



**State Water Plan Update
Ohio Water Resources Regional Committee Meeting**

January 26, 2021
1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members in Attendance:

Erin Kepple Adams	Annie Quinn
Lori Dayton	Mary Ellen Ramage
Sam Dinkins	Ron Rohall
Chuck Durista	Deb Simko
Matthew Genchur	Robert Softcheck
Duane Goodsell	John St. Clair
Kevin Halloran	Jasun Stanton
Sheryl Kelly	John Walliser
Deb Lange	Donna Lynn Zofcin
Jason McCabe	

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Daniel Dahlkemper
Ronald Musser

Others in Attendance:

Kristina Peacock-Jones - DEP	Monica Gould - Strategic Consulting Partners
Mark Matlock - DEP	Bob Whitmore - Strategic Consulting Partners
Mike Hill - DEP	
James Horton - DEP	
William Brogan – DEP	
Summer Kunkle - DEP	

Visitors:

None

Welcome

Mark Matlock, DEP, welcomed everyone to the meeting, explained the meeting was being recorded, and provided helpful hints on the use of the technology. Ron Rohall, Committee Chair, welcomed committee members to the meeting. Attendance was completed through the online participant list.

Public Comment

Chair Rohall opened the meeting for public comment. An opportunity to express comments verbally or in the chat box was offered. There was no public comment.

Minutes

The October 27, 2020 meeting minutes were approved on a Mary Ellen Ramage / Chuck Durista motion. A voice vote completed the vote.

Committee Membership

Mark Matlock shared that Lori Dayton will be replacing Terry Dayton as a member of the Ohio Region Committee.

DEP State Water Plan Update

Kristina Peacock-Jones, DEP, provided an update on DEP activities. The USGS Water Use Data and Research (WUDR) Grants data sharing projects are progressing well. The project for improving Chapter 110 data input is complete and should go live during the first quarter of 2021. The project involving data sharing between agencies (SRBC, DRBC, and USGS) has been initiated with the IT architecture and data sharing protocols in place. Testing of the data sharing has begun and the project should be fully operational during the first quarter of 2021.

Another one of our data sharing tools, Power BI, has been completed. This data sharing tool will display water use data to the public in a more user-friendly way.

Mark Matlock shared that a statewide public hearing was held on January 6, 2021. A total of 10 comments were offered statewide. Eight of the comments were offered from the Ohio Region. Four comments were offered verbally, and four comments were written comments. Summary notes of the public meeting comments are being compiled and will be sent to the committee members within the near future.

Back Creek and Laurel Hill CARPs

Mark Matlock shared the two CARPs are being reviewed internally at DEP. Committee members should be receiving updated information soon.

Regional Components and Action Plans

The DEP staff presented summarized points from previous Committee meetings on the region's priorities, uniqueness, stormwater management, climate change, and regional projects showcase. The Committee discussed the summarized points and provided feedback, recommended changes, and additional ideas. The discussion produced the following key points for the Committee's future discussions.

Specific Regional Priorities

1. Interagency water resource planning - can address many of the key issues and priorities, identify water resources needed to promote and facilitate economic development, watershed integrity and recreation benefits. Include equity, inclusion, and environmental justice in the decision-making process.
2. Water Quality and Quantity - Stormwater management - climate change impact, MS4, funding needed for infrastructure, and forest buffers to reduce flooding.
Legacy issues – AMD and orphaned wells. Miles of streams have been restored but many miles are still impacted. Might be #1 or #2 pollutant next to sediment. Creates a huge economic burden and results in a loss of recreational areas and revenue streams. Loss of drinking water supply. Additional legacy issues have an impact.
3. Holistic approach to water quality and quantity - 50% to 60% of land is forests. Healthy forests can help protect water quality and quantity; abandoned mines drainage (AMD); new large-scale industries coming into the region; inter-basin transfer of water.

Region's Uniqueness - What are the Ohio region's unique characteristics that are important considerations in the state water planning?

- Colleges and municipalities working together towards water resource related issues.
- Allegheny National Forest – protected lands provide conservation and recreation.
- Strong support from foundations for the SW region water resource initiatives.
- Rivers are used for transportation and recreation, inland port for sand, gravel, coal, and other commodities. 2nd largest inlet port.
- Headwaters of the Ohio River have an impact on 1000 miles of river downstream.
- There are many issues that are unique to large river systems.
- Legacy issues such as acid mine drainage and abandoned wells. National laboratory researching the extraction of rare earth elements from the AMD. <https://netl.doe.gov/coal/rare-earth-elements>
- The Ohio is the second largest basin in Pennsylvania and receives a disproportionate amount of state funding and man hours for the watershed.
- Tribal lands of the Seneca Nation of Indians – flooded when we created the Kinzua dam.
- One of the most densely municipally populated regions in the country and this creates difficulties in zoning and planning.
- Ohio River Basin Alliance - [ORBA](#) is an organization unique to the basin. Also, ORSANCO, much different than SRBC and DRBC. They deal with water quality and quantity differently.
- Geography – settled on unique geology within the state. Different planning and treatment requirements based on locational requirements (high relief areas).
- Geology – incised plateau – synclines and anticlines that have been cut off from glacial activities.

