not yet been determined. (see Appendix B for more detail and a description of lacustraries within Ohio’s AOCs). Since a shoreline ICI (LE-ICI) has not been developed, an evaluation of *Hexagenia* (burrowing mayfly nymphs) should be used as a BUI restoration target for shoreline areas.

The restoration target for this BUI was developed from WQS and guidance for macroinvertebrate community evaluation, but the restoration targets are not the same as the WQS or guidance. These differences include: 1) the non-significant departure values were used to set the restoration target (where appropriate) and 2) metric scores are averaged across an assessment unit for each aquatic life use. Additional information on how to calculate the average index value for comparison to the restoration target follows.

For the purpose of this restoration target, the ICI values should be averaged across a designated assessment unit. If a single assessment unit has multiple criteria that apply to that unit (e.g., wading, boating, lacustrary), then the unit should be evaluated in segments based on each criteria. For consistency with other Ohio EPA programs, it is recommended that 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) be used. Each AOC’s site conditions will need to be evaluated using the lacustrary evaluation guidance but will need to consider its applicability and if local targets will need to be established or how and/or if conditions are similar to regional conditions. RAPs may elect to use an alternate assessment unit, provided the proposed assessment unit will result in an equivalent evaluation of the conditions and Ohio EPA concurs with that determination.

The calculated average value for an assessment unit needs to meet the restoration target set for ICI and L-ICI for this BUI to be removable for that assessment unit. The calculated average value of each assessment unit in the AOC needs to meet the restoration target value in order for the BUI to be removable for the AOC. Assessment unit averages should NOT be averaged to determine BUI impairment status for an AOC.

Ohio AOC Program recommends the following guidelines for averaging data:

1. If multiple assessments were conducted at an individual site during a single year or field season, the results should be evaluated to determine an annual average for each individual site. Otherwise, use the most current data available for each site, collected within the last 10 years.
2. The averages for individual sites (as calculated in #1) should be combined with other sites within the same assessment unit to determine the overall average value for the assessment unit. The overall assessment unit average can be based on data from different years as long as all data is no older than 10 years.

For BUI restoration target assessments, if any single ICI sample is 50% or less of the target or any single narrative is “Very Poor”, then the whole assessment unit may be considered impaired. These conditions may be indicative of a hotspot being present and additional investigation and, potentially, restoration actions may be needed. If a sampling site significantly lowers the assessment unit average

due to site conditions that are not representative of the assessment unit (i.e., highway interchange) or are highly impacted by the surrounding land use that will likely not be removed/altered (i.e., commercial development), then that site should not prohibit this BUI from being removed. Instead, these sites may be removed from the status determination data set and a new status will be calculated without these non-representative, non-restorable sites included.

For shoreline areas (e.g., open water areas, bays), the status of the BUI should be measured using the population density of *Hexagenia* (burrowing mayflies) nymphs in the spring prior to “hatching”. In Ohio, this is applicable only to the Maumee AOC. Measuring a “moving” average is more likely than individual yearly averages to reflect long-term changes in water and sediment quality. In addition, because three-year moving averages appear to reveal the underlying long-term trend in population density, they, rather than annual averages, should be used to determine the extent to which the *Hexagenia* metric is attaining the target density (Kreiger, 2004).

Based on studies of the Lake Erie Western Basin, it is believed that the *Hexagenia* densities between 201 and 300 should be scored as “Excellent” and then bracketed above and below by two separate ranges of densities between 101 to 200 and 301 to 400 that should be scored as “Good.” That is, a low density of mayflies will not sustain the Lake Erie fishery, but high densities of mayflies indicate over-enrichment and potential dissolved oxygen problems. For the purpose of this restoration target, the desired population density is between 101 and 400 nymphs /m<sup>2</sup>, with the ideal range between 201 and 300 (Kreiger, 2004).

Ohio’s BUI restoration target for the Degradation of Benthos includes multiple pathways for removal. The first pathway utilizes an established comprehensive multi-metric set of indices (ICI, L-ICI) for evaluating the health of the macroinvertebrate community. The second pathway is only applicable in the open waters of Maumee Bay within the Maumee AOC. This pathway is based on the density of the *Hexagenia* (burrowing mayflies) nymphs. Both of these pathways are described above and are applicable to those areas that do not have an impairment due to contamination in sediments.

The third pathway, added in version 3.0 (2017) of this Guidance, addresses areas where chemical contamination in sediments has been identified as the primary cause of the impaired benthos in those areas. This BUI removal pathway recognizes that each contaminated sediment project will have project-specific remedial goals for contaminated sediments. After remedial actions to achieve remedial goals have been implemented, the primary cause of the BUI impairment in that area will have been addressed. However, the recovery of the benthic communities to the level necessary to achieve the restoration target may take an extended period of time. That extended period should not preclude the removal of the Degradation of Benthos BUI in areas where contaminated sediments have been addressed. Therefore, when a remedial action to address sediment contamination has been completed in accordance with its approved plan and confirmed with applicable post-remedy confirmation sampling to verify that a contaminated sediment project’s remedial goals have been achieved to the extent practicable, this BUI can be considered restored provided the areas where contaminated sediment were not the primary cause also meet their respective BUI restoration target.

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## BUI 7: Restrictions on Navigational Dredging Activities

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when contaminants in sediments exceed standards, criteria or guidelines such that there are restrictions on dredging or disposal activities.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

Contaminants in sediment exceed sediment quality guidelines used by the State such that there are restrictions on navigational dredging or disposal activities.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

There are no restrictions on navigational dredging or disposal activities due to contaminants in sediment, such that there are suitable options available for reuse or disposal of the material.

#### Notes

- This BUI specifically addresses areas within the authorized federal navigation channels that have been routinely dredged.
- Navigational dredging refers to dredging of a federally designated ship channel and routinely dredged stretches of a river to enable the passage of commercial and/or recreational vessels.
- Restrictions of disposal activities refer to the prohibition of disposal or re-use of dredged materials due to chemical contamination or biological toxicity of the sediment.
- This does not include the maintenance dredging of private marinas, slips, docks, etc. However, if sediment contaminant concentrations in these areas are a source of contamination that precludes attainment of remedial dredging goals of federally designated ship channels and historically dredged stretches of a river, then dredging of private marinas, slips, docks, etc. may be considered.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio EPA, U.S. EPA, and/or U.S. Army Corps of Engineers sediment characterization studies
- Other sediment characterization studies

## Rationale

This BUI specifically addresses areas within the federally designated ship channels and that have been routinely dredged to maintain navigable depths for commercial and/or recreational vessels. While this beneficial use addresses restrictions on dredging or disposal activities, the following are not considered a failure to meet suitable options for beneficial use:

- 1) Precautionary seasonal restrictions on dredging to prevent real or anticipated impacts to spawning fish, avian or macroinvertebrate species is not considered to be a cause for impairment;
- 2) Local restrictions due to local detrimental effects of the dredging operation (increased turbidity, noise, channel restrictions, etc.) are not considered to be a cause for impairment for this BUI; and
- 3) If sediment reuse or disposal is restricted solely due to volume, this beneficial use would not be considered to be impaired.

In previous versions of this Guidance, Ohio relied on suitability of dredged sediments for open lake disposal as the BUI restoration target. The suitability for open lake disposal was selected as a measure of sediment quality since Ohio did not have sediment criteria and open lake disposal was considered the least restricted form of disposal at the time. Since this target was originally drafted and implemented back in 2005, Ohio has developed alternative options for Lake Erie dredged sediment beneficial use. In 2015, Ohio prohibited the practice of open lake disposal (Ohio Revised Code Section 6111.32, effective July 1, 2020) with a few limited exceptions.

In 2017, Ohio developed beneficial use rules authorizing the upland beneficial use of Lake Erie dredge sediment. (Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) Chapter 3745-599, effective March 31, 2019) The rules address individual and general beneficial use permit requirements including the establishment of screening levels, restrictions, or standards. (OAC 3745-599-200, -310 and -320) To evaluate this BUI, Ohio will compare dredged sediment data to a number of standards and screening levels, including 1) the residential and/or industrial soil U.S. EPA Regional Screening Levels (RSLs) and 2) information regarding ambient background conditions for the upland beneficial use of dredged sediment. If the material would be found suitable for upland beneficial use of the dredged sediment based on the two above evaluation methods, then the restoration target for this BUI will be met.

An alternate evaluation method for achieving the restoration target for this BUI is related to the aquatic beneficial use of dredged sediment such as in-water habitat restoration projects. Placement of material into 'waters of the state' requires a Federal Water Pollution Control Act certification under section 401 from the state of Ohio. To evaluate this BUI, Ohio will evaluate applicable chemical and biological data in accordance with the 401 certification process, such that the dredged sediments would be suitable for in-water use. If the material would be permissible for aquatic beneficial use for dredge sediment based on the 401 certification process, then the restoration target for this BUI has been met.

Additional conditions that may be considered in determining the status of this BUI include:

- Effectiveness and extent of improvements from remedial activities that have been completed and/or,
- Ecological screening levels and any associated restrictions and/or,
- Associated dredge material management plans and navigation dredging permits that will continue to monitor navigational dredging activities, if applicable.

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## BUI 8: Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when there are persistent water quality problems (e.g., dissolved oxygen depletion of bottom waters, nuisance algal blooms or accumulation, decreased water clarity) attributed to cultural (human-induced) eutrophication.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

The beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

Dissolved oxygen levels do not meet minimum criteria established in Ohio Water Quality Standards (WQS) for the stream segment of concern, and the cause is due to excessive nutrient loading or excessive levels of oxygen demanding substances; **AND/OR**

Nutrients entering the waters as a result of human activity create nuisance growths of aquatic weeds or algae (Ohio WQS, Chapter 3745-1 of the Ohio Administrative Code – see Appendix A)

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

#### For Riverine waters (upstream of lacustrary or freshwater estuary):

If no persistent nuisance growth of algae, such as filamentous *Cladophora*, or blooms of blue-green algae have been documented within the last three years due to sources of nutrients from within the AOC.

#### For Lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary):

In the lacustrine waters of the mainstem of the Maumee River, Black River, Cuyahoga River, and Ashtabula River and of Maumee Bay the seasonal average dissolved oxygen value within an assessment unit meets the OMZA criteria listed in the Ohio WQS, Chapter 3745-1 (See Appendix A for more information);

Dissolved Oxygen Restoration Targets	
Designated Use	OMZA <sup>1</sup> (mg/L)
EWB	6.0
WWH	5.0
MWH	4.0
LRW	3.0
Federally Designated Shipping Channels	NA

<sup>1</sup> OMZA = outside mixing zone average defined as the minimum twenty-four-hour average.

#### **AND**

No persistent nuisance growth of algae, such as filamentous *Cladophora*, or blooms of blue-green algae have been documented within the last three years due to sources of nutrients from within the AOC.

**Notes**

- Water quality problems due to nutrient loadings originating outside of the AOC will not be considered a BUI impairment and will be addressed by other programs as described in the rationale.
- Persistent algal growths are considered to be those that occur frequently (annually, multiple times during the season) and that impact the public use of the river.

**Data Sources**

- Ohio EPA water quality surveys
- Other local or federal surveys

**Rationale**

Eutrophic waters can represent a natural stage in the aging of a water body. For example, as a lake fills in it becomes shallower, warmer and more susceptible to supporting excessive growths of aquatic vegetation and algae. However, in many cases, the eutrophication process is accelerated by human activities that cause increased nutrient and sediment loading. Eutrophication is considered a BUI impairment if it is caused by human activity. Eutrophication directly impacts several BUIs, including BUI 9 (Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste & Odor Problems), BUI 10 (Beach Closings), BUI 11 (Degradation of Aesthetics), and BUI 13 (Degradation of Plankton Populations). In general, all algae related issues should be addressed by this BUI unless there are BUI-specific targets (e.g., beach advisories due to algal toxins).

Nutrient enrichment is a major water quality problem in Ohio and throughout the nation. While efforts to control nutrient enrichment over the past 40 years have yielded some positive results, current evidence shows the need to develop new solutions and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of existing strategies to reduce nutrient in our waterways. Nutrient pollution is caused by an excess of phosphorus and/or nitrogen in the aquatic environment. Excess nutrients in the aquatic environment can cause algal blooms that are larger in volume, and occur with greater frequency and duration, than they would in an environment without excess nutrients. The Ohio 2024 Integrated Report (Ohio EPA, 2024) lists nutrients as one of the leading causes of impairment to rivers and streams in Ohio, with 48% of listed waters impaired entirely, or in part, by nutrients.

Recently, Lake Erie has experienced a resurgence of harmful algal blooms of blue-green algae impacting both the Western and Central Basin waters. Ohio Phosphorus Taskforce Phase I Report (2010) concluded that there are multiple contributors to phosphorus into Lake Erie.

Considering the significant State and Federal initiatives underway to address nutrient runoff, restoration efforts under the AOC Program should be focused on local sources of impairment. State and federal governments have launched a number of voluntary and regulatory programs and investments to address nutrient management. Ohio EPA and the Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources released the Ohio Nutrient Reduction Strategy in June 2013. The Strategy provides a comprehensive picture of nutrient management activities for both point and nonpoint sources in Ohio. The Ohio Domestic Action Plan was completed in 2023 and supports the 2019 H2Ohio initiative to reduce nutrient loading to Lake Erie Basin by 40% of the 2008 load, focusing on wetland restoration, agricultural best management practices, and watershed planning to combat harmful

algal blooms (OLEC, 2023). Additionally, the Maumee River Nutrient TMDL was finalized in 2023 (Ohio EPA, 2023). The goal of the TMDL is to remove impairments to drinking water, aquatic life, and recreational uses in Ohio's western Lake Erie assessment units due to harmful algal blooms (HABs) by planning reductions in the phosphorus load delivered to the Maumee watershed.

To assess nutrient impacts to aquatic use in streams, Ohio EPA initially developed a Trophic Index but is now pursuing a Stream Nutrient Assessment Procedure [SNAP]. Therefore, until this methodology is finalized the restoration target for the riverine areas will rely on the narrative condition described above. Once the new nutrient assessment procedure is finalized and adopted, Ohio EPA will review the restoration target for this BUI and consider revisions as appropriate.

