



**Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
MINUTES
4.13.2026**

NEORS Environmental & Maintenance Services Center – 4747 E 49th St, Cleveland, OH 44125

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

Introductions

Attendees:

Voting Members: Sarah Barrow, Carly Beck, Megan Conklin, Pamela Davis, Gabriella Eisel, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Emily Kao, Samantha Martin, Erica Matheny, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, David Ritter, Megan Shaeffer, Megan Smith, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Heather Ullinger, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff), Amber Bellamy, Emily Bacha, Laura DeYoung

Guests: Donna Friedman, Mackenzie Kaser, Bruce Kole, Lisa Merenti, Sarah Stanzi, Refka Abrous, Audrey Rey

Approval of Minutes of January 12th, 2026 – *A motion to approve by D. Ritter; seconded by P. Davis. All in favor with no abstentions.*

Public Comment – none.

Old Business

- Newly Elected Members Short Introductions – All New Members
- Review of Advisory Committee Member Commitments and Requirements – J. Grieser
 - Submission Required: Conflict of Interest Form and Signed Alt. Appt. Letter
 - New Member Orientation: Feb. 2, 2026
- Biennial Symposium – N. Lopez
 - *See Public Engagement Subcommittee for follow-up.*

New Business

- 'Portraits of Adventure' Proposal by Josh Reuck – J. Grieser
 - Following J. Reuck's public comment at the previous meeting, he is offering a proposal to the Advisory Committee to develop portraits of key individuals from Management Action Projects (MAPs).
 - Developed portraits could be used on social media, website, and on-site projects if allowed.
 - It was noted to ensure rights are available for public use and distribution.
 - Overall, Advisory Committee is supportive of using grant funds to pursue this project.

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) Update – S. LaGory

- A Gorge Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) Sediment Cleanup and Dam Removal public meeting will be held on April 28th, 2026 from 6:00-8:00 PM at the Akron-Summit County Public Library.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) Update – H. Boesinger

- Management Action Projects (MAPs) updates:
 - Cuyahoga River Old Channel (CROC) – design for the GLLA marina areas and now the Strategic Navigation Channel portion will be moving to a third-party contractor through U.S. EPA. The design is being tentatively tracked to be completed in 2029.
 - Delisting will likely be in parallel with the completion of this project.
 - Brandywine Creek Restoration – OLEC is working with West Creek Conservancy (WCC) and GLNPO to get the design funded through GLRI. There are some concerns with permitting due to category 3 wetlands, so WCC will be submitting a permitting pre-application to Ohio EPA prior to a funding decision being made.
- Applications for the second round of funding for the Lake Erie Community Grant is open until April 30th, funding multiple projects up to \$75K and one up to \$750K.
- H. Boesinger is expected to be on maternity leave starting mid-July for 4 months. K. Patterson will be the main point of contact during that time.

Facilitating Organization Update (Cuyahoga SWCD) – N. Lopez

- Financial Overview & Reporting
 - The facilitating grant of \$157,500 has expended 47% of its funds, with 42% of the project timeline remaining.
- The 2025 Annual Report was completed and distributed. A digital copy will be shared via email for reference.
- N. Lopez will be out of office beginning April 28 through May 17. K. Hall Fitzgerald and J. Bartley will be the main point of contact during that time.

Subcommittee Updates

Governance – E. Matheny

- A meeting will be scheduled next month to discuss the annual mid-year self-reflection survey.

Public Engagement – S. Hardy

- The annual outreach events have been updated on the sign-up spreadsheet. All voting members are required to participate in at least one event per year.
 - Cleveland Drinking Water Open House – May 9th at Crown Water Treatment Plant
 - NEO Adventure Fest – May 16th at Downtown Cuyahoga Falls Pavilion
 - WPC Open House – May 20th at Water Pollution Control
- The Ohio Sea Grant – Cuyahoga River AOC intern has been offered to a candidate. The jointly funded position will support the Advisory Committee and focus on environmental communications and public engagement.
 - The intern will benefit from various professional development opportunities. Members will also be invited to offer shadowing opportunities.
- AOC Biennial Symposium Recap
 - The subcommittee met on March 25th to debrief after the event.

- All expressed very positive feedback and numerous confirmations of overall success.
- Many noted the highlight of the event was the panel discussion with the author and illustrator of “The Day the River Caught Fire”.

Strategic Implementation – C. Beck

- Welcome M. Smith as the new vice-chair.
- The next meeting will be scheduled in June to discuss:
 - Detailed project updates
 - Great Lakes Resilience Study
 - Debrief of non-MAP project spreadsheet
- Other Project Updates:
 - Wood Creek Fish Passage (J. Grieser) – the project is designed and has received permit approvals. Construction is slated to begin later this year.
 - Gorge GLLA Sediment Cleanup (H. Ullinger) – Severson Environmental Services Inc. was on hold during the winter but resumed work in March. They are currently handling ongoing pipe clogging issues. The sand and sediment material is being separated during cleanup with potential for beneficial uses.
 - Gorge Dam Removal (H. Ullinger) – the project is currently at 90% design.
 - Little Cuyahoga River Fish Barrier Removals and Memorial Parkway Restoration (H. Ullinger) – project design is ready and getting ready to bid for construction soon.
 - E. 185th Spillway (D. Ritter) – Final design was completed by USACE and will be bid for construction in the fall. Construction is anticipated to begin in early 2027.
 - Mayfield Sand Ridge Restoration (K. Hall Fitzgerald) – Phase 3 has tentatively been awarded for funding by GLNPO.

Announcements Pertinent to BUI Delisting Activities

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2026 Quarterly Meeting Schedule – Jul. 13 (Mayfield Sand Ridge Golf Club), Oct. 19 (Cuyahoga Falls Downtown Pavillion)

Adjourn