Stormwater and Flood Management - What are the region's priorities for stormwater and flood management and preserving water quality?

- Funding for counties to complete Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans, Subdivision and Land Development and zoning ordinances and hazard mitigation plans; smaller counties cannot fund initiatives on their own; Act 167 is a priority.
- Stormwater management maintenance. If not properly maintained, they do not function optimally. Deciding ownership and who is responsible is a challenge.
- Stormwater maintenance agreements may be in place from the 1960's and may be difficult to enforce. Old facilities may not have been maintained for decades.
- Consider changing BMP design standards for storm event frequencies, duration, and return frequencies. (DEP SCM manual will address these items)
- Assess aging infrastructure for high-frequency storm events, assess now and do not wait for high-frequency events to occur. Tie closer to the word flooding.
- Retrofit existing aging BMPs for large impervious areas, parking lots from vacant shopping malls; should be required to have groundwater recharge areas.
- Contaminants from large impervious areas are flowing into stormwater.
- Change permitting regulations to create higher standards for stormwater BMPs.
- Planning should be completed on a watershed basis; smaller counties and municipalities do not have stormwater plans and do not have funding to create. Better to start planning upstream or at headwaters and trickle down.
- BMPs are the heart of what municipalities use for their work; one size BMP strategy does not work, urban, suburban, and rural areas are all different.
- Stormwater BMPs do not function the same in all areas and some areas need unique BMPs. MS4 requirements, make voluntary for municipalities not required to implement or help provide incentives for implementing BMPs. Mechanism to help municipalities to move forward with these plans. (incentives, incentives, incentives!)
- CSO removals.
<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=004909c6679a4289b629a1c26278224c>
- SSOs
- Floodplain management ordinances – minimum standard adopted in 2015 (years may vary based on when they were adopted, rolling schedule). Should be implemented regionally vs individually. (federal program implemented through the municipality – FEMA) Redevelopment – what you can and cannot do. Most municipalities have adopted and following the ordinances, more the ones outside of the ordinance that have issues. River based flooding vs. creek-based flooding.

Climate Change Adaptation - What are the impacts of climate the region is experiencing now and how do we manage these events in the future?

- Adjust how storm frequency and intensity are handled to reduce risks to safety and environmental impacts.
- Investigate the implications of flash flooding and potential decreased groundwater recharge on waterway flow.
- Planning for amplified droughts for protection and conservation.
- Risk of deeper droughts brought on by climate change and steps to promote groundwater infiltration to maintain aquifers.

- Climate change implications on water supply vulnerability, availability, and reliability.
- Planning to store water during high-intensity storms and save for drought events. Homeowners disconnect downspouts and routing water to swales.
- Locks and dam's infrastructure planning to build in resiliency. Army Corps of Engineers owns them. Locks and dams repair and maintenance is on the way, infrastructure bill.
- Precipitation and surface-based flooding – amounts of impervious surfaces.
- Riparian buffer rules do not go up to the stream bank. Helps the headwaters before the waters reach the lower communities. (state legislation for clear cutting) Riparian buffer part of an optional section of the ordinance.

Regional Projects Showcase

- Acid Mine Drainage Mitigation - The SR89 system located on State Game Lands #95 was constructed by Seneca Landfill, Ink to offset and mitigate stream impacts associated with their mine permit and landfill extension project. It utilizes a Terraced iron formation to collect various acid mine drainage seeps and promote iron removal at low pH utilizing biogeochemical processes.
- Westmoreland County IWRP - Westmoreland County Conservation District is in the process of creating a framework for Integrated Water Resource Planning that includes a sophisticated web interface with interactive mapping and monitoring dashboard. The IWRP completes the Act 167 Plan Phase 2, and coincides with Westmoreland County's 2018 comprehensive plan, "Reimagining Our Westmoreland", the plan will be an everchanging document that will develop as more data and resources become available.
- 9-mile watershed association
- Stormwater, EJ, climate change and how they determine key priority project sites. <https://ninemilerun.org/>
- Stream Restoration Incorporated in Butler County
- Passive mine drainage treatment projects. Mineral extraction from AMD for beneficial usage. <https://www.streamrestorationinc.org/>
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission - Integrated water resource planning (IWRP) is a flexible and holistic type of planning that involves professionals from various water sectors working together for a coordinated and cooperative approach to manage the interconnectedness of water and identify possible solutions. Planning across political boundaries at the watershed or regional level may seem challenging; however, some common beneficial outcomes to integrated planning, as identified by the One Water process, can be:
- <https://spcwater.org/topics/planning-and-resiliency/integrated-water-resource-planning/>

Resources Provided in the Chat

- 548 municipalities in the SPC 10-county region alone
- The Ohio Basin also includes counties outside of the SPC (Southwestern PA Commission) region, so the number provided is not all encompassing.