Eutrophication can be a localized problem in certain segments of streams that may be downstream sources of high levels of nutrients (either point or nonpoint), loadings of oxygen demanding substances or in areas of little circulation and low flow. In some areas, the natural stream channel has been dredged and deepened to accommodate shipping or recreational boating. These areas may become stagnant and have occasional algal blooms. The bloom may be primarily due to the altered morphology and deepened section rather than ongoing, egregious nutrient impairments. However, should the opportunity arise to alter the stream morphology back to a more natural state, the AOC should encourage this option.

Exceptions for the dissolved oxygen criteria are included in OAC 3745-1-26 (updated 2021) for the LRW waters identified as the Cuyahoga River ship channel (river mile 5.6 @ the Newburgh and South Shore RR Bridge to the Cleveland harbor portion of Lake Erie). According to the rule, "the physical habitat of the channel and the prevailing background dissolved oxygen regime are insufficient to support any resemblance of the warmwater habitat aquatic life use designation. A use attainability analysis has been conducted and indicated that the extant fauna is substantially degraded and the potential for recovery of the fauna to the level characteristic of other Lake Erie river mouth is precluded by irretrievable human induced conditions. However, the ship channel is used by fish as a migratory route in the spring months. This seasonal and stream flow related uses shall be recognized and protected through this rule." The section E(3)(a) of the rule describes the following exception related to dissolved oxygen, "The limited resource water dissolved oxygen criterion shall be 1.5 mg/L minimum. No dissolved oxygen average criteria apply." Section E(5) states "These standards reflect the desire for restoring and maintaining multiple uses of the ship channel expressed by the Cuyahoga River Remedial Action Plan Coordinating Committee. All parties, private and public, who contribute to the dissolved oxygen problem may share responsibility in the study and attainment of these standards. The dissolved oxygen criteria established in paragraph I(E)(3) of this rule are intended to be the minimum planning targets for the remedial action planning process to use in evaluating beneficial use restoration."

Based on the Cuyahoga rule, we believe it is appropriate to utilize the Cuyahoga River shipping channel dissolved oxygen criteria as the BUI restoration target for the federally designated shipping channels in the Black River, Maumee and Ashtabula River AOCs.

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Ohio EPA. 2013. Ohio Nutrient Reduction Strategy. (Available at: [https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/wqs/ONRS\\_final\\_jun13.pdf](https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/wqs/ONRS_final_jun13.pdf))

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## BUI 9: Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste & Odor Problems

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when treated drinking water supplies are impacted to the extent that:

- 1) Densities of disease-causing organisms, concentrations of hazardous or toxic chemicals, or radioactive substances exceed human health standards, objectives or guidelines; **OR**
- 2) Taste and odor problems are present; **OR**
- 3) Treatment needed to make raw water suitable for drinking is beyond the standard treatment (i.e., settling, coagulation, disinfection) used in comparable portions of the Great Lakes which are not degraded.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if any of the following apply and are due to degradation of surface water raw water quality caused by contaminant sources or activities from within the AOC:

- 1) Any chronic advisories or restrictions to drinking water consumption are imposed by the Ohio EPA, the Ohio Department of Health, or the community water system, **AND/OR**
- 2) Additional treatment beyond "standard" is necessary to remove pathogens, hazardous or toxic chemicals, or radioactive substances, to make raw water suitable for human consumption. This includes taste and odor, if the additional treatment is specifically necessary to control taste and odor problems, **AND/OR**
- 3) Chronic taste and/or odor complaints have been documented by the water system operator and are due to human activities within the AOC and not the result of treatment processes (e.g., chlorination.)

#### Notes

- Any water consumption advisories imposed due to water line breaks, equipment failures, or operator error would not be considered an impairment.
- Surface water sources (rivers, lakes and streams) are, by definition, open systems and can be subject to periodic adverse conditions. Occasional taste or odor complaints will not constitute an impairment unless they are determined to be chronic.
- Ohio EPA staff should be consulted to assist with evaluation of whether taste and/or odor complaints are chronic and represent an impairment of this BUI.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

No chronic consumption advisories or taste or odor complaints in the finished water, due to degradation of raw water quality caused by contaminant sources or activities within the AOC, for any community water system using standard or conventional treatment and drawing water from within the AOC.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio Integrated Water Quality Report
- State of Ohio Drinking Water Advisories for Public Water Systems
- Data or reports from Ohio public water systems

## Rationale

According to the IJC Listing Guidelines, an impairment for this beneficial use considers human health issues related to treated drinking water as well as the aesthetics (taste/odor) of the treated drinking water. Drinking water that is completely safe for human consumption may not be palatable for drinking because of taste or odor. Also, of concern to the IJC is the use of treatment techniques beyond what is considered standard (settling, coagulation, disinfection). It is extremely important to note that all water systems getting their water from a surface water source must include the filtration of that surface water. Filtration may not be considered standard by the IJC guidelines but is required treatment even for systems utilizing a pristine stream as the raw water source (OAC 3745-81-73).

### For State of Ohio Drinking Water Advisories:

Drinking water advisories issued by Ohio EPA and/or a community public water system are one of the key indicators of impairment for this BUI. All community public water systems in Ohio are regulated by the Ohio EPA, according to the Safe Drinking Water Act, and must submit regular reports of treated water quality to the Ohio EPA. When evaluating the advisories, consideration should be given to the severity/duration and the underlying cause of the restriction or advisory (*i.e., was the restriction or advisory issued because of a raw water quality problem that originated within the AOC?*).

### For Indicators of Taste and Odor Problems:

There are finished water standards (Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels) for taste related compounds and odors although very few water systems currently conduct odor threshold monitoring and taste is very subjective to the consumer. The best measures to evaluate taste and odor for this BUI are the number of citizen complaints which are tracked by the water system and the cause and duration of those taste and odor problems.

## References

Hartig, J., D. Rathke, D. Williams. 1990. How Clean is Clean in the Great Lakes Areas of Concern? - Report from the 1988 IAGLR Symposium. J. Great Lakes Res. 16(1):169-179.

International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA_2012.pdf))

IJC. 1991. Commission approves list/delist criteria for Great Lakes Areas of Concern. Focus on IJC Activities, Volume 16, Issue 1. ISSN 0832-6673. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/201903/WQB\\_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC\\_March1991.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/201903/WQB_CommissionApprovesList%26DelistCriteriaforGLAOC_March1991.pdf))

Ohio Administrative Code 3745-81-73 (Requires water systems that use a surface water source to provide conventional filtration, direct filtration, slow sand filtration or other filtration technology.)

Restoring United States Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the United States Policy Committee Dec. 6, 2001

## BUI 10: Beach Closings (Recreation Use)

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when waters, which are commonly used for total-body contact or partial-body contact recreation, exceed standards, objectives, or guidelines for such use.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if any of the following occur:

#### Public Bathing Beaches:

Bathing beach advisories are posted for more than 10 percent of the recreational season due to bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) OR advisories are posted for more than 10 percent of the recreational season due to algal toxins. **OR**

#### Primary Contact Recreation (Paddling Streams):

Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails, or formerly designated Paddling Streams, that are within the AOC are included on Ohio's most recent Clean Water Act Section 303(d) list of impaired waters for recreational use due to bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) AND combined sewer overflows (CSOs) are either not present or not being addressed. **OR**

#### Chemical Contaminant (all waters):

A state or local government agency has issued a warning to avoid contact with the water due to the presence of a chemical of concern, such as PCB or PAH.

#### Note

- Ohio's water quality standards define the recreation season as May 1 through October 31, though Lake Erie beach monitoring typically is focused between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. The recreation season applies only to the public bathing beaches and designated Water Trails/Paddling Streams, not the Chemical Contaminant condition.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use shall be considered restored when the following conditions are met for public bathing beaches, designated paddling streams and chemical contaminant contact advisories:

#### Public Bathing Beaches:

This BUI will be considered restored when posted contact advisory days due to bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) do not exceed 10 percent (or 19 days) of the recreation season; AND posted recreational public health advisory days due to algal toxins do not exceed 10 percent (or 19 days) of the recreation season. This target must be met in 3 out of the most recent 5 years; **OR**

In cases where public bathing beaches within the AOC have posted contact advisory days for either bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) or algal toxins that exceed 10 percent of the recreation season and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are the primary cause, the BUI will be considered

restored when the bacterial impacts from CSOs are being addressed under an approved long-term control plan or other legally-binding document.

#### **Primary Contact Recreation (Paddling Streams):**

No Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trail, or formerly designated Paddling Stream, within the AOC is included on Ohio's most recent 303(d) list of impaired waters due to bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) **OR**

If an Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trail, or formerly designated Paddling Stream, within the AOC is on the list of non-attaining waters because of bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) and the presence of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are the primary cause, this BUI will be considered restored when the bacterial impacts from CSOs are being addressed under an approved long-term control plan or other legally-binding document; **AND**

If an Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trail, or formerly designated Paddling Stream, within the AOC is on the list of non-attaining waters because of bacterial contamination (*E. coli*) and the presence of non-point source pollution is the primary cause, this BUI will be considered restored when a TMDL is approved and the State and RAP can document that the level of bacterial contamination is not significantly worse than similar watersheds.

#### **Chemical Contaminant (all waters):**

No local or state contact advisories related to the presence of a chemical contaminant exist.

#### **Notes**

- In Ohio, locally identified and planned water trails have been designated by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources. These trails are widely used for paddling and have been designed to enhance public access and paddling safety. These Water Trail segments are defined by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources and, in most cases; do not include the entirety of any Ohio AOC.
- In Ohio, popular paddling streams with identified public access points were formerly designated by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources as Paddling Streams (Appendix D). This designation extends from the most upstream identified public access point to the mouth. These paddling stream segments are defined by the Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources and, in most cases; do not include the entirety of any Ohio AOC. The Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources no longer recognizes the paddling streams definition, but they may still be used for the purpose of this BUI evaluation.
- For beaches, bacteriological sampling data may be used in lieu of advisory data if sampling was conducted 7 days per week during the entire sampling season. Exceedances of the Beach Action Value will be counted as Advisory Days if using bacteriological sampling data.
- The recreational season is designated as May 1 to October 31.

#### **Potential Data Sources**

- Ohio EPA and other local bacteria surveys
- Ohio EPA CSO/SSO database

- State and local algal toxin monitoring/contact advisory postings
- Ohio BeachGuard website
- Ohio EPA Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) data
- Local Long-Term Control Plan computer modeling or Ohio EPA TSD/TMDL modeling

## Rationale

Based on the IJC listing guideline, it is appropriate and protective of human health to include both public beaches and primary contact recreation waters. Ohio water quality standards for recreational use have changed since the previous targets were written; therefore, this target has been updated to reflect these changes. The AOC targets are directly tied to the advisories, so if the water quality standards used to list the advisories change, the BUI target is still viable.

Either Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails or formerly designated Paddling Streams may be used in relation to the Primary Contact (Paddling Streams) target (Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources, 2026). The designation that includes the greatest length of stream miles within the AOC boundary should be used.

When determining the status of the Algal Toxin Target condition it should be noted that once there is an exceedance of the cyanotoxin recreational threshold, a contact advisory is posted. It requires two consecutive weeks (14 days) below that threshold to remove a contact advisory. For purposes of calculating the number of advisory days, use the follow guidance:

- If the last weekly sample collected for a recreational season warrants an advisory, then 2 weeks (14 days) should be added to the total number of advisory days for that season or the number of days to the end of the recreational season, whichever is less.
- If the second to last weekly sample collected for a recreational season warrants an advisory and the last weekly sample does not, then 1 week (7 days) should added to the total number of advisory days for that season or the number of days to the end of the recreational season, whichever is less.
- If data is not collected weekly, but shows a decline below threshold with subsequent samples, then 14 days should be added to the last date of exceedance or the number of days to the end of the recreational season, whichever is less.

This BUI should be applied only to public bathing beaches, including inland lake public beaches that are routinely monitored, and Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails/Paddling Streams, as these are the areas that Ohio has determined to be heavily used or could support frequent primary contact activities. Appendix D contains a list of public bathing beaches and designated Paddling Streams and Water Trails in each AOC where this BUI applies.

Combining Ohio EPA's comprehensive stream monitoring and local health department monitoring data provides a comprehensive look at bacteria levels in waters across the AOCs and the state. Bacterial contamination represents a pervasive statewide problem and one that is exacerbated by weather. For example, in the 2024 Ohio Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report (which contains the 303(d) list of impaired waters), only 6.3% of Lake Erie beaches and 3.5% of watershed assessment units (streams and rivers) attained the Recreation Use. Ohio has also

completed a number of TMDLs to address bacteria impairments and additional assessments will be required in the future.

Sources of bacteria can include package plants, Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs), home sewage treatment systems (HSTs), commercial on-site systems, land application of organic materials, storm water, concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) and other livestock operations, and permitted wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs). These sources are present across Ohio AOCs, and the tools to manage and address each source range from regulatory to voluntary actions.

An evaluation of failing HSTs in Ohio provides an illustration of how many of these sources are not unique to AOCs but represent basin-wide or statewide issues. According to the Ohio Department of Health Report (June 2025): *Household Sewage Treatment System Failures in Ohio*, approximately 14% of all household sewage treatment systems throughout the state are failing to some degree. This report provides a summary of local health department survey responses for the 2022-2023 Clean Watershed Needs Survey.

The 2014 revised restoration targets for this BUI were designed to identify sources of contamination within the AOCs that represent extraordinary problems that can be addressed through implementation at the local level. It is also important to recognize the numerous ongoing efforts to address these widespread issues including Ohio's TMDL program, local health department efforts to identify and upgrade or replace failing septic systems, targeted state funding and programs to address unsewered areas, and non-point source reduction programs. Additionally, communities have made tremendous investments to address storm water and correct CSO/SSO issues and will continue to reduce sources of contamination as long-term control plans are implemented.

