

Ottawa River Coalition Meeting Minutes **March 25, 2021 Virtual Meeting 8:00 am**

In attendance:

Beth Seibert, Allen County Commissioners
Joe Gearing, Allen County Engineer's Office
Matt Elling, Allen County Health Dept.
Casey Heilman, Allen SWCD
Teresa Adams, Allen SWCD
Patrick Beam, Beam Designs LLC
Jim Morrissey, City of Lima Public Works Dept.
Tyler Black, JAMPD
Cory Gonya, Nutrien
Brett Allerding Curfman, ODOT Dist. 1
Boden Fisher, OSU Extension Allen County
Kevin Cox, Perry Township Trustees

Travis Fillhart, Allen County EMA
Brian Nartker, Allen County Health Dept.
Steve Kayatin, Allen County Sanitary Eng. Dept.
Jarrod Wehinger, Allen SWCD
Marcy Bolek, Alloway
Emily Kerber, City of Lima Utilities Dept.
Mike Elwood, Hardin SWCD
Brian Riedmaier, National Lime and Stone
Russ Decker, Nutrien
Clint Schroeder, OSU Extension Allen County
Haley Belisle, Ottawa River Coalition

Chairman, Joe Gearing called the meeting to order at 8:03 am.

Joe welcomed the group to the Virtual March Meeting. Usernames were called to determine who was in attendance.

No additions to the agenda were requested.

Joe introduced the meeting minutes from January 21, 2021. There were no requests for additions or corrections to the minutes. *Motion by Kevin Cox to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021 meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Morrissey and carried.*

Executive Director, Haley Belisle read from the list of 2021 memberships to be approved. *Motion by Jim Morrissey to approve list of 2021 members. Motion seconded by Emily Kerber and carried.*

Treasurer's Report

September Financial Report – Executive Director, Haley Belisle presented the March Financial Report, outlining receipts, expenses and account balances since 12/31/2020. The report included income from membership dues, sponsorships, and donations to the School To River Project. *Motion by Russ Decker to approve the March Financial Report. Motion seconded by Kevin Cox and carried.*

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Chairman Joe Gearing reported on their virtual February 18 meeting where this agenda was prepared, and plans were made for the March virtual meeting.

- Good Friday Fish Fry – The committee largely discussed the Good Friday Fish Fry that is to occur on April 2nd. Details of the Fish Fry drive thru were relayed to the Coalition.

Community Relations Committee – Casey Heilman spoke of the of an ongoing education project that Allen SWCD and JAMPD have constructed together. This virtual education project will allow for students to receive river education from the classroom while meeting COVID-19 restrictions. ASWCD and JAMPD have created clear resin castings of aquatic macroinvertebrates for school children to closely observe these species without leaving the classroom. Casey spoke of the Ottawa River Cleanup event that is to take place on April 24th.

Stream Monitoring Committee

- Emily Kerber gave an update on the Equalization Basin project, reporting that the basin is up-and-running. The basin was tested with a recent rain event. Emily noted that the basin is very helpful for small rain events, but there may still be some overflows with large rain events. Focus is currently on optimizing the system.
- Cory Gonya provided a regulatory update.
 - Cory spoke of the TMDL for the Maumee River Watershed. Ohio EPA will be launching a series of public outreach webinars to update and involve the community in the TMDL process. Cory noted that this TMDL is a little different in that it focuses on nutrient loads. Cory also spoke of the H2Ohio program remaining a top priority of the State Operating Budget. Cory spoke of the new and upcoming PFAS regulations including a Maximum Contaminant Level.

Lowhead Dam Committee – Haley Belisle gave an update on the Allentown Lowhead Dam Removal Project. Ottawa River Coalition has sent a Letter of Map Revision to FEMA and has requested an exemption of the \$8000.00 fee. FEMA has requested additional details and another submittal will be needed. However, the case worker noted that this is a “no cost case”.

Stormwater Committee

- Jim Morrissey gave an update on City of Lima stormwater projects. Jim noted that they are finishing up the most recent reporting cycle with Ohio EPA. Upcoming projects include 4th street and Melrose Phase III.
- Haley Belisle spoke of ASWCD’s summer interns. Two interns have accepted the position and will start in May. They will focus on Lima City ponds, storm drain data collection, and dry-weather outfall monitoring. ASWCD is working on annual reporting.
- Joe Gearing gave an update on Allen County Engineer projects. Joe reported that the county will soon receive new aerials to work with and will hopefully be receiving new contours as well (current ones are from 2003). O.B. Frails project is still underway and should be wrapping up in the next couple of months. ACE has been working with the Nature Conservancy and ODNR in an effort to obtain State and Federal funding to construct wetlands to help reduce nutrient loads discharged to the river. ACE has been working on the inspection for the Metcalf bridge.

