



NEFCO FORUM

August 2023

A big step forward for sustaining the Portage Lakes

On July 19, 2023, the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) General Policy Board accepted the Portage Lakes Management Plan. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Northeast District Office (NEDO) requested that NEFCO develop a plan to help guide the management of nuisance vegetation in the lakes, while protecting the lakes' water quality, habitats, and activities.

"Acceptance of the plan finalizes seven years of studies and plan development by NEFCO and a diverse group of advisors, the Portage Lakes Technical Advisory Committee (PLTAC), representing local, county, and state governments, the Portage Lakes Advisory Council, limnologists (lake scientists), boaters, anglers, volunteers, and other interested individuals," said Maia Peck, NEFCO Watershed Planner and author of the plan. "The PLTAC members are already working together to carry out plan recommendations, which will improve the effectiveness of safely managing aquatic vegetation, protecting lake health, and continuing to support the many uses on the lakes," added Peck.

The Portage Lakes are in the communities of Green, New Franklin, and Coventry Township. Residents and visitors appreciate the lakes for their natural beauty, habitats, recreational opportunities, fisheries, and thriving community. The lakes are also used for flood control and flow management. The lakes contribute to the quality of life and economy of the surrounding area. "The Portage Lakes are a jewel of the region, and we need to protect them for future generations to enjoy," said NEFCO General Policy Board Chair Richard Regula. Acceptance of the Portage Lakes Management Plan by the NEFCO Board allows the partners to continue moving forward with this new collaborative approach and to develop an effective management program to sustain this important resource and its activities into the future.

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Lakes, vegetation, people, and their watersheds are complex interconnected systems. Changes to one aspect can have widespread effects. The Portage Lakes are vulnerable to impacts from the 74-square mile watershed, alterations for flood control and flow management, and intense use. Some of the impacts are apparent, as dense growth of vegetation in shallow areas, often results from high levels of nutrients that have washed in and built up from the watershed. Sustaining multiple uses, water quality, and habitats is challenging in such systems.

The Portage Lakes Management Plan recommends a new coordinated, collaborative approach to managing the Portage Lakes, and follows the North American Lake Management Society's guidelines. Similar programs elsewhere are used successfully to sustain lakes and lake activities. Lake management programs use monitoring, lakes expertise, and community participation to understand conditions and develop appropriate tools to address concerns. The Plan provides the framework for partners to better understand the lakes, the causes of problems like nuisance vegetation, and to manage them systematically while protecting water quality. The focus areas of the plan include reducing impacts from the drainage area (watershed), systematically managing aquatic vegetation, reducing the levels of nutrients in the lakes that feed dense vegetation, developing a management program, and increasing stewardship and understanding in the lakes' communities.



The PLTAC members who helped shape the plan will continue to work together as lake management partners. They have demonstrated their commitment to this new program by moving forward on some of the recommendations: developing monitoring programs; establishing a watershed coordinator position; and commissioning selective management of nuisance vegetation in key areas. A new visitors center, being designed for the Portage Lakes State Park, will offer further opportunities for visitors to the region. These efforts represent investments in a collaborative lakes management program and the future of the lakes.

NEFCO staff acknowledges the important contributions of the PLTAC and many other volunteers and participants in learning about the lakes-watershed system and developing the Portage Lakes Management Plan. The PLTAC members generously contributed their time, expertise, and perspectives in many discussions and built a shared understanding of conditions, priorities, concerns, potential approaches and impacts, and other considerations. PLTAC member organizations included: Ohio EPA NEDO; ODNr Divisions of Wildlife and Parks and Watercraft NE District; Summit County Departments of Planning and GIS, and Sanitary Sewer Services; Summit County Health District; Summit Metro Parks; Summit Soil and Water Conservation District; the communities of Green, New Franklin, and Coventry Township; Portage Lakes Advisory Council; limnologists from Ohio State University School of Environment and Natural Resources, AQUA DOCS, and EnviroScience; and several volunteers and community members.

"The real strength of the Portage Lakes management efforts is the diverse group of partners, who have worked together and learned from each other for several years," noted Peck. "The TAC helped shape the plan and several members are already taking important steps to carry out this new approach to managing the Portage Lakes. Their commitment and collaboration should be celebrated."