Ohio's BUI Restoration Target for this BUI includes multiple conditions. Some conditions have multiple pathways for removal. If the primary cause of the impairment is believed to be due to CSOs or non-point sources of pollution, this cause must be documented before this pathway to BUI removal can be used. Ohio EPA and the local advisory committee will need to support the cause identification via computer modeling, or through other evidence, that clearly states and fully explains the cause of the impairment. Once the issue has been documented as the primary cause, and an approved LTCP or approved TMDLs are in place to address the issue, this BUI can be considered restored for this condition.

## References

International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA_2012.pdf))

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Lake Erie Lakewide Management Plan (LaMP) 2000, 2002, 2004. Lake Erie LaMP Work Group. (Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/greatlakes/lake-erie-lamps#basics>)

Ohio Department of Health. Beach Monitoring Results. (Available at: <https://odh.ohio.gov/know-our-programs/bathing-beach-monitoring>)

Ohio Department of Health Report (January 2013): Household Sewage Treatment System Failures in Ohio.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Lake Erie Basin Paddling Stream Maps. Accessed October 2015.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources. 2026. Ohio Water Trails. (Available at: <https://ohiodnr.gov/discover-and-learn/land-water/rivers-streams-wetlands/ohio-water-trails>)

Ohio EPA. Ohio Water Quality Standards. Chapter 3745-1-37 of the Ohio Administrative Code. Effective 2/6/2017. (Available at: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/chapter-3745-1>)

Ohio EPA. 2012. Ohio Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report. (Available at: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/surface-water/reports-data/ohio-integrated-water-quality-monitoring-and-assessment-report>)

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State of Ohio. 2020. Harmful Algal Bloom Response Strategy for Recreational Waters. (Available at: <https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/image/upload/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/hab/HABResponseStrategy.pdf>)

USEPA. 2002. Great Lakes Strategy 2002: A Plan for the New Millennium.

## BUI 11: Degradation of Aesthetics

### IJC Listing Guideline

When any substance in water produces a persistent objectionable deposit, unnatural color or turbidity, or unnatural odor (e.g., oil slick, surface scum).

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

Ohio has not established numeric criteria that directly relate to this BUI. Based on Ohio water quality criteria applicable to all waters (OAC 3745-1-04, sections A-C), this beneficial use shall be listed as impaired when human activity routinely causes any of the following persistent conditions:

- Sludge deposits
- Oil sheens, scum and other objectionable materials
- Materials that produce color, odor, or other nuisances.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

If there are no observed ongoing occurrences of sludge deposits, oil sheens, scum and other objectionable materials; specifically, materials that produce color, odor, or other nuisances, then this BUI may be considering restored. **OR**

If there are observed ongoing occurrences and Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) are a significant cause of aesthetic impairments but the CSOs are being addressed under an approved long-term control plan or other legally-binding document, then this BUI may be considered restored. Where long-term remedies may take several years to be fully implemented, it may be necessary to develop short-term control strategies. **AND/OR**

If there are observed ongoing occurrences and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) are a significant cause of aesthetic impairments but the MS4 is regulated under an NPDES Permit or other legally-binding document, this BUI may be considered restored.

#### Notes

- Aesthetic impairments due to algae or excessive nutrient loading will be addressed under BUI 8.
- Natural physical features (e.g., woody debris, logjams, rootwads) and excessive turbidity following storm events or due to agricultural activities are not considered an impairment under this BUI.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio EPA water quality surveys
- Local water quality surveys or reports
- Ohio EPA or local CSO discharge reports
- U.S. Coast Guard spill reports

## Rationale

The Degradation of Aesthetics Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) is more subjective than the other beneficial use impairments. The targets listed above were developed to address aesthetic conditions that interfere with public access or use of the water. OAC 3745-1-04 is provided in Appendix A.

Many of the persistent conditions identified in the listing guideline can be attributed to the presence of active Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). Combined sewers were built to collect sanitary and industrial wastewater, as well as storm water runoff, and transport this combined wastewater to treatment facilities. During dry weather, they are designed to transport all flow to the treatment plant. When it rains, the volume of storm water and wastewater may exceed the capacity of the combined sewers or of the treatment plant. When this happens, the combined sewers are designed to allow a portion of the combined wastewater to overflow into the nearest ditch, stream, river or lake. This is a combined sewer overflow (CSO). Ohio's CSO universe consists of 88 communities, ranging from small, rural villages to large metropolitan areas. Of those, 16 have separated their sewers and eliminated their CSOs. The remaining 72 CSO communities in Ohio have about 1,055 known CSOs. (August 2020). In 1994, U.S. EPA published the national CSO Control Policy. Working from the national policy, Ohio EPA issued its CSO Control Strategy in 1995. The primary goals of Ohio's Strategy are to control CSOs so that they do not significantly contribute to violations of water quality standards or impairment of designated uses and to minimize the total loading of pollutants discharged during wet weather.

Ohio EPA continues to implement CSO controls through provisions included in NPDES permits and using orders and consent agreements when appropriate. The NPDES permits for our CSO communities require them to implement nine minimum technology-based controls to address CSO problems before long-term measures are taken. USEPA provides a number of CSO-related guidance documents, including one for the Nine Minimum Controls (<https://www.epa.gov/npdes/npdes-cso-guidance-documents>).

Requirements to develop and implement Long Term Control Plans (LTCPs) are also included where appropriate. In 2007, U.S. EPA adopted a new definition for the Water Safe for Swimming Measure (SS-1), which sets goals to address the water quality and human health impacts of CSOs. The new definition sets a goal of incorporating an implementation schedule of approved projects into an appropriate enforceable mechanism, including a permit or enforcement order. Ohio currently meets the SS-1 definition for 96% of its active CSO communities (August 2020).

Another existing mechanism to address storm water debris and other contaminants is regulation through the MS4 program. Polluted storm water runoff is commonly transported through Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s), which often discharge untreated waters into local water bodies. Regulated MS4s need to prevent harmful pollutants, litter and other debris from being washed or dumped into local waterbodies. Jurisdictions must obtain a NPDES permit and develop a storm water management program. One of the requirements is to develop and implement a storm water management program (SWMP) to reduce the contamination of storm water runoff and prohibit illicit discharges.

If the RAP identifies debris or other objectionable materials as the primary cause of aesthetic impairment under this BUI, a debris harvester, a regularly scheduled clean-up effort, or other short-

term collection or prevention program may be utilized to address the BUI until a LTCP has been approved and substantial implementation is underway.

Degradation of aesthetics due to excessive nutrient and eutrophication are addressed under BUI 8 (Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae). It is important to acknowledge that aesthetics is very subjective and the public will perceive conditions and impaired use differently, based on expectations and experience. It will be important for the AOC Program to consider multiple lines of evidence for restoration of this beneficial use, including U.S. Coast Guard Spill Reports, Ohio EPA TSD reports and other data sets to document that any degraded conditions are not chronic, are not caused by local sources, or are no worse than the average Lake Erie watershed.

## References

International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [www.ijc.org/en\\_/Great\\_Lakes\\_Water\\_Quality](http://www.ijc.org/en_/Great_Lakes_Water_Quality))

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Ohio EPA. Ohio Water Quality Standards. Chapter 3745-1-04 of the Ohio Administrative Code. (Available at: <https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-administrative-code/rule-3745-1-04>)

Restoring United States Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the United States Policy Committee Dec. 6, 2001.

## BUI 12: Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when there are additional costs required to treat the water prior to use for agricultural purposes (i.e., including but not limited to, livestock watering, irrigation and crop-spraying) or industrial purposes (i.e., intended for commercial or industrial applications and non-contact food processing).

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

- 1) Additional costs are incurred by the user to treat the water from the AOC prior to use for agricultural purposes (i.e., including but not limited to, livestock watering, irrigation and crop-spraying) and the additional treatment is due to persistent water quality problems resulting from human activities within the boundaries of the AOC. **AND/OR**
- 2) Additional costs are incurred by the user to treat the water from the AOC for industrial purposes (i.e., intended for commercial or industrial applications and non-contact food processing) and the need for the additional treatment is due to persistent water quality problems resulting from human activities occurring within the boundaries of the AOC.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

No additional costs (due to human activities within the AOC) are necessary to treat water from the AOC prior to agricultural, commercial or industrial use.

#### Potential Data Source

- Local survey of agricultural and industrial water users

## Rationale

The potential uses of water for agricultural, commercial and industrial purposes can cover a wide range of possibilities and, therefore, a wide range of treatment options, and finally a wide range of treatment costs. Additional treatment must be due to persistent water quality problems and due to human-related activities within the AOC. Only one of Ohio's RAPs has identified this beneficial use as impaired in their AOC. This target only applies to the Ottawa River in the Maumee AOC.

## References

Hartig, J., D. Rathke and D. Williams. 1990. How Clean is Clean in the Great Lakes Areas of Concern? - Report from the 1988 IAGLR Symposium, J. Great Lakes Res. 16(1):169-179.

International Joint Commission. 2012. Protocol Amending the Agreement Between Canada and the United States of America on Great Lakes Water Quality, 1978, as Amended on October 16, 1983 and on November 18, 1987. (Available at: [https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA\\_2012.pdf](https://www.ijc.org/sites/default/files/2018-07/GLWQA_2012.pdf))

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Restoring United States Areas of Concern: Delisting Principles and Guidelines. Adopted by the United States Policy Committee Dec. 6, 2001.

## BUI 13: Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when phytoplankton and zooplankton community structure significantly diverges from un-impacted control sites of comparable physical and chemical characteristics. In addition, this use will be considered impaired when relevant, field-validated, phytoplankton or zooplankton bioassays (e.g. Ceriodaphnia, algal fractionation bioassays) with appropriate quality assurance/quality controls confirm toxicity in ambient waters.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:  
The fish community assessment indicates impairment.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

Ohio EPA considers this BUI to be related to bays and/or lakes rather than streams; thus, it applies only to Maumee Bay in the Maumee AOC and is not applicable to other Ohio AOCs. This use will be considered restored for Maumee Bay when BUI 3 is not impaired for fish populations in Maumee Bay.

#### Note

- Aesthetic impairments due to algae or excessive nutrient loading are addressed under BUI 8.

#### Potential Data Sources

- Ohio EPA biological surveys
- Ohio EPA Lake Erie nearshore assessments
- Other local or federal surveys

## Rationale

Plankton are small organisms, both plants (phyto-) and animals (zoo-), that live in the water column. They possess limited or no ability to swim against currents but move with the water. Periphyton are organisms that are attached to underwater surfaces and therefore, by definition, are not considered to be plankton. Phytoplankton forms the base of the aquatic food web. Much of the energy captured by phytoplankton is consumed by zooplankton that, in turn, are eaten by larger organisms such as larger zooplankton, benthos and fish. The beneficial use of plankton communities is the conversion of solar energy to chemical energy (biomass), the incorporation of nutrients into biomass and the conveyance of these materials to normal, diverse fish and wildlife communities, and ultimately to human populations. In order to function most efficiently in this role, the plankton community must be balanced and adaptive to change. An impairment would be a decrease in the ability of the plankton communities to perform these functions.

Aquatic ecosystems require a diverse and healthy plankton community as virtually all species of fish feed on plankton as some point in their life cycle. The restoration target for this BUI utilizes fish community indices (via BUI 3) as a surrogate for plankton population health since direct indicators for

plankton communities are not currently available. It is assumed that waters achieving the target biological indices for fish are supported by a healthy and diverse lower trophic level, including plankton.

There are natural annual cycles for plankton within a healthy waterbody with boom and bust periods where diatoms, blue-green algae, green algae and zooplankton dominate. The presence of nuisance plankton populations, such as blue-green algal blooms, are common in the Maumee Bay and other bays and lakes and will be addressed under BUI 8 (Eutrophication and Undesirable Algae).

We intend to continue listing the status of this BUI as “Not Applicable” for both riverine and lacustrine waters as is the case with the Ashtabula, Black and Cuyahoga River AOCs. Maumee Bay in the Maumee AOC is the only area that should be evaluated for this BUI.

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## BUI 14: Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat

### IJC Listing Guideline

An impairment will be listed when fish and wildlife management goals have not been met as a result of loss of fish and wildlife habitat due to perturbation in the physical, chemical or biological integrity of the Boundary Waters, including wetlands.

### State of Ohio Listing Guideline

This beneficial use shall be listed as impaired if:

#### For Fish:

Biological surveys report that the average score for a 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed) are in departure from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for habitat.

#### For Wildlife:

The wildlife population component of BUI #3 is impaired and insufficient or poor quality habitat is identified as the cause of that impairment. If the wildlife component of BUI 3 (Fish and Wildlife Populations) is not designated as impaired, then this beneficial use should not be listed as impaired.

### State of Ohio Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

#### For Fish (aquatic habitat):

In the riverine areas upstream from the lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), the average Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI) value within an assessment unit do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for habitat. **AND**

In lake affected waters (lacustrary or freshwater estuary), the average Lacustrary Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (L-QHEI) or Shoreline Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (LE-QHEI) values do not significantly diverge from the State of Ohio's BUI Restoration Targets for habitat (See Appendix B for additional detail information and lacustrary/nearshore locations in each AOC).

Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI) Restoration Targets				
Site Type	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>1</sup>
Riverine – headwaters	70	55	43	NA
Riverine	75	60	45	NA
Lacustrary <sup>2</sup> (L-QHEI)	55	55	NA	NA
Shoreline (LE-QHEI)	50	50	NA	NA

<sup>1</sup> For LRW waters, a QHEI evaluation is not applicable. See Rationale for details.

<sup>2</sup> For the lacustrary areas, a L-QHEI  $\geq 55$  is considered an acceptable target (Thoma, 2006 and personal communication with Roger Thoma, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> For the shoreline areas, a LE-QHEI  $\geq 50$  is considered an acceptable target (Thoma, 2006).

**For Wildlife (terrestrial and wetland habitat):**

If the AOC is not impaired for the Wildlife Populations component of BUI 3 then it will be considered “not impaired” for the Wildlife Habitat component of BUI 14. **OR**

If the AOC is impaired for Wildlife Populations component of BUI 3 and insufficient or poor quality habitat is identified as the cause, then the following targets applies:

- At least 10% terrestrial habitat land cover (NLCD classes: forest, shrubland, and herbaceous upland)
- At least 2% wetland habitat land cover (NLCD classes: woody and emergent wetlands)

**Note**

- Assessment units for the fish habitat are the 12-digit HU, Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) or other agreed upon stream segment or subwatershed. For the wildlife habitat, the AOC should be evaluated as a whole.

