

April 6, 2022
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Executive Committee
Meeting Summary

Attendance

Mary Helen Smith	Portage County Health District
Wesley Carder	City of Canton
Tony Demasi	City of Cuyahoga Falls
Ron Etling	Portage County Board of Commissioners' Appointee
Kevin Givins	City of Orrville
Genny Hanna	City of Akron
Bob Hempel	Wayne County Health Department
Patrick Jeffers	City of Twinsburg
Tia Rutledge	Portage County Water Resources
Patricia Vanah	Ohio EPA
Julie Reis	Summit County Public Health
Joe Hadley	NEFCO
Maia Peck	NEFCO
Tom LaPlante	NEFCO

Chairwoman Smith called the meeting to order

Public Comments

There were no comments from the public

Meeting Summary

The March meeting summary was accepted as transmitted.

Discussion Item

“Portage Lakes Management Study (PLMS) – Phase 6; and rollout of the Portage Lakes Management Plan (PLMP) final draft”; Maia Peck, Watershed Planner/GIS Specialist, NEFCO
Ms. Peck began her presentation with an overview of NEFCO’s Portage Lakes Management Study (PLMS), which is in its sixth year and receives funding in part from Ohio EPA. The overview included a discussion on the current conditions of the Portage Lakes (eutrophic, with an over-abundance of aquatic plants that the lake users find objectionable) and causes of nutrient loading (failing and discharging NPDES household sewage treatment systems, lawn fertilizer, geese), and a new, systematic approach of lake management, including the selective control of the aquatic vegetation, which is needed to reduce nutrient loading. Topics covered included:

- The Portage Lakes setting
- Portage Lakes system
- Importance of the Lakes to the region, communities – worth protecting
- PLMS overview
- Lakes system – a complex, interconnected system
- Urban lakes system – system altered, more complex
- State of the Lakes
- Nutrients, especially phosphorous, and productivity
- Excessive nutrients fertilize the Lakes, nourish plants, including HABs
- External nutrient loading – watershed
- Internal loading – recycled nutrients
- Lessons learned – things could be (get) worse
- How to improve conditions in the Lakes system
 - Reduce external (watershed) nutrient loads

- Reduce internal nutrient loads
- “Just clear the aquatic weeds out” is not an option, may increase nutrification/HABs
- Who’s taking care of the Lakes system?
 - PLMS Technical Advisory Committee/partners
- Urban Lakes without comprehensive/integrated management are not sustainable
 - How to sustain urban lakes, uses – make the Lakes system a priority, together
- Goals
- Key recommendations
- Benefits (worth the effort)
- How do we get there?
- Examples from other lake management programs
- 2022 draft Portage Lakes Management Plan (PLMP) rollout – public notification
 - Lakes communities will be given the opportunity to endorse the draft PLMP
 - Public will be given the opportunity to comment on the draft PLMP and provide input
 - After the rollout to the Lakes communities and public, NEFCO Board will be asked to endorse the draft PLMP

Ms. Peck’s presentation concluded with her fielding many questions and suggestions from the ERTAC. Ms. Rutledge asked whether the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has been asked to be a PLMS partner and added that if it hasn’t been asked to be a partner, there could be a missed opportunity for revenue and lakes management services. Chairwoman Smith suggested that Ohio EPA and ODNR should say what, as an organization, the NEFCO Board would be recommending (what’s the conclusion of the PLMS) with its endorsement of the draft PLMP.

NEFCO FY2022 Work Program

NEFCO Board approves 208 Plan amendments for the Mantua FPA and Aurora FPA

Mr. LaPlante reported that with the ERTAC’s recommendation, the NEFCO Board approved the Mantua FPA amendment to the 208 Plan on February 16th, and the Board approved the Aurora FPA amendment on March 16th.

Ohio EPA and USEPA Region 5 meet to discuss ways to reduce time needed for federal approval of state-certified 208 Plan amendments and updates

Mr. LaPlante reported that at the Ohio Association of Regional Councils water quality subcommittee quarterly meeting that was held on March 21st, NEFCO staff learned that Ohio EPA and its head legal council had a call with USEPA Region 5 in February to discuss ways to reduce the time needed for federal approval of state-certified 208 Plan amendments and updates. Region 5 staff informed Ohio EPA that part of the delay is that Ohio is the only state in the region with a state certification and federal approval process, meaning it’s a somewhat foreign process to the federal agency. Region 5 staff is going through the federal regulations to determine if there’s a better way for its administration to sign off on state-certified 208 Plan amendments and updates. Ohio is the only state in Region 5 with a statute that makes it illegal to issue a PTI that isn’t consistent with a 208 Plan. Region 5 will determine if there is a different process or shorter process to achieve federal approval of state-certified 208 Plan amendments and updates submitted by Ohio EPA. FPA boundary updates and wastewater treatment prescription updates should be quicker to gain federal approval versus an entire update of all 208 Plan chapters since different Region 5 reviewers handle the different 208 Plan chapters. Ohio EPA may ask the Areawide Planning Agencies to distinguish between PTI driven Plan amendments, versus Plan updates. NEFCO already does this.