Watershed Committee – Jarrod Wehinger, Allen Soil and Water Conservation District, presented on the H2Ohio Program. The program started back in November 2019 as Governor DeWine noted that “we have a moral obligation to preserve and protect our natural resources”. DeWine noted “My H2Ohio plan is dedicated, holistic water quality strategy with long-lasting solution to address the causes of Ohio’s water problems, not just the symptoms”. The program boasts partnerships with many conversation agencies, farm organizations, universities and high schools, and public and government agencies. Targeted priorities of this program include reducing phosphorus, creating wetlands, addressing failing septic systems, and preventing lead contamination.

Reducing Phosphorus and other nutrient runoff to Lake Erie can help prevent harmful algal blooms. ASWCD is focusing on reducing Phosphorus with seven BMPs with 90 local producers. These BMPs are paid incentives and include soil testing, variable-rate fertilization, subsurface nutrient application, manure incorporation, conservation crop rotation, cover crops, and drainage water management. Soil testing (Voluntary Nutrient Management Plan) shows the nutrient currently in the soil and include crop rotations and nutrients to be applied each year. Variable-Rate fertilization (VRT) allows producers to apply fertilizer based on nutrient need as some areas may not need any nutrients. This combats overapplying fertilizer. Subsurface nutrient application involves injecting liquid fertilizer to help prevent surface runoff. Manure incorporation injects liquid manure and incorporates this into the ground to help combat surface runoff. Conservation crop rotation (specifically for small grain and forage) to help reduce erosion and allow for healthier moisture content. Cover crops help with soil health and pairs well with fall fertilizer applications. Drainage water management helps slow nutrient loss through drainage tile. Other practices not focused on by ASWCD include two-stage ditch construction to widen ditches and slow flow, edge of field buffers which slows flow and allows nutrients to settle, and wetland construction which filters water to trap nutrients. Progress in this three-year program will not happen overnight. However, we can measure the success of the program over time with farmer crop yields, water monitoring, and algal bloom volumes. Improvements still need to be made with the program including expanding across more acres, better communication with producers, and better deadlines. Learn more at H2.Ohio.Gov

New Business

Member and Partner Reports

- Alloway – Marcy Bolek provided an update regarding Alloway’s EnviroGo trailers. They currently have three trailers out on sites.
- Board of Allen County Commissioners – Beth Seibert provided an update that she recently participated in FEMA’s open house and noted that some significant changes have been made. Beth noted that the county is dedicated to reaching out to the community to update those residents that are now residing in expanded flood areas.
- Allen County Sanitary Engineer Department – Steve Kayatin provided an update on ACSED projects. ACSED is continuing to work on orders from OEPA to reduce SSOs from the Shawnee WWTP. The Gomer Sewer project is moving forward. ACSED has continued working on its 10-Year Capital Improvement Program.
- Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District – Tyler Black provided an update. JAMPD will soon be opening bids on their new office building. JAMPD has been working with the Health Department to re-open shelter reservations and have in-person programming.
- City of Lima Public Works Department – Jim Morrissey announced that the Chamber of Commerce has their Real American Sunrise event tomorrow where the City will recognize their Stormwater Superstars.
- Perry Township – Kevin Cox provided an update. Perry Township will be having their Pancake Day event on April 24th from 7AM – 11AM. Perry is currently looking for a new zoning inspector and will be updating their zoning board of appeals.
- Hardin Soil and Water Conservation District – Mike Elwood provided an update. Hardin SWCD is working on H2Ohio contracts with 85 local producers.
- Allen Soil and Water Conservation District – Haley Belisle provided an update on the Adopt-a-Roadway program. If anyone is interested in joining, they can contact Casey Heilman.

- Allen County Health Department – Brian Nartker provided an update that the health department is waiting on OEPA to release funds for the Water Pollution Control loan fund to replace failing septic systems.

Motion by Jim Morrissey to adjourn the March meeting. Motion seconded by Russ Decker and carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:09 am. The next meeting of the Ottawa River Coalition is Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 8:00 AM.

Minutes transcribed by Haley Belisle, Executive Director.