**Potential Data Sources**

- Ohio EPA QHEI data
- National Land Cover Database

**Rationale**

Habitat can be defined as the natural ecological conditions in which organisms live and reproduce. Habitat is also the interaction between numerous environmental factors, such as but not limited to, temperature, moisture, availability of food, and security from predation. Any disruption of a single factor or combination of factors can cause dire impacts to the quality of habitat for native species.

The IJC listing guideline states that there should be no loss of habitat for either fish or wildlife due to disproportionate or undue alterations in the chemical, physical or biological components of the waters of the AOC, including wetlands. Many Great Lakes states, including Ohio, have also emphasized terrestrial wildlife habitat quality issues, in addition to the impacts to the “waters of the AOC” identified by the IJC. For the purpose of evaluating this BUI, habitat has been sub-divided into three general categories: aquatic, terrestrial and wetland.

**For Fish (aquatic habitat) Assessment:**

The Ohio Water Quality Standards (WQS; Ohio Administrative Code Chapter 3745-1) consist of designated uses and chemical and biological criteria designed to represent measurable properties of the environment that are consistent with the narrative goals specified by each use designation. Use designations consist of two broad use groups: aquatic life (i.e., aquatic community status) and human health (i.e., water supply, recreational use). Every named public waterbody in Ohio has an assigned aquatic use designation and there are target biological criteria for each use designation. The biocriteria for waterways are codified in the Ohio WQS.

The Lake Erie watershed falls within two ecoregions – geographic regions with unique ecological characteristics. These are the Erie/Ontario Lake Plain (EOLP) and the Huron/Erie Lake Plain (HELP). Chemical and/or biological criteria are generally assigned to each use designation in accordance with the broad goals defined by each. This constitutes a "tiered" approach in that varying and graduated levels of protection are provided by each criterion. This hierarchy is especially apparent for the

biological criteria. The aquatic life use criteria frequently control the resulting protection and restoration requirements as an emphasis on protecting aquatic life generally results in water quality suitable for all uses. This is why the aquatic life use criteria are emphasized in Ohio EPA biological and water quality reports (see Appendix A).

When measuring the status of this BUI, the Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI), Lake Quality Habitat Evaluation Index (L-QHEI) or Nearshore Quality Habitat Evaluation Index (N-QHEI) are used to assess habitat quality. The QHEI, L-QHEI, and N-QHEI are multi-metric indices. There are no differences in index values between the two ecoregions where Ohio's AOCs are located - EOLP and HELP. All QHEI values are considered to be guidance as they have not yet been finalized or adopted in the Ohio WQS but represent a level of aquatic habitat that does not limit fish population quality.

For LRW waters, a QHEI evaluation is not applicable. LRW designations are waters that have been found to lack the potential for any resemblance of any other aquatic life habitat as determined by the biological criteria through a use attainability analysis such that the extant fauna is substantially degraded and that the potential for recovery of the fauna to the level characteristic of any other aquatic life habitat is realistically precluded due to natural background conditions or irretrievable human-induced conditions.

In addition to the river habitat areas, two other zones exist – the area where the river the lake water mix and Lake Erie shoreline. The Lake Erie Shoreline Area designation applies to areas of open waters/bays where the water depth is equal to or less than three meters. This area was previously referred to as the Nearshore Area; however, Ohio EPA has modified how its monitors/measures Lake Erie and its bays. Ohio EPA refers to the area where the river and lake mix as a lacustrary (combination of the terms lacustrine and estuary). The lacustrary areas could also be described as drowned river mouths (lake water flows into the river essentially “drowning” the river mouth). A methodology to conduct a QHEI along the Lake Erie shoreline (LE-QHEI) and in the lacustrary areas (L-QHEI) has been developed, but no quality assessment tiering system has been formally defined in WQS.

The L-QHEI and LE-QHEI values for the lacustraries and shoreline areas are guidance and have not yet been finalized or adopted into State rules. However, based on previous Ohio EPA work, an L-QHEI of  $\geq 55$  or a LE-QHEI  $\geq 50$  are considered the point at which fish communities can attain warmwater habitat criteria and should be considered an acceptable BUI restoration target for these waters (Thoma, 2006 and personal communication with Roger Thoma, 2013). Each AOC's site conditions will need to be evaluated using the lacustrary evaluation guidance but will need to consider its applicability and if local targets will need to be established or how and/or if conditions are similar to regional conditions. Guidance on conducting QHEI's in this area and background data is available from Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water. Appendix B provides additional detail and a description of lacustraries.

The restoration target for this BUI was developed from WQS and guidance for habitat evaluation, but the restoration targets are not the same as the WQS or guidance. These differences include: 1) the non-significant departure values were used to set the restoration target (where appropriate) and 2) metric scores are averaged across an assessment unit for each aquatic life use. Additional

information on how to calculate the average index value for comparison to the restoration target follows.

For the purpose of this restoration target, the QHEI values should be averaged across a designated assessment unit. If a single assessment unit has multiple criteria that apply to that unit (e.g. free-flowing areas, lacustrary), then the unit should be evaluated in applicable segments, based on each criteria. For consistency with other Ohio EPA programs, it is recommended that 12-digit HU or Large River Assessment Unit (LRAU) be used. Local Advisory Committees may elect to use an alternate assessment unit, provided the proposed assessment unit will result in an equivalent evaluation of the conditions and AOC Program concurs with that determination.

The calculated average value for an assessment unit needs to meet the restoration target value set for QHEI, L-QHEI and LE-QHEI for this BUI to be removable for fish habitat in that assessment unit. The calculated average value of each assessment unit in the AOC needs to meet the restoration target value in order for the BUI to be removable for the AOC. Assessment unit averages should NOT be averaged to determine BUI impairment status for an AOC.

Ohio EPA recommends the following guidelines for averaging data:

1. If multiple assessments were conducted at an individual site during a single year or field season, the results should be evaluated to determine an annual average for each individual site unless the assessments were conducted prior to and after riverbank activities, like determining the effectiveness of riverbank habitat improvements. In these situations, the most current assessment data should be used.
2. The averages for individual sites (as calculated in #1) should be combined with other sites within the same assessment unit to determine the overall average value for the assessment unit. The overall assessment unit average can be based on data from different years as long as all data is no older than 10 years.

For BUI restoration target assessments, if any single QHEI sample is 50% or less of the target or any single narrative is "Very Poor," then the whole assessment unit may be considered impaired. These conditions may be indicative of a hotspot being present and additional investigation and, potentially, restoration actions may be needed. If a sampling site significantly lowers the assessment unit average due to site conditions that are not representative of the assessment unit (i.e., highway interchange) or are highly impacted by the surrounding land use that will likely not be removed/altered (i.e., commercial development), then that site should not prohibit this BUI from being removed. Instead, these sites may be removed from the status determination data set and a new status calculated without these non-representative, non-restorable sites included.

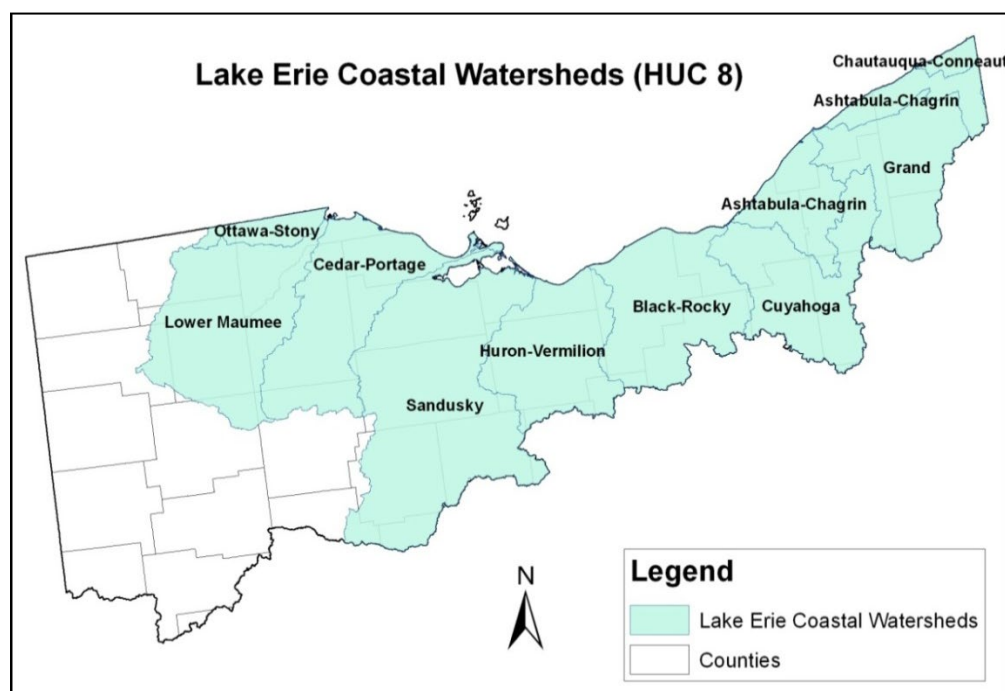
#### **For Wildlife (terrestrial and wetland habitat) Assessment:**

In order to produce healthy wildlife populations, wildlife ecosystems require diverse and healthy habitats. While aquatic habitat assessment methodologies have been a proven tool in monitoring aquatic habitat potential, little data is available on terrestrial, or amphibian habitat evaluations associated with the water resource. The restoration target for the wildlife habitat component of this BUI now considers this linkage and utilizes wildlife population measures (via BUI 3) as a surrogate for an initial assessment of wildlife habitat quality since direct indicators for non-aquatic habitat are not

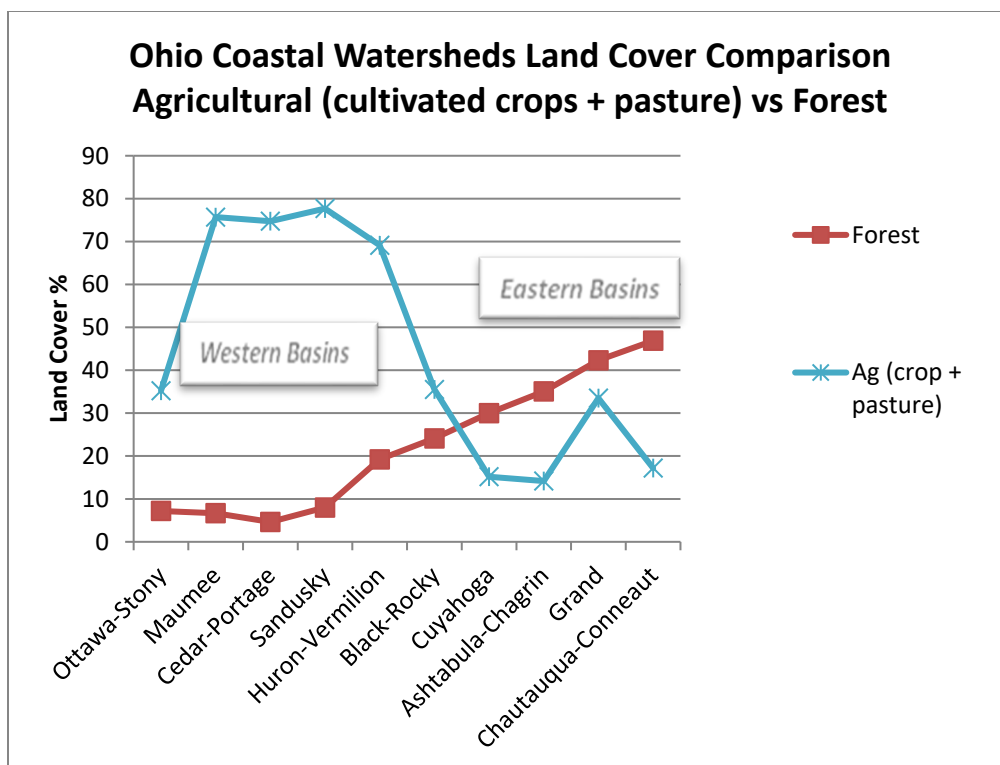
currently available. If there is no impairment for the wildlife component of BUI 3, it is assumed that habitat quality is sufficient and wildlife habitat would not be considered to be impaired.

If the wildlife population component of BUI 3 is listed as impaired and degraded or insufficient habitat is the cause of the impairment, the wildlife component of this BUI should be listed as impaired and Ohio RAP organizations should utilize indirect assessments through the use of land cover type for measuring progress toward and removal of this impairment.

Ohio EPA evaluated the 2006 National Land Cover Database (NLCD 2006) to identify regional land cover percentages in the Lake Erie coastal watersheds as designated by the 8-digit HU boundaries. Across the Ohio Lake Erie watershed, land use percentages vary widely from east to west. Prior to European settlement, much of the Ohio Lake Erie basin was heavily forested except for the western parts where the Great Black Swamp was located. Over time, many forests were cleared and wetlands were drained to facilitate the industrialization of cities and industries and to provide agricultural land. In Ohio's Lake Erie watersheds, industrialization mainly occurred around the mouths of major rivers but the more western watersheds experienced extensive conversion of forests and expansive tracts of wetlands to agricultural land. Figure 2 below shows Ohio's Lake Erie coastal watersheds. Figure 3 illustrates a comparison between cultivated land cover and forested land cover in these watersheds.



**Figure 2. Lake Erie Coastal Watersheds**



**Figure 3. Land Cover Comparison (Agricultural vs. Forest) in Ohio Lake Erie Coastal Watersheds**

As shown in Figure 3, the land cover percentages for forest and agricultural use are similar at the Black-Rocky watershed. This shows that across the Ohio Lake Erie basin, the Black-Rocky HUC-8 basin is the transition point where predominantly forested watersheds change to predominantly agricultural watersheds. The eastern watersheds average 32.5% forested cover and 25.1% agricultural (cultivated crops and pasture/hay). The western watersheds average only 8.8% forested cover but 74.0% agricultural (cultivated crops and pasture/hay).