Areawides/Ohio EPA collaborative project on sewerred and unsewerred areas data collection and mapping; status

Mr. LaPlante reported that NEFCO staff has received data on priority unsewerred areas from all four county health districts in the region. He explained that to be included as a priority unsewerred area for this collaborative mapping project, the affected wastewater management agency (MA) with jurisdiction in an identified area needs to agree that the health district's priority area is its priority. He indicated that as of March 1st, all the affected MAs in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties, except the City of Barberton, indicated that they agree that the health districts' identified priority areas are their priorities, provided the MAs have a voice in scheduling any sewer projects with funding made available as a result of this mapping project. He further indicated that of the 16 priority areas identified by Summit County Public Health, a small portion of one of those areas within the City of Norton won't be included in this collaborative mapping project. That small area is under the City of Barberton's wastewater management jurisdiction and is identified in the 208 Plan as an area that is expected to be served with sanitary sewers within the next 20 years. The City of Barberton stated that this small area is not considered a priority sewer area in its system. Mr. LaPlante noted that the next step is for NEFCO's GIS specialist to create GIS shapefiles of the priority unsewerred areas in Portage and Summit Counties, which is expected to be completed by late May. Mr. LaPlante thanked the MAs in Stark and Wayne Counties for already providing the shapefiles for their respective priority unsewerred areas.

Canal Diversion Dam Removal project; status

Mr. LaPlante explained to newer ERTAC members that NEFCO is the recipient of an \$800,000 USEPA grant for this project, and Friends of the Crooked River (FOCR) is the grant's subrecipient and local implementor. He noted that as requested by FOCR, on January 10th, staff sent a formal request to USEPA to extend the project period end date from March 31, 2022, to June 30, 2022. He reported that this extension was finally approved by USEPA Region 5 on April 4th with no lapse in the grant. He added that on March 28th, NEFCO made the final drawdown on behalf of FOCR from the USEPA grant; and while all federal grant funds have been exhausted, the subaward and FOCR's use of SEP funds are tied to the USEPA grant, thus the need for the extension. Lastly, Mr. LaPlante reminded newer ERTAC members that after months of delays caused by COVID-19, the Archimedes screw pump finally arrived from Rotterdam, Netherlands and was set in place on January 25th, by FOCR's contractor. He explained that the pump is needed to provide river water once again to the adjacent historic section of the Ohio & Erie Canal within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. He noted that the pump start-up date is still scheduled for April 28th.

Highlights from the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern 2022 Symposium on March 22nd

Mr. LaPlante indicated that he attended the annual symposium showcasing and celebrating the Cuyahoga River AOC's progress in delisting the river as an AOC, which was held in Brecksville on World Water Day, March 22nd. He gave some of the highlights of the symposium, which included a presentation by a biologist from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of preliminary data that showed a reduction in fish tumors in the Cuyahoga River. He indicated that there was also a presentation by FOCR that demonstrated that removal of the Canal Diversion Dam in 2020 leaves one major barrier to delisting the Cuyahoga River AOC: the Gorge Dam in Akron/ Cuyahoga Falls. He noted that Ohio EPA Northeast District Office staff presented this Gorge Dam removal schedule/timeline:

- 2022: Design of sediment removal and storage site
- 2023: Prepare the site where the dredged sediment will be stored

- 2024: Sediment removal from the dam pool
- 2025: Dam removal (funding is now available through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law)

Mr. LaPlante reported that the symposium concluded with a physical tour of the Canal Diversion Dam removal site where the Cuyahoga River was flowing freely with riffles and pools where the dam once stood, and the newly installed Archimedes screw pump awaited start-up to provide river water once again to the adjacent historic section of the Ohio & Erie Canal within the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Poll: Which room setup is preferred by the ERTAC?

- Current classroom setup with social distancing*
- Traditional face-to-face U-shaped setup with possibly less social distancing*

At the request of Chairwoman Smith, the ERTAC was polled and chose option “a”, but with some minor adjustments being made to the arrangement of the tables to optimize face-to-face discussions. Mr. LaPlante said that he would arrive early to the meetings to accommodate the ERTAC’s preference.

Reports from ERTAC members (a chance for members to report on activities or problems affecting their communities)

Mr. Demasi reported that the City of Cuyahoga Falls will host a public meeting on the Gorge Dam Removal Project on June 28th at 6:00 p.m. in The Natatorium’s Hopewell Room. He also reported that the City of Cuyahoga Falls River-City Cleanup Series will be held on April 16th, May 21st, and June 25th. He noted that more information on the cleanup series can be found at <https://www.cityofcf.com/>.

Information items requested

Items were requested by Mr. Etling.

Ohio EPA Public Notices requested

Mr. Hadley drew the ERTAC’s attention to the first notice listed: lead service line inventory and mapping grants being available now. No Ohio EPA public notices were requested.

Ohio Environmental Legislation Recently Signed or Introduced

Mr. Hadley gave a brief summary of Am. HB 175 and HB 464. He indicated that HB 175, which was introduced in late winter of last year to deregulate certain ephemeral water features under various water pollution control laws, and in opposition of which Ohio EPA’s director testified, passed in the House last fall. He noted that a compromise amended/substitute HB 175 that may appease Ohio EPA has been introduced but hasn’t been brought before the full Senate yet. He indicated that HB 464 was introduced to eliminate public water system asset management program requirements and to require the Director of Environmental Protection to rescind rules governing that program. Ms. Vanah commented that one of the sponsor’s issues is that all public water systems have the same requirement without regard to the size of the system, meaning a small mobile home park with limited resources has the same requirements as a large public water system with many resources, such as Cleveland Water. Chairwoman Smith, Ms. Rutledge, and Ms. Vanah commented that it may be more appropriate to have a tiered asset management requirement based on the public water system size. Chairwoman Smith indicated that the Portage County Health District is not in agreement with completely eliminating public water system asset management requirements.

Other Business

Mr. Givins noted that the Wayne County Water Expo is returning for the first time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be held on April 28th at the Wayne County Fairgrounds. For more information, visit

<https://oawwa.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1618862&group=>

ERTAC Contact Hour Course List

Chairwoman Smith drew the ERTAC's attention to the list.

Next Meeting

Chairwoman Smith said that the next meeting would be held on May 4, 2022, at The Natatorium, Hopewell Room, 2345 4th Street, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.