**Ottawa River Coalition Meeting Minutes**

**July 22, 2021 Virtual Meeting 8:00 am**

*In attendance:*

Joe Gearing, Allen County Engineer’s Office Matt Elling, Allen County Health Dept.

Steve Kayatin, Allen County Sanitary Eng. Dept. Jarrod Wehinger, Allen SWCD

Teresa Adams, Allen SWCD Ethan Grant, Allen SWCD

Abby Obert, Allen SWCD Jessica Begonia, Alloway

Sophia Fisher, City of Lima Community Devel. Jim Morrisey, City of Lima Public Works Dept.

Emily Kerber, City of Lima Utilities Dept. Tyler Black, JAMPD

Adam Haunhorst, LACRPC Clint Schroeder, OSU Extension Allen County

Haley Belisle, Ottawa River Coalition Kevin Cox, Perry Township Trustees

Eric Broughton, Tri-Moraine Audubon Society

Chairman, Joe Gearing called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

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

No additions to the agenda were requested.

Joe introduced the meeting minutes from May 27, 2021. Request to add Teresa Adams to the list of attending members. *Motion by Steve Kayatin to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2021 meeting as amended. Motion seconded by Kevin Cox and carried.*

**Treasurer’s Report**

September Financial Report – Treasurer, Sophia Fisher presented the July Financial Report, outlining receipts, expenses and account balances since 05/27/2021. The report included income from Amazon Smile. *Motion by Kevin Cox to approve the July Financial Report. Motion seconded by Steve Kayatin and carried.*

**Committee Reports**

Executive Committee – Chairman Joe Gearing reported on their virtual June 17 meeting where this agenda was prepared, and plans were made for the July virtual meeting.

* In-Person Meeting Update – A survey was sent to Coalition members to see if we would like to move to an in-person or hybrid meeting in September. A majority of Coalition members would like to see a hybrid meeting option in September where we would have an in-person meeting with virtual option. Meetings will follow state guidelines regarding COVID and we will go forward with planning for a hybrid meeting.
* Maumee TMDL Coalition – Mayor Berger has introduced the creation of a stakeholder Coalition regarding the Maumee TMDL. This is the same fast-tracked TMDL for the Maumee River Watershed that ORC has been following. ORC has been invited to join this TMDL Coalition for stakeholder representation as Ohio EPA releases components of this TMDL. As it currently stands, there is a small fee included in Coalition involvement. Members are asked if we would like to respond to the Mayor’s invitation to join as a tentative “yes”, depending on the involvement fee.

*Motion by Steve Kayatin to move ahead with joining the Maumee TMDL Coalition with the clarification of the cost to join. Motion seconded by Kevin Cox and carried.*

* Fundraising Update – Executive Director, Haley Belisle provided an update on a potential auction in 2021. Coalition members provided their thoughts on having this auction as our funds will be relatively low going into 2022. Discussion was held between online and in-person auctions. ORC will move forward with organizing an auction for 2021.

Community Relations Committee – Haley Belisle provided an update on education events. Education events, lately slowed due to COVID, have been starting up again. Casey Heilman with Allen SWCD has been able to attend several education events in local schools and has tried a few new programs that were created during COVID.

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.

Stormwater Committee

* Jim Morrisey 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. These 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 programing.
* City of Lima Public Works Department – Jim Morrisey 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 Morrisey 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.