Although the Black River AOC had previously listed the wildlife habitat component of this BUI as impaired, the wildlife population component of BUI #3 is not listed as an impairment, therefore sufficient habitat is present in the Black River AOC to sustain healthy and reproducing wildlife populations. Consequently, based on this target, the only Ohio AOC now impaired for wildlife habitat is the Maumee AOC. In order to determine background land use numbers for this AOC, the land cover in the western coastal HUC-8 watersheds was evaluated to develop sub-regional targets. Sub-regional target development was necessary due to the disparity of land uses across the greater Ohio Lake Erie basin region.

The BUI 14 Wildlife Habitat target is based on the presence of two categories of land use cover: Terrestrial Habitat Cover and Wetland Habitat Cover. The Terrestrial Habitat Cover target incorporates the sum of 3 forest and 2 shrubland/herbaceous upland cover types and their land use percentages within the Lake Erie coastal watersheds into a combined target category called Terrestrial Habitat Cover.

The sum of the 8 wetland classifications and their use percentages within the Lake Erie coastal watersheds are combined into a target category called Wetland Habitat Cover. The Wildlife Habitat restoration targets were created based on the NLCD 2006 land cover averages for the Western Lake Erie Coastal watersheds and are summarized in Table 2 for both Terrestrial and Wetland Habitat Cover.

Wetlands serve as both aquatic and terrestrial habitats, and a certain amount of acreage is critical for watershed health. Higher quality wetlands are also desirable as measured by the Ohio Rapid Assessment Method and as compared to Ohio wetland standards. Wetland acreage lost in Ohio has been extensive as these lands were drained and/or filled to accommodate human development and agricultural needs. It has been widely documented that 90% of Ohio's original wetlands have disappeared. Of particular concern is the loss of much of the Great Black Swamp, mostly located in northwest Ohio. The Great Black Swamp at about 5000mi<sup>2</sup> was once about the size of Connecticut or roughly about 10% of the landmass of the state of Ohio. Today, only about 5%, or 250 mi<sup>2</sup>, of the original Great Black Swamp remains. Protection of remaining wetlands in these areas as well as the whole of the state of Ohio should be a high priority.

**Table 2. Land Cover Targets for Western Basin AOCs**

Cover Type, in %	Western Basin AOC Targets
<b>Wetland Habitat Cover BUI Removal Target (all types)</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Terrestrial Habitat Cover BUI Removal Target</b> <i>(sum of Forest and Shrubland and Herbaceous Upland Cover)</i>	<b>10%</b>
- Forest (all types)	9%
- Shrubland and Herbaceous Upland	1%

In addition to developing fish and wildlife habitat, it is important to ensure that reasonable protection is in place for existing unimpacted habitat areas, followed by restoration or rehabilitation of degraded habitat areas. The beneficial use restoration process should include a maintenance plan to reduce the risk of future degradation. Adjacent land use practices can have considerable impact on water quality and habitat.

The development of the greater Lake Erie basin has caused fish and wildlife habitat areas to suffer. As development pressures increase, more aquatic, terrestrial and wetland habitats will be impacted, but the state strives to limit those impacts or it allows for mitigation of those impacts. A moratorium on future development or returning developed lands to pristine conditions is not, nor can it be, the goal in restoring this beneficial use. Ohio's restoration targets were designed to provide a realistic goal that considers current land use and the needed balance between future development and preservation/restoration of natural habitats.

Most wildlife populations and habitat goals set by wildlife managers are typically based on areas much larger than the AOC boundaries. Each RAP will have to establish a vision for their aquatic, terrestrial and wetland habitats that can be achieved in their AOC based on original habitat, amount

and type of habitat that has been irreplaceably lost, how their AOC may fit into the larger regional picture for such things as importance of a migratory corridor or important bird area, and what can reasonably be protected or restored.

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## Local Target for Maumee AOC BUI 14b: Loss of Wildlife Habitat

*(approved by Maumee AOC Advisory Committee on August 11, 2016)*

*(accepted by Ohio EPA as functionally equivalent to State Target on September 13, 2016)*

### Maumee AOC BUI 14b Wildlife Habitat Restoration Target

This beneficial use will be considered restored when the following conditions are met:

#### For Wildlife Habitat:

The Maumee AOC has at least 10% terrestrial & 2% wetland habitat land cover, which Ohio EPA has calculated as 3,427 acres.

(NLCD classes include: Terrestrial - forest, shrubland, herbaceous upland, Wetland - woody wetland, emergent wetland)

#### With the following local specifications for the Maumee AOC:

- The total acres needed to fulfill the target can be achieved with projects in either terrestrial or wetland land use areas.
- The total acres needed to fulfill the target can be achieved with either restoration or enhancement projects; not just projects that change land use classification.

#### Notes

- The NLCD was used to set this target. Based on NLCD 2011, Ohio EPA determined that 3,427 acres are needed to achieve this target in the Maumee AOC.
- The Maumee AOC is listed for both the fish and wildlife components of BUI 14 and is the only Ohio AOC listed for the wildlife component of this BUI.

#### Potential Data Sources

- National Land Cover Database
- Regional GIS-based projects, local restoration plans, field studies
- GLRI-funded and implementer project lists/records

### Rationale

According to the *Delisting Guidance and Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern* (Jan. 2016) for BUI 14b, “Most wildlife population and habitat goals set by wildlife managers are typically based on areas much larger than the AOC boundaries. Each RAP will have to establish a vision for their aquatic, terrestrial and wetland habitats that can be achieved in their AOC based on original habitat, amount and type of habitat that has been irreplaceably lost, how their AOC may fit into the larger regional picture for such things as importance of a migratory corridor or important bird area, and what can reasonably be protected or restored. “

Similar to the statewide target, the Maumee AOC BUI 14b Restoration Target is focused on protection, enhancement and restoration of wetland and terrestrial uplands. For purposes of this target, the MAAC defines these conditions as follows:

- **Protection** –All projects must have some reasonable assurance of protection through at least 2025 or 5 years post-implementation otherwise enhancement and restoration activities may not be long lasting. Examples of protection may include acquiring existing natural areas to prevent development, acquiring altered lands to be restored, or adding environmental covenant to deeds.
- **Enhancement** – Improving land with poor quality wildlife habitat (i.e., Category 1 wetland) to higher quality wildlife habitat (i.e., Category 2 or 3 wetland). Examples include infrastructure updates (i.e., improving water control structures, dikes, etc.) and invasive species management within existing, protected, natural habitats.
- **Restoration** –Transforming altered land (i.e., row crop fields, urban development) that provides little to no wildlife habitat to natural land cover that provides wildlife habitat, including terrestrial or wetland land cover. Examples include breaking drainage tiles, diking fields, and/or contouring land to create wetlands.

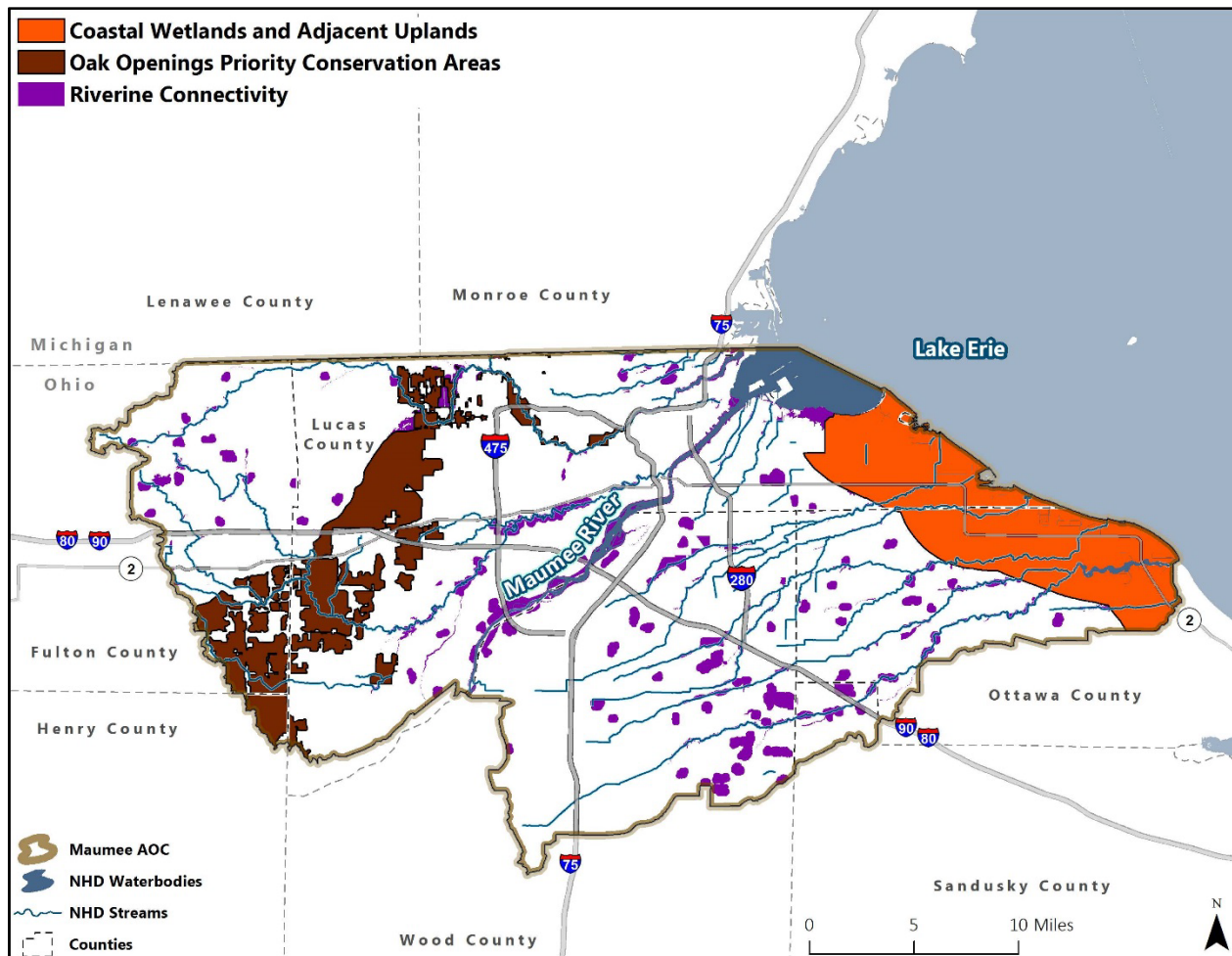
As one of the largest AOCs with the most degraded wildlife habitat, the Maumee AOC will need extensive resources to make measurable improvements. In order to maximize these resources, the time and money must be directed to those areas that have some reasonable level of protection or assurance that enhancement and restoration efforts will not be promptly undone. In particular, those areas that allow for coordinated implementation, long-term management, improved quality and function, and connectivity will be prioritized.

For the purposes of this BUI, the Maumee AOC has been divided into spatially discrete restoration critical areas or sub-regions that recognize that wildlife and their associated habitat vary considerably across the Maumee AOC. By targeting conservation actions within these priority sub-regions, resources can be more efficiently used to protect the unique plants and animals of the region. Three sub-regions have been defined: Coastal Wetlands & Adjacent Uplands, Oak Openings, and Riverine Connectivity. Management Action Projects (MAP) will be primarily focused in the identified habitat critical areas/sub-regions of the Oak Openings and Coastal Wetlands of the Maumee AOC. In lieu of immediate projects in the Riverine Connectivity critical area/sub-region, habitat restoration plans will be created to identify where critically impaired areas exist, determine project needs and establish eligibility for future funding. These projects, in the Riverine Connectivity area are still vitally important to connect sub-regions, improve habitat and water quality, and continue to improve the diversity of plants, animals, and aquatic ecology but with reluctance, the MAAC recognizes that other funding and resources beyond the AOC program may be necessary to dramatically improve this sub-region.

Based on NLCD 2011, Ohio EPA determined that 3,427 acres are needed to achieve the state target in the *Delisting Guidance and Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern* (Jan. 2016) in the Maumee AOC. Local expertise in this AOC has identified significant errors in which the NLCD is not able to correctly classify the unique ecosystem nuances here, especially between some terrestrial and wetland sub-classes in the Oak Openings region. To account for this challenge, the MAAC is using the NLCD to set the broad acreage goal but has built within the target the flexibility to implement these acres within either terrestrial or wetland classes. With the minor allowances recommended by the MAAC to the state target, this AOC will have increased opportunities for project identification/implementation and more opportunities for project identification while improving natural land cover overall. Progress toward the target acreage will be tracked by the number of acres

enhanced or restored until the target is achieved. This approach allows for the removal of the BUI regardless of when the next NLCD dataset is released.

The Maumee AOC BUI 14b Restoration Target will not completely fix the degraded wildlife habitat problems of the AOC, but will improve the conditions of those essential, most critical areas while building momentum in a focused direction that is expected to continue after the BUI is removed; ultimately resulting in overall ecosystem restoration. The effort to achieve the BUI 14b Restoration Target will also further the ongoing successful efforts in the Oak Openings and Coastal sub-regions, while focusing improvements in those areas that have been traditionally neglected (Riverine Connectivity sub-region) and, therefore, need the most assistance.



## **Appendices**

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## **Appendix A: Ohio Water Quality Standards (Ohio Administrative Code 3745-1)**

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The OAC Chapter 3745-1 has been updated effective March, 2024. This appendix has been updated to reflect these changes. The OAC Chapter 3745-1 may have been updated since 2024 but may not be reflected in this Appendix... Water quality standards contain two distinct elements: designated uses and numerical or narrative criteria designed to protect and measure attainment of the uses. Rules 3745-1-01 to 3745-1-07 of the Ohio Water Quality Standards apply to all surface waters of the State of Ohio. Rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 define the use designations applicable to the river and stream segments around the state. Additional chemical-specific criteria applicable within the Lake Erie drainage basin are contained in rules 3745-1-31 and 3745-1-33. The water quality criteria applicable to a specific water body are determined by identifying the use designations assigned to that water body in Rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-31, then referring to Rule 3745-1-07 and 3745-1-35 for criteria protective of those use designations. The following are excerpts from OAC 3745-1.

