Cuyahoga River AOC Advisory Committee
AGENDA
7-13-2026
Mayfield Sand Ridge Club – 545 Sheridan Rd, South Euclid, OH, 44121

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

Introductions

Attendees:

Voting Members: Sarah Barrow, Carly Beck, Pamela Davis, Gabriella Eisel, Jennifer Grieser, Pat Gsellman, Scott Hardy, Jennifer Heard, Bill Hughes, Emily Kao, Tom LaPlante, Whitnye Long Jones, Samantha Martin, Elaine Price, Bryce Pulley, David Ritter, Megan Shaeffer, Megan Smith, Meghan Tinker Paynter, Heather Ullinger, Kate Wells, Christina Znidarsic

Ex-Officio/Resource: Nichole Lopez (CSWCD – Staff), Kristin Hall (CSWCD – Staff), Len Rincon Martinez (OSU-AOC Intern), Matt Acre, Emily Bacha, Hannah Boesinger, Joshua Kocik, Kristina Patterson, Beth Sparks-Jackson

Guests: Sophia Bonjour, Jacob Cimperman, Ali Clark, Kate Chapel, Mattie Dunlap, Mackenzie Kaser, Bruce Kole, Caitlin Lundell, Lainey McDaniels, Michele Mumaw, Charles Sawyer, Sarah Stanzi, Vannessa Steigerwald-Dick, Gabe Zimmerman

Approval of Minutes of April 13th, 2026 – *A motion to approve by S. Martin, seconded by S. Barrow. All in favor with no abstentions.*

Public Comment

Presentation

- U.S. Geological Survey – M. Acre, Research Biologist

Old Business

- 'Portraits of Adventure' Proposal by Josh Reuck – J. Grieser
    - See update below under the *Public Engagement Subcommittee*.

New Business

- Summer Ohio Sea Grant/AOC Intern Introduction – L. Rincon Martinez
    - Len is a rising senior at Case Western Reserve University studying Cognitive Science and Environmental Studies.
    - The internship focuses on advancing community engagement initiatives and public education strategies across the Cuyahoga River AOC.
    - There was a discussion on effective outreach and successful approaches for engaging with the public. Notable discussion points included:

        - Depending on the audience, beginning conversations by asking where individuals are from and whether they are familiar with the Cuyahoga River AOC is a productive first step. Based on their response, highlight nearby Management Action Projects (MAPs) to create a local connection.
        - Utilizing visual aids (i.e. tabletop poster) helps explain the AOC and its restoration efforts.
        - Connecting Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) to the history of the Cuyahoga River helps provide context, especially when describing BUIs as a restoration "checklist" leading toward delisting.
        - Fish health is likely one of the most relatable ways to explain the restoration progress to individuals unfamiliar with the AOC.
        - Highlighting the collaborative nature of the Advisory Committee and its many partner organizations helps the public better understand how the AOC functions.
        - Developing an "elevator pitch" is important for outreach events where interactions are often brief. Members also discussed offering larger incentives for individuals to follow the AOC on social media or subscribe to the newsletter.
        - In terms of a unified outreach message, members shared to:
            - Raise public awareness of the river's recovery by encouraging people to visit restoration sites firsthand.
            - Continue efforts to change public perceptions of the Cuyahoga River.
            - Partner with local media outlets, including recurring features such as "Kicking it with Kenny," to share restoration stories.
            - Develop a Cuyahoga River AOC "passport" highlighting restoration projects and recreational destinations throughout the Area of Concern.

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office Update – H. Boesinger (on behalf of S. LaGory)

- The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has not yet been reauthorized.
- GLNPO has appointed a new permanent supervisor following the retirement of Amy Pelka in 2025.
    - Caitie Nigrelli will serve as the lead management contact for Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

OLEC Update – H. Boesinger

- Management Action Projects (MAPs) updates:
    - Currently, we have seven of the sixteen MAPs now complete!
        - Irishtown Bend - Green Bulkhead Project is substantially complete.
        - Station Road Restoration Area has reached approximately 65% design and is now considered complete.
    - Wood Creek Fish Passage entered construction in June and is anticipated to be substantially completed later this quarter.
    - Little Cuyahoga River Fish Barrier Removals has construction contractors in place and is expected to begin construction in early August. The project has also been awarded GLRI supplemental funding.
    - East 185th Spillway was awarded GLRI construction funding, with work tentatively scheduled to begin in early 2027.
        - M. Acre from the U.S. Geological Survey will likely be conducting a fish movement study supporting the project.

- West Creek Conservancy was awarded design funding through GLRI for the Brandywine Creek Restoration project.

Facilitating Organization Update (Cuyahoga SWCD) – N. Lopez

- Financial Overview & Reporting
  - The facilitating grant of $157,500 has expended 60% of its funds, with 73% of the project timeline remaining.

Subcommittee Updates

Governance – K. Wells

- The subcommittee met in May and decided to transition the Mid-Year Self-Reflection Survey from an annual to a biennial schedule.
- A Mid-Year Check-In will be distributed to all members with their current participation records as a point of reference in terms of their two-year commitment.
  - N. Lopez will be sending that information by the end of the month.
- Applications for new Advisory Committee members will be opening again this fall.

Public Engagement – S. Hardy

- There are several outreach events scheduled for the remainder of the year that still need member support:
  - Blue Heron Homecoming – July 18th, 2026
  - Blazing Paddles Paddlefest – July 18th, 2026
  - One World Day – August 30th, 2026
  - NEORSD Clean Water Festival – September 19th, 2026
  - Sturgeon Fest – September 19th, 2026
- Portraits of Aventure Update
  - The subcommittee met in May to discuss proposal details and decided to showcase the Gorge Removal and E. 185th Spillway projects.
  - A contractual agreement with Josh Reuck was signed on July 1st and the project is currently underway.
  - A meeting was held with project partners to identify individuals to interview who have contributed to these projects and, where possible, community members whose lives have been positively impacted.
    - Members are encouraged to share recommendations for individuals who should be highlighted.

Strategic Implementation – C. Beck

- The subcommittee met in June with the following discussion items:
  - Hosted Sam Martin from the Great Lakes Commission for an update on the Sediment Management to Support Restoration and Resilience project.
  - H. Boesinger offered detailed updates for the currently active Management Action Project(s).
  - Offered participation in a Non-MAP Update Working Group.
  - Reminded members to bring any opportunities for public comment/engagement for any relevant projects or initiatives within the AOC.

Announcements Pertinent to BUI Delisting Activities

- A Wood Creek Fish Passage celebration is anticipated following project completion; details are forthcoming.
- In alignment with the facilitating grant deliverables, there are currently discussions to host tours with Cleveland Metro Parks' eLCee2 boat in the Flats.
    - If members have certain groups (up to 16 people) they would like to host, please reach out to N. Lopez.
- Upcoming opportunities include the 2026 Great Lakes Conference on September 24-25 in Detroit, Michigan and the 2026 Great Lakes Annual Learning Exchange on October 21 at CWRU's Tinkham Veale Conference Center.

Cuyahoga AOC Committee 2026 Quarterly Meeting Schedule – Oct. 19 (Cuyahoga Falls Downtown Pavillion)

- There is currently a plan to arrange a tour of the Gorge GLLA Sediment Cleanup site with U.S. EPA. The tour will be limited to 30 people with priority given to Advisory Committee members. Participants will be required to wear PPE as it is an active construction site. More details will be shared later.

Adjourn