

Ottawa River Coalition Meeting Minutes
September 24, 2020 Virtual Meeting 8:00 am

In attendance:

Beth Seibert, Allen County Commissioners
Tom Berger, Allen County EMA
Matt Elling, Allen County Health Dept.
Casey Heilman, Allen SWCD
Kim Riddell-Furry, Alloway
Emily Kerber, City of Lima Utilities Dept.
Tyler Black, JAMPD
Shane Coleman, LACRPC
Cory Gonya, Nutrien
Clint Schroeder, OSU Extension Allen County
Haley Belisle, Ottawa River Coalition

Travis Fillhart, Allen County EMA
Joe Gearing, Allen County Engineer's Office
Steve Kayatin, Allen County Sanitary Eng. Dept.
Jarrod Wehinger, Allen SWCD
Megan Hurd, Alloway
Jim Morrissey, City of Lima Public Works Dept.
Roy Baldridge, LACNIP
Adam Haunhorst, LACRPC
Brett Allarding Curfman, ODOT Dist. 1
Eric Broughton, Tri-Moraine Audubon Society

Chairman, Cory Gonya called the meeting to order at 8:01 am.

Cory welcomed the group to the Virtual September Meeting. Usernames were called to determine who was in attendance.

No additions to the agenda were requested.

Cory announced that Ford Motor Company was on the list of 2020 memberships to be approved. *Motion by Jim Morrissey to approve Ford Motor Company as a 2020 member. Motion seconded by Tom Berger and carried.*

Cory introduced the meeting minutes from July 23, 2020. There were no requests for additions or corrections to the minutes. *Motion by Steve Kayatin to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2020 meeting. Motion seconded by Jim Morrissey and carried.*

Treasurer's Report

September Financial Report – Executive Director, Haley Belisle presented the September Financial Report, outlining receipts, expenses and account balances since the July report. This report included the income amount of \$950.00 which was the result of member donations. Haley expressed the Coalition's appreciation for these donations by their members during this difficult time. *Motion by Beth Seibert to approve the September Financial Report. Motion seconded by Tom Berger and carried.*

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Chairman Cory Gonya reported on their virtual August 10 meeting where this agenda was prepared, and plans were made for the September virtual meeting.

- Allentown Dam Removal Project – The committee largely discussed the Allentown Lowhead Dam Removal Project that occurred later that month. A more detailed report will be given later in the meeting.
- Financial Records Informal Audit Update – Beth Seibert discussed plans for a future informal audit of the financial records. This will take place on November 10th, 2020.

Community Relations Committee – Casey Heilman spoke of an upcoming education event with Allen Lima Leadership (ALL) on October 9th hosted by Allen Soil and Water Conservation District (ASWCD) and Ottawa River Coalition. The ALL class will collect macroinvertebrates from the river and will learn about water quality at the site of the former Allentown Lowhead Dam. Casey also spoke of an education project where ASWCD and Johnny Appleseed Metropolitan Park District have partnered together to bring virtual river education into the classroom.

Stream Monitoring Committee

- Emily Kerber gave an update on the Equalization Basin project, reporting that everything is going well and the project is almost finished. The basin is operational and running well. The area has been seeded with grass and the fencing has been placed. They are hoping to fully run the system with a rain event in the next few weeks.
- Cory Gonya provided a regulatory update.
 - Cory spoke of the ongoing lawsuit between the Environmental Law & Policy Center and U.S. EPA regarding the designation of western Lake Erie as “low” priority for development of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). Ohio EPA has announced that they would fast-track a TMDL for the Maumee River Watershed, which is normally a 5-step process. Ohio EPA will use existing studies and reports for steps 1-2 and will start on step 3 in October 2020.

Lowhead Dam Committee – Cory Gonya gave an update on the Allentown Lowhead Dam Removal Project and Haley Belisle showed a collection of photos and videos from the dam removal. Degen Excavating Company began removal on August 27th and completed removal on August 28th. Nate Tessler, a certified Mussel Surveyor, coordinated the efforts of his team and volunteers from Ottawa River Coalition to relocate 85 mussels representing 10 different species. The project ended on-budget and Degen Excavating will be seeding the area used as an entranceway into the stream. Ottawa River Coalition will soon be submitting a Letter of Map Revision to FEMA. Unfortunately, this process includes an \$8000.00 fee. Ottawa River Coalition has been working with Lima-Allen County Regional Planning Commission in an effort to avoid this fee and ORC will request a fee exemption from FEMA.

Stormwater Committee

- Jim Morrissey gave an update on City of Lima projects. The Schoonover dam project has finished. The Melrose Phase II project will be finished in the next 2-3 weeks as they are currently wrapping up topsoil placement, tree planting, and grass seeding. The railroad grade separation project finished last June, but some areas will be reseeded with grass. The Faurot Park tiling project has finished and some areas will be reseeded with grass. The City is looking ahead toward their 2021 projects, which will include Melrose Phase III.
- Casey Heilman spoke of urban stormwater initiatives served by Allen SWCD. Rain barrel sales continue to rise and ASWCD has seen many people partake in the rain barrel rebate and tree rebate programs.