### **3745-1-01 Purpose and Applicability**

(A) The purpose of these water quality standards, in this chapter, is to establish minimum water quality requirements for all surface waters of the state, thereby protecting public health and welfare; and to enhance, improve and maintain water quality as provided under the laws of the state of Ohio, section [6111.041](#) of the Revised Code, the federal Clean Water Act, and rules adopted thereunder.

(B) Whenever two or more use designations apply to the same surface water, the more stringent criteria of each use designation applies.

(C) These water quality standards apply to all surface waters of the state except as provided in paragraph (D), (E), or (F) of this rule. Compliance schedules may be granted pursuant to rule [3745-33-05](#) of the Administrative Code.

(D) These water quality standards do not apply to water bodies when the flow is less than the critical low-flow values determined in rule [3745-2-05](#) of the Administrative Code.

(E) General exceptions. The following exceptions apply only to the specific water quality criteria involved in each case for a reasonable period of time as determined by the director:

(1) Pesticide chemicals applied for control of aquatic plants or animals in the intended application area, if the following conditions are met:

(a) The pesticide is applied in accordance with label instructions.

(b) The pesticide is applied consistent with a national pollutant discharge elimination system (NPDES) permit, if an NPDES permit for the activity is in force.

(c) If an NPDES permit for the activity is not in force, notice must be given to the director if the proposed application is for any of the following:

- (i) Algae, weed, or nuisance animal control in public water supply reservoirs.
- (ii) Nuisance fish control.
- (iii) Algae, weed, or nuisance animal control in waters classified in rule [3745-1-05](#) of the Administrative Code as outstanding national resource waters, outstanding state waters, or superior high quality waters other than lake Erie.
- (iv) Algae or weed control in lake Erie done by aircraft.
- (v) Forest pest control.

The director, upon receiving such notice, may order that the chemicals not be applied if the director concludes that the proposed application would pose an unreasonable danger to human or aquatic life.

(2) Exceptions for water quality disturbance caused by construction activities. Temporary exceptions may apply whenever construction occurs on or near water bodies or during the period of time when the aftereffects of construction activities degrade water quality and such activities have been authorized by any of the following:

- (a) The United States army corps of engineers or by a section 401 water quality certification.
- (b) A state isolated wetland permit issued by the Ohio environmental protection agency.
- (c) A construction storm water permit for earth disturbing activities greater than one acre issued by the Ohio environmental protection agency.

(3) Whenever coal remining permits are issued pursuant to section 301(p) of the act. This exception applies to pH, iron and manganese for the duration of the remining activity. This exception applies only if: there is a demonstrated potential for improved water quality from the remining operation and no degradation of existing instream conditions occurs.

(F) Criteria and exceptions for dredging and depositing of dredged material. The following criteria and exceptions apply only to the specific water quality criteria involved in each case for a reasonable period of time as determined by the director:

(1) Criteria applied in lake Erie. The following criteria apply to dredging work associated with the regular maintenance of federal navigation channels and ports on lake Erie:

- (a) No modeled increase in "bioaccumulation" of a "bioaccumulative chemical of concern" as those terms are defined in rule [3745-1-02](#) of the Administrative Code as a result of the deposit of dredged material.
- (b) No deposit of dredged material unless the director authorizes the deposit of dredged material pursuant to division (C) of section [6111.32](#) of the Revised Code or makes a determination pursuant to division (E) of section [6111.32](#) of the Revised Code.

(2) Exceptions from other criteria. Temporary exceptions from criteria other than those found in paragraph (F)(1) of this rule may apply whenever dredging and depositing of dredged material occurs on or near water bodies or during the period of time when the aftereffects of dredging activities degrade water quality and such activities have been authorized by the United States army corps of engineers and by a section 401 water quality certification or state isolated wetland permit issued by the Ohio environmental protection agency.

(G) Temporary variances. The director may grant temporary variances from compliance with water quality criteria applicable by this chapter pursuant to rule [3745-1-38](#) of the Administrative Code.

### **3745-1-04 Criteria applicable to all waters**

*(This section is included in its entirety)*

The following general water quality criteria apply to all surface waters of the state including mixing zones. To every extent practical and possible as determined by the director, these waters shall be as follows:

(A) Free from suspended solids or other substances that enter the waters as a result of human activity and that will settle to form putrescent or otherwise objectionable sludge deposits, or that will adversely affect aquatic life.

(B) Free from floating debris, oil, scum and other floating materials entering the waters as a result of human activity in amounts sufficient to be unsightly or cause degradation.

(C) Free from materials entering the waters as a result of human activity producing color, odor or other conditions in such a degree as to create a nuisance.

(D) Free from substances entering the waters as a result of human activity in concentrations that are toxic or harmful to human, animal or aquatic life or are rapidly lethal in the mixing zone.

(E) Free from nutrients entering the waters as a result of human activity in concentrations that create nuisance growths of aquatic weeds and algae.

(F) Free from public health nuisances associated with raw or poorly treated sewage reaching surface waters of the state. A public health nuisance exists when the conditions set forth in paragraph (F)(1) of this rule are demonstrated.

(1) An inspection conducted by, or under the supervision of, Ohio EPA or a sanitarian registered under Chapter 4736. of the Revised Code documents both of the following:

(a) Odor, color or other visual manifestations of raw or poorly treated sewage.

(b) Water samples exceed one thousand thirty E. coli counts per one hundred milliliters in two or more samples when five or fewer samples are collected, or in more than twenty per cent of the samples when more than five samples are taken.

(2) Paragraph (F)(1) of this rule may be used by the appropriate authorities to document the existence of unsanitary conditions as described in section [6117.34](#) of the Revised Code, but does not preclude the use of other evidence of unsanitary conditions for the purposes described in section [6117.34](#) of the Revised Code.

(G) For the purposes of applying paragraph (F) of this rule the water samples shall be collected as follows:

(1) When flow is representative of steady state dry weather conditions, i.e., base flow or delayed flow.

(2) At least two hours apart.

(3) Over a time period not to exceed thirty days.

(H) Nothing in paragraph (F) or (G) of this rule limits or otherwise changes the applicability of paragraphs (A) to (E) of this rule.

### **3745-1-07 Water Use Designations and Statewide Criteria**

*(This section is NOT included in its entirety)*

(A) Water quality standards contain two distinct elements: designated uses; and numerical or narrative criteria designed to protect and measure attainment of the uses.

(1) Each water body in the state is assigned one or more aquatic life habitat use designations. Each water body may be assigned one or more water supply use designations and/or one recreational use designation. These use designations are defined in paragraph (B) of this rule. Water bodies are assigned use designations in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-32 of the Administrative Code. In addition, water bodies are assigned designations as described in paragraphs (B)(1)(a), (B)(1)(c), (B)(3)(a), (B)(4)(a) and (B)(4)(b) of this rule and in the antidegradation rule (rule 3745-1-05 of the Administrative Code).

(B) Use designations are defined as follows:

(1) Aquatic life habitat

(a) "Warmwater" - these are waters capable of supporting and maintaining a balanced, integrated, adaptive community of warmwater aquatic organisms having a species composition, diversity, and functional organization comparable to the twenty-fifth percentile of the identified reference sites within each of the following ecoregions: the interior plateau ecoregion, the Erie/Ontario lake plains ecoregion, the western Allegheny plateau ecoregion and the eastern corn belt plains ecoregion. For the Huron/Erie lake plains ecoregion, the comparable species composition, diversity and functional

organization are based upon the ninetieth percentile of all sites within the ecoregion. For all ecoregions, the attributes of species composition, diversity and functional organization will be measured using the index of biotic integrity, the modified index of well-being and the invertebrate community index as defined in "Biological Criteria for the Protection of Aquatic Life: Volume II, User's Manual for Biological Field Assessment of Ohio Surface Waters," as cited in paragraph (B) of rule 3745-1-03 of the Administrative Code. In addition to those water body segments designated in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-32 of the Administrative Code, all upground storage reservoirs are designated warmwater habitats. Attainment of this use designation (except for upground storage reservoirs) is based on the criteria in table 7-1 of this rule. A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.

- (b) "Limited warmwater" - these are waters that were temporarily designated in the 1978 water quality standards as not meeting specific warmwater habitat criteria. Criteria for the support of this use designation are the same as the criteria for the support of the use designation warmwater habitat. However, individual criteria are varied on a case-by-case basis and supersede the criteria for warmwater habitat where applicable. Any exceptions from warmwater habitat criteria apply only to specific criteria during specified time periods and/or flow conditions. The adjusted criteria and conditions for specified stream segments are denoted as comments in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 of the Administrative Code. Stream segments currently designated limited warmwater habitats will undergo use attainability analyses and will be redesignated other aquatic life habitats. No additional stream segments will be designated limited warmwater habitats.
- (a) "Exceptional warmwater" - these are waters capable of supporting and maintaining an exceptional or unusual community of warmwater aquatic organisms having a species composition, diversity, and functional organization comparable to the seventy-fifth percentile of the identified reference sites on a statewide basis. The attributes of species composition, diversity and functional organization will be measured using the index of biotic integrity, the modified index of well-being and the invertebrate community index as defined in "Biological Criteria for the Protection of Aquatic Life: Volume II, User's Manual for Biological Field Assessment of Ohio Surface Waters," as cited in paragraph (B) of rule 3745-1-03 of the Administrative Code. In addition to those water body segments designated in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-32 of the Administrative Code, all lakes and reservoirs, except upground storage reservoirs, are designated exceptional warmwater habitats. Attainment of this use designation (except for lakes and reservoirs) is based on the criteria in table 7-1 of this rule. A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.
- (b) "Modified warmwater" - these are waters that have been the subject of a use attainability analysis and have been found to be incapable of supporting and maintaining a balanced, integrated, adaptive community of warmwater organisms due to irretrievable modifications of the physical habitat. Such modifications are of a long-lasting duration (i.e., twenty years or longer) and may include the following examples: extensive stream

- channel modification activities permitted under sections 401 and 404 of the act or Chapter 6131. of the Revised Code, extensive sedimentation resulting from abandoned mine land runoff, and extensive permanent impoundment of free-flowing water bodies. The attributes of species composition, diversity and functional organization will be measured using the index of biotic integrity, the modified index of well-being and the invertebrate community index as defined in "Biological Criteria for the Protection of Aquatic Life: Volume II, User's Manual for Biological Field Assessment of Ohio Surface Waters," as cited in paragraph (B) of rule 3745-1-03 of the Administrative Code. Attainment of this use designation is based on the criteria in table 7-1 of this rule. Each water body designated modified warmwater habitat will be listed in the appropriate use designation rule (rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-32 of the Administrative Code) and will be identified by ecoregion and type of physical habitat modification as listed in table 7-1 of this rule. The modified warmwater habitat designation can be applied only to those waters that do not attain the warmwater habitat biological criteria in table 7-1 of this rule because of irretrievable modifications of the physical habitat. All water body segments designated modified warmwater habitat will be reviewed on a triennial basis (or sooner) to determine whether the use designation should be changed. A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.
- (c) "Seasonal salmonid" - these are rivers, streams and embayments capable of supporting the passage of salmonids from October to May and are water bodies large enough to support recreational fishing. This use will be in effect the months of October to May. Another aquatic life habitat use designation will be enforced the remainder of the year (June to September). A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.
- (f) "Coldwater" - these are waters that meet one or both of the characteristics described in paragraphs (B)(1)(f)(i) and (B)(1)(f)(ii) of this rule. A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.
- (i) "Coldwater habitat, inland trout streams" - these are waters which support trout stocking and management under the auspices of the Ohio department of natural resources, division of wildlife, excluding waters in lake run stocking programs, lake or reservoir stocking programs, experimental or trial stocking programs, and put and take programs on waters without, or without the potential restoration of, natural coldwater attributes of temperature and flow. The director shall designate these waters in consultation with the director of the Ohio department of natural resources.
- (ii) "Coldwater habitat, native fauna" - these are waters capable of supporting populations of native coldwater fish and associated vertebrate and invertebrate organisms and plants on an annual basis. The director shall designate these waters based upon results of use attainability analyses.
- (g) "Limited resource water" - these are waters that have been the subject of a use attainability analysis and have been found to lack the potential for any resemblance of

any other aquatic life habitat as determined by the biological criteria in table 7-1 of this rule. The use attainability analysis must demonstrate that the extant fauna is substantially degraded and that the potential for recovery of the fauna to the level characteristic of any other aquatic life habitat is realistically precluded due to natural background conditions or irretrievable human-induced conditions. For water bodies in the Lake Erie drainage basin, the designation of water bodies as limited resource waters shall include demonstrations that the "Outside Mixing Zone Average" water quality criteria and values and chronic whole effluent toxicity levels are not necessary to protect the designated uses and aquatic life pursuant to rule 3745-1-39 of the Administrative Code. All water body segments designated limited resource water will be reviewed on a triennial basis (or sooner) to determine whether the use designation should be changed. Limited resource waters are also termed nuisance prevention for some water bodies designated in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 of the Administrative Code. A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code. Waters designated limited resource water will be assigned one or more of the following causative factors. These causative factors will be listed as comments in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 of the Administrative Code.

- (i) "Acid mine drainage" - these are surface waters with sustained pH values below 4.1 s.u. or with intermittently acidic conditions combined with severe streambed siltation and have a demonstrated biological performance below that of the modified warmwater habitat biological criteria.
- (ii) "Small drainageway maintenance" - these are highly modified surface water drainageways (usually less than three square miles in drainage area) that do not possess the stream morphology and habitat characteristics necessary to support any other aquatic life habitat use. The potential for habitat improvements must be precluded due to regular stream channel maintenance required for drainage purposes.
- (iii) Other specified conditions.

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(C) Biological criteria presented in table 7-1 of this rule provide a direct measure of attainment of the warmwater habitat, exceptional warmwater habitat and modified warmwater habitat aquatic life uses. Biological criteria and the exceptions to chemical-specific or whole-effluent criteria allowed by this paragraph do not apply to any other use designations.

### 3745-1-35 Aquatic Life and Wildlife Criteria

(This section is included in its entirety)

Table 35-1. Statewide water quality criteria for the protection of aquatic life.