The final draft of the Portage Lakes Management Plan can be found on NEFCO's [website](#).

Lautzenheiser to serve on NADO Research Foundation Advisory Committee



Nick Lautzenheiser, NEFCO Program Manager for Economic Development Planning, was selected to serve on the National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation (NADO RF) Advisory Committee, representing the Midwest Region. The NADO RF Advisory Committee works with NADO RF leadership and staff to identify issues and topics of relevance and concern to NADO members; provides guidance and offers ideas related to research and training programs and opportunities to serve the membership; and shares their individual and collective professional expertise and in-depth knowledge of regional approaches to economic development. The Advisory Committee includes eight members: one from each of the six NADO membership regions; one representing the Associate Membership category; and the NADO Research Foundation President. Committee members serve for two-year terms; Lautzenheiser will serve between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2025. "I'm excited to participate on this national-level advisory committee, representing NEFCO and the Midwest Region," said Lautzenheiser. "I look forward to contributing to the committee and bringing back knowledge, best practices, and additional expertise to the NEFCO Region." NEFCO is a member of NADO, participates in its opportunities, and actively utilizes its resources provided to regional development organizations.

Numerous EDA funding opportunities available

The U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) has several funding opportunities available, including the Tech Hubs Program, Recompete Pilot Program, and Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. Please contact Nick Lautzenheiser at nick@nefcoplanning.org if you have questions regarding the funding opportunities below or would like to discuss projects. For more information, please visit [EDA website](#). As a reminder, all applications to the EDA must now be submitted through the [EDGE portal](#).

Regional Technology and Innovation Hub Program (Tech Hubs)

Summary: \$500 million, two-phase program aims to make place-based investments in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to become globally competitive in critical technologies and industries. Phase 1 applicants may apply for (1) Strategy Development Grants, (2) Tech Hub Designation, or (3) both. No funding is included with the approval of a Tech Hub Designation; however, approval is necessary to be eligible to apply for a Phase 2 Implementation Grant.

Eligible Applicants: Consortia, which must include one or more of each of the following: (1) institutions of higher education; (2) political subdivisions; (3) industry groups or firms in relevant technology, innovation, or manufacturing sectors; (4) economic development or similar entities focused primarily on improving science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, or access to capital; and (5) labor organizations or workforce training organizations.

Eligible Geographies: Metropolitan or micropolitan statistical areas with a concentration of assets, capital, research and development, labor market, and infrastructure strongly relevant to the Hub's selected core technology area, the Hub's identified market area, and its potential to become globally competitive in that area within a decade.

Available Funding: \$15 million for Phase 1 Strategy Development Grants. Strategy Development Grants will provide up to \$500,000 in funding to awardees; Designation is unfunded but is a prerequisite for applying for Phase 2 Implementation Grants. \$485 million for Phase 2 Implementation Grants.

Local Match Requirement: 20 percent

Deadline: August 15, 2023 (Phase 1); Phase 2 NOFO to be released in Fall 2023

Additional Information: [Tech Hubs webpage](#) or the [NOFO](#)

Distressed Area (Recompete Pilot Program)

Summary: \$200 million, two-phase program providing funding to foster economic activity in geographically diverse and persistently distressed communities across the country. Specifically, this program targets areas where prime-age (25-54 years) employment significantly trails the national average, with the goal to close this gap through flexible, bottom-up strategy development and implementation investments. Phase 1 applicants may apply for (1) Strategy Development Grants, (2) Approval of a Recompete Plan, or (3) both. No funding is included with Recompete Plan Approval; however, Approval is necessary to be eligible to apply for a Phase 2 Implementation Grant.

Eligible Applicants: Local governments, nonprofits, economic development districts, and coalitions of the aforementioned

Eligible Geographies: Kent and Windham (Portage County); Beach City, Brewster, Canton, East Sparta, and Waynesburg (Stark County); portions of Akron (29 census tracts) (Summit County); Congress (Wayne County); (see [Recompete Mapping Tool](#)).