- <https://netl.doe.gov/coal/water-management>
- Water Management - Assessing the Energy-Water Nexus and providing new technologies for efficient energy production Water is a fixed resource with competing demands and increase uncertainty.
- <https://netl.doe.gov/coal/rare-earth-elements>
- Feasibility of Recovering Rare Earth Elements/Critical Minerals Sustainability
- The Rare Earth Elements (REE) from Coal and Coal By-Products RD&D Program consists of five core technology areas that are focused on development of REE separation and recovery technologies, address...
- Make MS4 program requirements voluntary for municipalities that are not MS4.
- Army Corps is working closely with Alcosan on initiatives to help reduce overflows, Allegheny County Sanitary Authority - Alcosan -
- <https://www.portpitt.com/pages/about/>
- The priorities of the Ohio River Basin were developed in the Planning Assistance to States initiative Congress has passed and President Trump signed into law. It authorizes funding that supports priorities of the Ohio River Basin. Highlighted below are a few of the authorizations
- Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA):
- \$25 million to fully fund projects to manage and prevent the spread of invasive Asian carp in the Tennessee and Cumberland River watersheds of the Ohio River Basin.
- Inland Waterways Trust Fund (IWTF): Cost share change to 65% Federal and 35% IWTF. This change (from 50/50 match) will enable the maintenance backlog for navigation locks and dams to be addressed more efficiently with positive economic impact.
- Waterway construction program of \$323 million (including IWTF balance of \$33 million), will fund the Chickamauga Lock project to completion at \$230 million and fund the Kentucky Lock project at the efficient funding number of \$110 million.
- The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in the Great American Outdoors Act:
- Offshore oil and gas leases fund the LWCF which is used to protect federal public lands and waters and conservation on private land and fund public access, recreation, and ecosystem benefits.
- Congress made the LWCF permanent and provided full funding at \$900 million annually.
- Nearly \$10 billion over five years is authorized to address the backlog of maintenance projects in national parks and on public lands.
- New River Gorge National Park and Preserve was created with 7,021 acres added to expand recreational access.
- National Science Foundation authorization increased by 2.5% to \$8.48 billion. Environmental Restoration Initiative: Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was authorized through 2026 at \$475 million annually. [We are grateful for this funding for our watershed neighbor to the north - and we look forward to appropriate funding for an Ohio River Basin Restoration.]

These appropriations are an important start to accomplishing the objectives of the Plan for the Ohio River Basin. We anticipate that an Infrastructure bill with investments for drinking water, wastewater, and flood warning systems and protection - including green infrastructure - may be a near-term opportunity for Congress to address other Plan priorities. It is noteworthy that bipartisan support for water infrastructure in both the House and Senate WRDA bills was removed in the final bill.

- There is state legislation that allows for "clear cutting" -
- All floodplain management ordinances may not be from 2015. It depends on when the FIRM maps were adopted.
- Another option to deter building in flood prone areas, etc. would be for lenders to stop loaning money for these projects - if they do not already do so.
- I wanted to add or discuss Regional Uniqueness. I believe the Ohio River Basin as the only National Forest in our state: Allegheny National Forest. Secondly, although we have many state parks across the state and state game lands, I wonder if we could really emphasize the power of our protected land and its quantity. I feel as though we have a lot of protected land in the Ohio (which is valuable for conservation and recreation. A world class outdoor destination.
- Citation from CSO Density in our region:
<https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=004909c6679a4289b629a1c26278224c>
- <https://ninemilerun.org/>
- <https://spcwater.org/topics/planning-and-resiliency/integrated-water-resource-planning/>
- Integrated Water Resource Planning - SPC Water Resource Center
- Integrated water resource planning (IWRP) is a flexible and holistic type of planning that involves professionals from various water sectors working together for a coordinated and cooperative approach...
- spcwater.org
- <https://www.streamrestorationinc.org/>
- Projects: Southwestern PA Commission - integrated planning mapping GIS tool for existing watershed plans in the 10-county region.

Next Steps

Chair Rohall thanked all committee members for their attendance, participation, and ideas.

Mark Matlock, DEP staff, provided an overview of the Committee's future work.

- Summary notes from today's discussion will be provided to Committee members.
- At the next regional committee meeting the committee must elect/re-elect the Committee chair and vice-chair as required by the Committee Bylaws and Act 220
- The next Ohio Regional meeting will be held on April 27, 2021. At this meeting DEP staff are planning to share a story map of water projects completed or in operation since the last State Water Plan update.
- Future meetings are scheduled for July 27 and October 26, 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 pm on a Mary Ellen Ramage / Sam Dinkins motion.