Chemical	Form	Units	IMZM	OMZM	OMZA
Ammonia-N (WWH)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-2	Table 35-5
Ammonia-N (EWH)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-3	Table 35-6
Ammonia-N (MWH)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-2	Table 35-7
Ammonia-N (SSH)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-4	a
Ammonia-N (CWH)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-4	Table 35-8
Ammonia-N (LRW)	T	mg/l	--	Table 35-2	--
Arsenic	D	µg/l	680	340	150
Arsenic	TR	µg/l	680	340	150
Chlorine	R	µg/l	--	19	11
(WWH,EWH,MWH,CWH)					
Chlorine (LRW)	R	µg/l	--	19	--
Chlorine (SSH)	R	µg/l	--	b	b
Chromium VI	D	µg/l	31	16	11
Cyanide (Lake Erie drainage basin)	free	µg/l	44	22	5.2
Cyanide (Ohio River basin WWH/EWH/MWH)	free	µg/l	92	46	12
Cyanide (LRW)	free	µg/l	92	46	--
Cyanide (SSH/CWH)	free	µg/l	45	22	5.2
Dieldrin	T	µg/l	0.47	0.24	0.056
Dissolved oxygen (WWH)	T	mg/l	--	4.0	5.0
Dissolved oxygen (EWH)	T	mg/l	--	5.0	6.0
Dissolved oxygen (MWH)	T	mg/l	--	3.0c	4.0
Dissolved oxygen (SSH)	T	mg/l	--	a	a
Dissolved oxygen (CWH)	T	mg/l	--	6.0	7.0
Dissolved oxygen (LRW)	T	mg/l	--	2.0	3.0
Dissolved solids	T	mg/l	--	--	1500d
Endrin	T	µg/l	0.17	0.086	0.036
Lindane	T	µg/l	1.9	0.95	--
Mercury	D	µg/l	2.9	1.4	0.77
Mercury	TR	µg/l	3.4	1.7	0.91
Parathion	T	µg/l	0.13	0.065	0.013
pH (WWH, MWH)	--	s.u.	--	--	6.5-9.0
pH (EWH, CWH)	--	s.u.	--	--	e
pH (SSH)	--	s.u.	--	--	a
pH (LRW)	--	s.u.	--	--	6.5-9.0f
Selenium	D	µg/l	--	--	4.6
Selenium	TR	µg/l	--	--	5.0
Temperature (WWH, MWH)	--	°F(°C)	--	Table 35-14	Table 35-14

Temperature (EWH, CWH)	--	°F(°C)	--	g	g
Temperature (SSH)	--	°F(°C)	--	a	a
Temperature (LRW)	--	°F(°C)	--	98(37)	94(34)

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1 D = dissolved; R = total residual; T = total; TR = total recoverable.

2 mg/l = milligrams per liter (parts per million); µg/l = micrograms per liter (parts per billion); s.u. = standard units; OF = degrees fahrenheit; OC = degrees celsius.

3 IMZM = inside mixing zone maximum; OMZM = outside mixing zone maximum; OMZA = outside mixing zone average.

4 This aquatic life habitat use designation is in effect only during the months of October to May.

5 For dissolved oxygen, OMZM means outside mixing zone minimum and OMZA means outside mixing zone minimum twenty-four-hour average.

6 These criteria are implemented by multiplying them by a translator approved by the director pursuant to rule 3745-2-of the Administrative Code.

7 These criteria apply in the absence of a translator approved by the director pursuant to rule 3745-2-04 of the Administrative Code.

8 These criteria are water hardness dependent. See table 35-9 of this rule.

9 These criteria are water pH dependent. See table 35-10 of this rule.

a This criterion is the same as that for the aquatic life use designation in effect June to September. See footnote 4.

b No chlorine is to be discharged.

c The dissolved oxygen minimum at any time criterion for modified warmwater habitats in the Huron/Erie lake plain ecoregion, as identified in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 of the Administrative Code, is 2.5 mg/l.

d Equivalent 25°C specific conductance value is 2400 micromhos/cm.

e pH is to be 6.5-9.0, with no change within that range attributable to human-induced conditions.

f Acid mine drainage streams over sandstone geotype are exempt from the pH criterion.

g At no time shall the water temperature exceed the temperature which would occur if there were no temperature change attributable to human activities.

## Appendix B: Ecoregional Biological Criteria

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Attainment and non-attainment of aquatic life use is determined by using biological criteria as outlined in Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3745-1-07. As of March, 2024, the OAC Chapter 3745-1 was updated. This Appendix has been updated to reflect these changes. The aquatic life uses found in Ohio's Areas of Concern are as follows.

*(This section is NOT included in its entirety)*

### **Warm Water Habitat (WWH)**

This use designation defines the “typical” warmwater assemblage of aquatic organisms for Ohio rivers and streams; this use represents the principal restoration target for the majority of water resource management efforts in Ohio.

### **Exceptional Warm Water Habitat (EWH)**

This use designation is reserved for waters which support “unusual and exceptional” assemblages of aquatic organisms which are characterized by a high diversity of species, particularly those which are highly intolerant and/or rare, threatened, endangered, or special status (i.e., declining species); this use designation represents a protection goal for water resource management efforts dealing with Ohio's best water resources. Biological criteria for EWH apply uniformly across the state.

### **Modified Warm Water Habitat (MWH)**

This use applies to streams and rivers which have been subjected to extensive, maintained, and essentially permanent hydromodifications such that the biocriteria for the WWH use are not attainable and where the activities have been sanctioned and permitted by state and/or federal law; the representative aquatic assemblages are generally composed of species which are tolerant to low dissolved oxygen, silt, nutrient enrichment, and poor quality habitat. Biological criteria for MWH were derived from a separate set of habitat modified reference sites and are stratified across five ecoregions and three major modification types: channelization, run-of-river impoundments, and extensive sedimentation due to non-acidic mine drainage.

### **Coldwater Habitat (CWH)**

This use is intended for waters which support assemblages of cold water organisms and/or those which are stocked with salmonids with the intent of providing put-and-take fishery on a year round basis which is further sanctioned by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife; this use should not be confused with the Seasonal Salmonid Habitat (SSH) use which applies to the Lake Erie tributaries which support periodic “runs” of salmonids during the spring, summer, and/or fall. No specific biological criteria have been developed for the CWH use although the WWH biocriteria are viewed as attainable for CWH designated streams.

**Limited Resource Water Habitat (LRW)**

This use applies to small streams (usually <3 sq. mi. drainage area) and other water courses which have been irretrievably altered to the extent that no appreciable assemblage of aquatic life can be supported. Such waterways generally include small streams in extensively urbanized areas, those which lie in watersheds with extensive drainage modifications, those which completely lack water on a recurring annual basis (i.e., true ephemeral streams), or other irretrievably altered waterways.

**Seasonal Salmonid Habitat (SSH)**

This use applies to rivers, streams and embayments capable of supporting the passage of salmonids from October to May and includes water bodies large enough to support recreational fishing. This use will be in effect from October to May. Another aquatic life habitat use designation will be enforced the remainder of the year (June to September). A temporary variance to the criteria associated with this use designation may be granted as described in paragraph (F) of rule 3745-1-01 of the Administrative Code.

The biological community performance measures that are used to determine attainment or non-attainment for each of these habitat types are the Index of Biotic Integrity (IBI) and the Modified Index of Well-Being (MIwb), both of which are based on fish community characteristics, and the Invertebrate Community Index (ICI) which is based on macroinvertebrate community characteristics. IBI and ICI are multi-metric indices patterned after an original IBI described by Karr (1981) and Fausch et al. (1984). The MIwb is a measure of the fish community abundance and diversity using numbers and weight information from a variety of Midwest Rivers (Gammon 1976, Gammon et al. 1981). The MIwb is a modification of the Index of Well-Being (IWB) and corrects the problem of relatively high scores at degraded sites. Thirteen highly pollution tolerant species, exotics and hybrids are eliminated from the numbers and biomass components of the IWB, but the tolerant and exotic species are included in the Shannon Index component of the MIwb calculations. The modification eliminates the undesired effect caused by high abundance (in both numbers and biomass) of tolerant species but retains the influence in the Shannon indices.

Attainment of an aquatic life use is “full” if all three of the above indices meet the applicable criteria, “partial” if at least one of the indices does not attain and performance does not fall below the fair category, and “non” if all indices either fail to attain or any index indicates a poor or very poor performance.

The quality of the physical habitat is evaluated using the Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index (QHEI) developed by Ohio EPA for streams and rivers in Ohio (Rankin 1989, Rankin 1995). Various attributes of the available habitat are scored based on the relative importance of each to the existence of viable, diverse aquatic faunas. Evaluations of the type and quality of substrate, amount of in-stream cover, channel morphology, extent of riparian canopy, pool and riffle development and quality, and stream gradient are among the metrics used to determine the QHEI score which generally ranges from 20 to 100 in Ohio.

The QHEI is used to evaluate the characteristics of a stream segment, as opposed to only the habitat characteristics of a single sampling site. As such, individual sites may have poorer physical habitat due to localized disturbances yet still support aquatic communities closely resembling those sampled

at adjacent sites with better habitat, provided that water quality conditions are not limiting. QHEI scores from hundreds of segments throughout the state have indicated that values greater than 60 are generally conducive to existence of warmwater faunas. Scores greater than 75 frequently typify habitat conditions that have the ability to support exceptional warmwater faunas.

The following table includes the IBI, ICI, MIwb, and QHEI criteria scores that have been set as BUI restoration targets. These scores are based on the aquatic life habitat use designation and the ecoregion for each stream. Ecoregions are classification of the landscape by region. They are large landscape areas defined by climate, physical characteristics of the landscape, and the plants and animals that are able to live there. Ecoregions contain many different physical settings and biological communities, which occur in predictable patterns (Land by the Lakes: Nearshore Terrestrial Ecosystems, Holland & Reid, 1997). Ohio's areas of concern are primarily included in two ecoregions: Huron-Erie Lake Plain (HELP) and Erie/Ontario Lake Plain (EOLP). Ohio's Areas of Concern and their relative location to each ecoregion can be seen in the map on the following page.

The river mouth areas of the streams present a transition zone between river habitat and lake habitat. For Lake Erie, these areas are typically drowned river mouths where lake and river waters mix, currents slow, and in many cases, have been artificially deepened for navigation. Ohio EPA refers to these areas as lacustuaries (a combination of the words lacustrine and estuary) or freshwater estuaries. The lacustuaries extend upstream approximately to the point where the river reaches lake level. Table B-2 lists the approximate boundaries of the lacustuaries for each of Ohio's AOCs. Because they represent a habitat different than both the river and the lake, Ohio EPA has developed separate sampling methods and biological indices for these areas. The L-QHEI was developed for lacustuary and nearshore habitat assessments. Based on extensive analyses conducted by OEPA (Thoma), an L-QHEI of 55 or greater is considered the point at which fish communities can attain warmwater habitat criteria (Thoma, 2006 and personal communication with Roger Thoma, 2013). The draft indices for the lacustuary and nearshore areas are presented in Table B-3 and should be considered guidance only. Background scores for each AOC are available from Ohio EPA.

**Table B-1. Stream Evaluation Criteria and Benchmarks by Ecoregion**

Index Type – Site Type	Erie/Ontario Lake Plain (EOLP)				Huron-Erie Lake Plain (HELP)			
	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>1</sup>	EWH	WWH	MWH	LRW <sup>1</sup>
<b>IBI – Headwaters</b>	50	40	24	18	50	28	20	18
<b>IBI – Wading*</b>	50	38	24	18	50	32	20	18
<b>IBI – Boat*</b>	48	40	24	16	48	34	20	16
<b>MIwb – Wading</b>	9.4	7.9	6.2	4.5	9.4	7.3	5.6	4.5
<b>MIwb – Boat</b>	9.6	8.7	5.8	5.0	9.6	8.6	5.7	5.0
<b>ICI</b>	46	34	22	8	46	34	22	8
<b>QHEI - Headwaters</b>	70	55	43	NA	70	55	43	NA
<b>QHEI</b>	75	60	45	NA	75	60	45	NA

\*Wading and boat refer to sampling methodology (i.e., wading in shallow water and use of a boat in deeper water)

<sup>1</sup> Limited Resource Waters (LRW) are benchmarks as there currently are no criteria in Ohio WQS.

**Table B-2. Delineation of Lake Erie Lacustuaries (freshwater estuaries)<sup>#</sup>**

Stream	Lacustuary Length (Miles) <sup>#</sup>	Stream	Lacustuary Length (Miles) <sup>#</sup>
Halfway Creek <sup>^</sup>	3.29	Wolf Creek/Williams Ditch	2.27
Silver Creek <sup>^</sup>	1.25	Cedar Creek <sup>^</sup>	6.0
Shantee Creek <sup>^*</sup>	1.57	Crane Creek	5.9
Ottawa River	9.0	Turtle Creek	4.2
Swan Creek	3.4	Packer Creek	3.45
Delaware Creek <sup>^</sup>	0.23	Toussaint River	9.7
Maumee River	15.0	Toussaint Creek	7.9
Detwiler Ditch	0.62	Rusha Creek	4.0
Grassy Creek	1.01	Black River	6.6
Duck Creek	1.9	Cuyahoga River	7.0
Otter Creek	2.0	Euclid Creek <sup>^</sup>	0.3
Berger Ditch <sup>^</sup>	1.6	Ashtabula River	2.5

<sup>#</sup> Lacustuary lengths are approximate and fluctuate with lake levels and wind direction. The lengths presented here are based on Ohio EPA field observations.

<sup>^</sup> Length was determined by Dennis Mishne (Ohio EPA-2013/14) based on analytical data and map observations.

<sup>\*</sup> Lacustuary is for the lower Shantee Creek (the original cut off channel) in Detwiler 12-digit HUC.

**Table B-3. Evaluation Guidelines for Lake Erie Lacustuary and Nearshore<sup>1</sup>**

Type	IBI	Mlwb	ICI	QHEI
<b>Lacustuary</b>	42	8.6	42	55 <sup>2</sup>
<b>Lacustuary - LRW</b>	16	5.1	12	-
<b>Shoreline (rubble-hard bottom)</b>	42	8.9	NA	50 <sup>3</sup>
<b>Shoreline (sand-soft bottom)</b>	31	7.2	NA	50 <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Based on Thoma, 1999.