Available Funding: \$6-12 million for Phase 1 Strategy Development Grants; awards generally between \$250,000-\$500,000. Recompete Plan Approval is unfunded but is a prerequisite for applying for Phase 2 Implementation Grants. Approximately \$185 million for Phase 2 Implementation Grants

Local Match Requirement: None

Deadline: October 5, 2023 (Phase 1); Phase 2 NOFO to be released in Winter 2023/2024

Additional Information: eda.gov/Recompete; [NOFO](#)

Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance (PW/EAA)

Summary: Supports construction, non-construction, planning, technical assistance, and RLF projects. Projects must include job creation/retention and private investment components and be consistent with the [NEFCO CEDS](#) and [EDA Investment Priorities](#).

Eligible Applicants: political subdivisions, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education

Eligible Geographies: Communities with a per capita median income of 80 percent or less than the national average or an unemployment rate of one percent or greater than the national average.

Available Funding: Approximately \$5 million for projects in Ohio

Local Match Requirement: 50 percent

Deadline: Applications accepted year-round.

Additional Information: [Public Works webpage](#); [Economic Adjustment Assistance webpage](#); [NOFO](#)

Seven sewer authorities propose updates to their facilities planning areas in 2023



NEFCO is making steady progress on its inaugural annual facilities planning areas (FPA) update for Chapter 3 of its Clean Water (208) Plan. Seven wastewater management agencies (MA) in the NEFCO region submitted their proposed FPA update application packages to NEFCO before the June 30th deadline: the cities of Akron, Canton, and Ravenna; the Stark County Metropolitan Sewer District (SCMSD); the Bath Township Water and Sewer District (BTWSD); the Wayne County Office of Environmental Services (WCOES); and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District (NEORS).D).

The 208 Plan's Chapter 3 Appendices contain maps of FPA boundaries and wastewater treatment options (also known as prescriptions), specific written wastewater treatment prescriptions,

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information on wastewater treatment plants that receive flow and loading of sewage in specific areas of FPAs, and MA contact information. All this information is in accordance with Section 208 of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). Under the CWA and Ohio Revised Code, Ohio EPA cannot issue a permit-to-install (PTI) for sanitary sewer extensions or approve an infrastructure loan when either conflict with the 208 Plan.

Ravenna is proposing an update to only the wastewater treatment prescription language in Chapter 3 Appendix 3-10-Ravenna FPA, not an update to the FPA map. Akron is proposing an update to only the contact information and the wastewater treatment prescription language in Appendix 3-28-Akron FPA, not an update to the FPA map. WCOES is proposing to update the contact information found in Appendices 3-43-Kidron, 3-52-Wayne County Airport, 3-53-Wayne County Gingery, and 3-54-Wayne County Lincoln Way for these FPAs. BTWSD is proposing to update the wastewater prescriptions under its jurisdiction on the Akron FPA map to reflect current conditions and to update the contact information in Appendix 3-28-Akron FPA.

Canton and NEORSD contacted NEFCO in the fall of 2022 requesting to update the wastewater prescriptions on their respective FPA maps to reflect current conditions, with no pending projects needing a PTI at that time. SCMSD contacted NEFCO in February 2023, a month before the annual FPA update began, requesting to modify three FPA boundaries to make proposed sewer extension projects consistent with the 208 Plan, in advance of the developers applying for a PTI through Ohio EPA. All three MAs' requested prescription updates and/or boundary modifications are included in the draft FPA update.

"It's advantageous for these seven MAs to have pursued this proactive FPA update submittal process," said Tom LaPlante, NEFCO's water quality/environmental planner who is responsible for leading the agency's 208 planning update. "NEFCO staff and the participating MAs see the value in investing time in this important project since it provides an opportunity for the MAs to update the 208 Plan's FPAs to reflect current conditions and will allow PTIs for several proposed development and infrastructure improvement projects in Stark County," LaPlante added.

The NEFCO Board will be asked at its September 20th meeting to release the draft update for public review and comment, pending a recommendation from the NEFCO Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee.



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MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the region's quality of life, through collaborative planning efforts with NEFCO's area governments, in order to ensure environmental quality, orderly growth, and economic and community development

NEFCO FORUM

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