- Haley Belisle spoke 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 are currently creating clear resin castings of aquatic macroinvertebrates for school children to closely observe these species without leaving the classroom. Each resin casting can then be wiped clean and sanitized. ASWCD has been wrapping up their summer field season with some final data collection on county storm drains. ASWCD had one incident of illicit discharge found in a county storm drain and this was investigated by Allen County EMA who determined the discharge to be contained at that time.
- Joe Gearing gave an update on Allen County Engineer projects. Joe reported that the county will soon be starting their O.B. Frails project in Shawnee which will provide drainage improvements. ACE is in the process of taking bids for a project on Napoleon Road. 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 busy reviewing plans and taking meetings for local development in multiple industries.

Watershed Committee – Megan Hurd, analyst for Alloway, gave a presentation on Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) in Ohio Drinking Water. These compounds are entirely man made and are not found naturally in the environment. They are used in a variety of industries such as non-stick cookware, water resistant clothing, leather, carpeting, food packaging, and fire suppression foam. Most U.S. companies have suspended the use of PFAS in their manufacturing due to the dangers of environmental contamination. The most common exposure to these compounds is through ingestion and children are the most susceptible. PFAS have been detected in air, water, and soil and are highly moveable through the ecosystem. These compounds are very stable and have low biodegradability. In the human body, PFAS are not easily broken down by our metabolic systems and have been found in a majority of blood samples throughout the United States. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has reported that “Most people in the United States have one or more specific PFAS in their blood, especially PFOS and PFOA.” Known health risks due to PFAS include increased cholesterol, decreased vaccine response, liver damage, increased risk of high blood pressure, low birth weights, decreased fertility, and increased risk of kidney or testicular cancer. In December 2019, Ohio established a 6-step response to PFAS: (1) gather sampling data for levels in drinking water, (2) assist private water system owners with guidelines and resources, (3) establish action levels, (4) work with communities to identify resources to assist public water systems with preventative measures, (5) develop educational information, (6) continue ongoing engagement to ensure Ohio stays up to date with the current research and regulations set by the US EPA. Ohio EPA has been testing for PFAS in drinking water supplied by non-municipal waters (such as private wells) and municipal waters this year. PFAS have not been detected in any areas sampled in Allen County to date.

New Business

Member and Partner Reports

- Allen Soil and Water Conservation District – Haley Belisle announced that ASWCD recently held an election for their Board of Supervisors. Supervisors elected were Brandon Fisher and Teresa Adams.

- Allen County Emergency Management Agency – Tom Berger announced that the EMA office has moved and is now located at 2000 North West Street. EMA is currently updating their hazard mitigation plan and will be meeting with ASWCD to update the county illicit discharge regulations.
- Allen County Sanitary Engineer Department – Steve Kayatin provided an update on ACSED projects. ACSED is in the second phase of the Shawnee WWTP expansion project which will allow for increased capacity and reduced sanitary sewer overflows. They are planning for construction in 2022. The Gomer Sewer project is moving forward and should be going out to bid later this year. ACSED has a project at the crossroads of Bluelick and Slabtown to eliminate septic tanks in the area. ACSED has recently taken the leachate from EOLM landfill into their system. ACSED is upgrading their Robb avenue pump station and is working with Winona Lake to place a pump station. The County has turned over their water system to the Allen Water District on a 5-year contract. There is an effort to initiate a Master Water Study Plan for the whole county.
- Lima-Allen County Neighborhoods in Partnership – Roy Baldrige spoke of Neighborhood Impact Week which is currently taking place. The City of Lima and Activate Allen County have provided grants for neighborhoods to fund different projects (such as food distribution) and improvements.
- Alloway – Kim Riddell-Furry provided an update on Alloway’s projects. Alloway is currently completing a study in Defiance to test how effective cascading waterways are on agricultural properties. Alloway is exhibiting their EnviroGO trailer and respirometry products at the WEFTEC virtual conference. Alloway has made some modifications to their EnviroGO trailer that will allow for more equipment storage and the addition of counters and cabinets.
- Allen Soil and Water Conservation District – Jarrod Wehinger provided an update for the H2Ohio program in Allen County. In May, there were 110 different producers enrolled in the program. Since then, there has been a re-application mandate in order to make sure the acreage reported was accurate. Today, there are 98 different producers enrolled in the program.
- OSU Extension Allen County – Clint Schroeder reported that the early forecast for Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) in Lake Erie was 4.5/10 this year and recent indicators show that levels are 3-4/10. Factors that led to this lower level includes dry weather and having less total water move through the Maumee system. More research needs to be done on how dissolved reactive phosphorus is leaving the fields.
- Tri-Moraine Audubon Society – Eric Broughton reported that COVID-19 has affected many of their outdoor and environmental education programs. They have recently passed new bylaws and a new strategic plan that focuses on conservation activities.
- Allen County Health Department – Matt Elling reported that the department is currently working on their operational and maintenance program and updates to their billing process. The department is looking to use wastewater pollution control funds secured through the EPA to connect more homes to sewer lines and placing at least 3 private septic systems.

Motion by Jim Morrisey to adjourn the September meeting. Motion seconded by Emily Kerber and carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:31 am. The next meeting of the Ottawa River Coalition is Thursday, November 19, 2020 at 8:00 AM.

Minutes transcribed by Haley Belisle, Executive Director.