<sup>2</sup>For the lacustuary areas, a L-QHEI  $\geq 55$  is considered an acceptable target (Thoma, 2006 and personal communication with Roger Thoma, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>For the nearshore areas, a N-QHEI  $\geq 50$  is considered an acceptable target (Thoma, 2006).

## Appendix C: HUCs in Ohio's Areas of Concern

An assessment unit provides a practicable way to summarize water quality data and to convey information about the inferred status of the waterway being evaluated. Comparisons between assessment units are useful in water quality management; therefore, some consistency between assessment units is desirable. Ohio EPA commonly uses the 12-digit hydrologic unit code (HUC). Ohio AOCs cover all or part of 68 12-digit HUCs. Information about most of these HUCs is available in Ohio EPA's Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Reports.

### Maumee Area of Concern

<b>HUC 12</b>	<b>HU 10 NAME</b>	<b>HU 12 NAME</b>
<b>04100001 03 01</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Shantee Creek
<b>04100001 03 02</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Halfway Creek
<b>04100001 03 03</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Prairie Ditch
<b>04100001 03 04</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Headwaters Tenmile Creek
<b>04100001 03 05</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	North Tenmile Creek
<b>04100001 03 06</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Tenmile Creek
<b>04100001 03 07</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Heldman Ditch-Ottawa River
<b>04100001 03 08</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Sibley Creek-Ottawa River
<b>04100001 03 09</b>	Ottawa River-Frontal Lake Erie	Detwiler Ditch-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100009 07 01</b>	Upper Swan Creek	Ai Creek
<b>04100009 07 02</b>	Upper Swan Creek	Fewless Creek-Swan Creek
<b>04100009 07 03</b>	Upper Swan Creek	Gale Run-Swan Creek
<b>04100009 08 01</b>	Lower Swan Creek	Upper Blue Creek
<b>04100009 08 02</b>	Lower Swan Creek	Lower Blue Creek
<b>04100009 08 03</b>	Lower Swan Creek	Wolf Creek
<b>04100009 08 04</b>	Lower Swan Creek	Heilman Ditch-Swan Creek
<b>04100009 09 01</b>	Grassy Creek-Maumee River	Grassy Creek Diversion
<b>04100009 09 02</b>	Grassy Creek-Maumee River	Grassy Creek
<b>04100009 09 03</b>	Grassy Creek-Maumee River	Crooked Creek-Maumee River
<b>04100009 09 04</b>	Grassy Creek-Maumee River	Delaware Creek-Maumee River
<b>04100010 07 01</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Turtle Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100010 07 02</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Crane Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100010 07 03</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100010 07 04</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Wolf Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100010 07 05</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Berger Ditch
<b>04100010 07 06</b>	Cedar Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Otter Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
<b>04100010 06 01</b>	Toussaint Creek	Upper Toussaint Creek
<b>04100010 06 02</b>	Toussaint Creek	Packer Creek
<b>04100010 06 03</b>	Toussaint Creek	Lower Toussaint Creek

### Black River Area of Concern

HUC 12	HU 10 NAME	HU 12 NAME
04110001 06 01	Black River	French Creek
04110001 06 02	Black River	Black River

### Cuyahoga River Area of Concern

HUC 12	HU 10 NAME	HU 12 NAME
04110002 03 02	Little Cuyahoga River-Cuyahoga River	Mogadore Reservoir-Little Cuyahoga River
04110002 03 03	Little Cuyahoga River-Cuyahoga River	Wingfoot Lake outlet-Little Cuyahoga River
04110002 03 04	Little Cuyahoga River-Cuyahoga River	City of Akron-Little Cuyahoga River
04110002 03 05	Little Cuyahoga River-Cuyahoga River	Fish Creek-Cuyahoga River
04110002 04 01	Yellow Creek-Cuyahoga River	Mud Brook
04110002 04 02	Yellow Creek-Cuyahoga River	Yellow Creek
04110002 04 03	Yellow Creek-Cuyahoga River	Furnace Run
04110002 04 04	Yellow Creek-Cuyahoga River	Brandywine Creek
04110002 04 05	Yellow Creek-Cuyahoga River	Boston Run-Cuyahoga River
04110002 05 01	Tinkers Creek-Cuyahoga River	Pond Brook
04110002 05 02	Tinkers Creek-Cuyahoga River	Headwaters Tinkers Creek
04110002 05 03	Tinkers Creek-Cuyahoga River	Headwaters Chippewa Creek
04110002 05 04	Tinkers Creek-Cuyahoga River	Town of Twinsburg-Tinkers Creek
04110002 05 05	Tinkers Creek-Cuyahoga River	Willow Lake-Cuyahoga River
04110002 06 01	Big Creek-Cuyahoga River	Mill Creek
04110002 06 02	Big Creek-Cuyahoga River	Village of Independence-Cuyahoga River
04110002 06 03	Big Creek-Cuyahoga River	Big Creek
04110002 06 04	Big Creek-Cuyahoga River	Cuyahoga Heights-Cuyahoga River
04110002 06 05	Big Creek-Cuyahoga River	City of Cleveland-Cuyahoga River
04110003 05 03	Euclid Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Euclid Creek
04110003 05 04	Euclid Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Doan Brook-Frontal Lake Erie

### Ashtabula River Area of Concern

HUC 12	HU 10 NAME	HU 12 NAME
04110003 01 05	Ashtabula River	Lower Ashtabula River
04110003 02 01	Arcola Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Indian Creek-Frontal Lake Erie
04120101 06 06	Conneaut Creek-Frontal Lake Erie	Town of North Kingsville-Frontal Lake Erie

## Appendix D: Recreational Waters Water Quality Standards and Designated Waters

Ohio's water quality standards for recreation use are reviewed and updated periodically. Recreational use information is found at OAC 3745-1-37.

Recreation Use Waters: Categories and Bacteria Standards			
Recreation Use	Description	<i>E. coli</i> density (counts/100 ml)	
		90-Day Geometric Mean	Statistical Threshold Value <sup>1</sup>
Bathing Waters	These are waters that, during the recreation season, are heavily used for swimming. The bathing water use applies to all waters in areas where a lifeguard or bathhouse facilities are present, and to any additional water bodies designated bathing waters in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-32 of the Administrative Code. Applies to Lake Erie.	126	410 <sup>a</sup>
Primary Contact	These are waters that, during the recreation season, are suitable for one or more full-body contact recreation activities such as, but not limited to, wading, swimming, boating, water skiing, canoeing, kayaking, and scuba diving. All surface waters of the state are designated as primary contact recreation unless otherwise designated as bathing waters or secondary contact recreation.	126	410
Secondary Contact	These are waters that result in minimal exposure potential to water borne pathogens because the waters are: rarely used for water based recreation such as, but not limited to, wading; situated in remote, sparsely populated areas; have restricted access points; and have insufficient depth to provide full body immersion, thereby greatly limiting the potential for water based recreation activities. Waters designated secondary contact recreation are identified in rules 3745-1-08 to 3745-1-30 of the Administrative Code.	1030	1030

<sup>1</sup> These criteria shall not be exceeded in more than 10% of the samples taken during any 90-day period. (OAC 3745-1-07 Table 7-13)

<sup>a</sup> A beach action value of 235 *E. coli* colony counts per 100 ml shall be used for the purpose of issuing beach and bathing water advisories.

The restoration targets for BUI #10 Beach Closings should be applied to public bathing beaches, including the inland lake public beaches that are routinely monitored, and Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails or formerly designated Paddling Streams (previously defined in the OAC), as these are the areas that Ohio has determined to be heavily used or could support frequent primary contact activities. The areas where BUI #10 applies in each AOC are as follows.

<b>Public Bathing Beaches in Ohio AOCs</b>		
<b>AOC</b>	<b>Beach</b>	<b>Location</b>
Black AOC	Lakeview Beach 41.46378 -82.19608	Located west of the mouth of Black River on Lake Erie
Black AOC	Century Beach 41.47794 -82.15412	Located east of the mouth of the Black River on Lake Erie
Cuyahoga AOC	Edgewater Beach 41.48783 -81.74802	Located within Cleveland Metroparks Lakefront Reservation's Edgewater Park
Cuyahoga AOC	Villa Angela Beach 41.58709 -81.56419	Located within Cleveland Metroparks Lakefront Reservation's Euclid Beach Park, immediately adjacent to the Euclid Creek confluence with Lake Erie on its eastern side
Cuyahoga AOC	Euclid Beach 41.58606 -81.56928	Located within Cleveland Metroparks Lakefront Reservation's Euclid Beach Park, immediately adjacent to Euclid Creek confluence with Lake Erie on its western side
Maumee AOC	Maumee Bay State Park (Lake Erie beach) 41.6858 -83.3781	Located at the mouth of Wolf Creek/Berger Ditch on Lake Erie
Maumee AOC	Maumee Bay State Park (inland beach) 41.68576 -83.37911	Located within state park
Maumee AOC	Olander Park Beach 41.69073 -83.7105	Located within Olander Park
Ashtabula AOC	Lakeshore Park 41.90837 -80.77437	Located east of the mouth of the Ashtabula River on Lake Erie
Ashtabula AOC	Walnut Beach 41.90147 -80.80966	Located west of the mouth of the Ashtabula River on Lake Erie

<b>Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources designated Water Trails in Ohio AOCs</b>				
<b>Water body name</b>	<b>Flows into</b>	<b>Drainage basin</b>	<b>Segment Description</b>	<b>Length (RMs)</b>
Black River	Lake Erie	Black	Black River Reservation at Bur Oak (RM 9.5) to the mouth	9.5
Cuyahoga River	Lake Erie	Cuyahoga	SR 87 (RM 87.26) to the mouth	87.26
Maumee River	Maumee Bay	Maumee	East of Indiana-Ohio border (RM 107) to the mouth	107

<b>Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources formerly designated Paddling Stream in Ohio AOCs</b>				
<b>Water body name</b>	<b>Flows into</b>	<b>Drainage basin</b>	<b>Segment Description</b>	<b>Length (RMs)</b>
Ashtabula River	Lake Erie	Ashtabula	East Branch/West Branch confluence (RM 27.55) to the mouth	27.55
Black River	Lake Erie	Black	East Branch/West Branch confluence (RM 15.55) to the mouth	15.55
Cuyahoga River	Lake Erie	Cuyahoga	SR 87 (RM 87.26) to the mouth	87.26
Tinkers Creek	Cuyahoga River	Cuyahoga	Hawthorne Parkway at Richmond Road (RM 8.75) to the mouth	8.75
Maumee River	Maumee Bay	Maumee	Bend Road south of Bend (RM 76.22) to the mouth	76.22

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH), the state agency responsible for monitoring and tracking beach water quality, maintains a Beachguard website that lists seasonal bacteria counts and postings at all public beaches along Lake Erie and at inland lakes that are monitored. The recreational season is defined as May 1 through October 31.

The ODH is responsible for posting contact advisories in Ohio. Over the years ODH has posted several contact advisories within AOCs due to the presence of PCBs or PAHs. The Ottawa River (Maumee AOC) was posted with a contact advisory in 1991 by ODH with a DO NOT WADE OR SWIM contact advisory for the Eastern Interstate 475 Bridge to Lake Erie (Lucas County) segment of the stream due to the presence of high levels of PCBs. This contact advisory was removed in 2018. In 1983 ODH posted a contact advisory due to PAHs in the lower Black River (Black River AOC). This advisory was lifted in 2004.

## Appendix E: Acronyms and Abbreviations

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The acronyms and abbreviations below are commonly used in Ohio's AOC communities and are found throughout this document.

### A

AOC Area of Concern

### B

BMP Best Management Practice  
 BOD Biochemical Oxygen Demand  
 BUI Beneficial Use Impairment  
 BUIA Beneficial Use Impairment Assessment

### C

CDF Confined Disposal Facility  
 CSO Combined Sewer Overflow  
 CWH Coldwater Habitat

### D

DDE DDT metabolite  
 DDT Banned pesticide associated with bird and animal deformities and reproductive problems  
 DELT Deformities, Eroded Fins, Lesions, and Tumors  
 DNR Department of Natural Resources

### E

EIS Environmental Impact Study  
 EOLP Erie-Ontario Lake Plain Ecoregion  
 ESA Environmental Site Assessment  
 EWH Exceptional Warmwater Habitat

### G

GIS Geographical Information System  
 GLWQA Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement

### H

HELP Huron-Erie Lake Plain Ecoregion  
 Hg Mercury  
 HUC Hydrologic Unit Code

### I

IBI Index of Biotic Integrity  
 ICI Invertebrate Community Index  
 IJC International Joint Commission

**L**

LaMP	Lakewide Management Plan
LOEC	Lowest Observable Effect Concentration
LRW	Limited Resource Water

**M**

Mg/l	Milligrams per Liter
MGD	Million Gallons per Day
MAP	Management Action Project
MIwb	Modified Index of Well Being
MWH	Modified Warmwater Habitat

**N**

NOEC	No Observable Effect Concentration
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

**O**

OAC	Ohio Administrative Code
ODA	Ohio Department of Agriculture
ODNR	Ohio Department of Natural Resources
ODH	Ohio Department of Health

**P**

PAH	Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons
PCB	Polychlorinated Biphenyls
PEL	Probable Effect Level

**Q**

QHEI	Qualitative Habitat Evaluation Index
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**R**

RAP	Remedial Action Plan
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**S**

SSO	Sanitary Sewer Overflow
SWCD	Soil and Water Conservation District

**T**

TEL	Threshold Effect Level
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load Limits

**U**

µg/kg	Micrograms per Kilogram
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

USEPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

USFWS United States Fish and Wildlife Service

USGS United States Geological Survey

USPC United States Policy Committee

V

VAP Voluntary Action Program

W

WQ Water Quality

WQS Water Quality Standards (Ohio Administrative Code 3745-1)

WWH Warmwater Habitat

WWTP Wastewater Treatment Plant