

# Cuyahoga River RAP-Up

To the Cuyahoga River RAP Coordinating Committee members

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## CUYAHOGA RIVER RAP: THE NEXT GENERATION

At the next Cuyahoga River RAP Coordinating Committee (CCC) meeting on April 24 we will be voting to reorganize the structure of the CCC. You may be aware that this has been under discussion for the last two years within the CCC and Steering Committee. This change will align the RAP membership with the work that is currently underway leading to “delisting” or restoration of the beneficial use impairments.

### Some RAP History

The RAP Coordinating Committee was appointed in 1988 by Ohio EPA to identify the sources and causes of these beneficial use impairments (BUIs) as well as to develop and implement remedial actions to restore or “delist” these use impairments. The 1992 Stage One Report and 1995 Stage One Update provided the basis and data that identified the BUIs along with their causes. This list has been updated over the years as more information has been

gathered and additional sources and causes have been identified.

The 2003 Ohio EPA Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Report for the Lower Cuyahoga River provided further data and information. In addition, monitoring work by RAP stakeholder members including NEORS, ODN, Cleveland Metroparks, Metroparks Serving Summit County and the Cuyahoga Valley National Park along with the development of tributary watershed action plans have led to a better understanding of the BUI status within our Area of Concern (AOC).

USEPA Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) continues to ask for updates on BUI status as well as time frames for “delisting” of any of the impairments. Identifying and developing specific delisting targets for each AOC in the U.S. has been a priority.

### Delisting Targets

To this end, Ohio EPA RAP staff developed our Delisting Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern in 2005. This document provides the minimum targets of restoration needed for each BUI based on current state

regulations and policies. Once these targets are met, the BUI can be removed or “delisted”.

BUIs can also be delisted on a segment or tributary basis as well. In 2005 the Black River delisted the Degradation of Benthos impairment for the East Branch of the Black River.

The Cuyahoga RAP can also establish additional delisting targets as needed to track the progress made towards restoration.

### Current BUI status

Based on work done by the RAP delisting work group in 2005 and 2006 in comparing current data and information to the delisting targets the status of our Beneficial Uses is as follows:

- 1.a. Restrictions on Fish Consumption  
Impaired
- 1.b. Restrictions on Wildlife Consumption - Not Impaired
2. Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor  
Not Impaired
3. a. Degraded Fish Populations  
Impaired (in places)
- 3.b. Degraded Wildlife Populations  
Not Impaired
4. Fish Tumors and Other Deformities  
Impaired

- 5. Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems  
Not Impaired
- 6. Degradation of Benthos  
Impaired (in places)
- 7. Restrictions on Dredging Activities  
Impaired (in places)
- 8. Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae - Impaired (in places)
- 9. Restrictions on Drinking Water  
Not Impaired (not applicable)
- 10.a. Beach Closings/Recreational Contact - Impaired  
(periodically)
- 10.b. Recreational Access  
Impaired (in places)
- 11. Degradation of Aesthetics  
Impaired (periodically)
- 12. Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry – Not impaired
- 13. Degraded Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations  
Unknown – no standards
- 14.a. Loss of Fish Habitat  
Impaired (in places)
- 14.b. Loss of Wildlife Habitat  
Impaired (in places)

From this evaluation it can be seen that many of the impairments are limited to specific areas, river segments, or individual tributary watersheds. An identification of the BUIs on a tributary and river segment basis should allow for the delisting of several areas within the RAP AOC. The information gathered by the delisting work group and tributary watershed plans will enable us to further define the status of these impairments as well as report on the progress made in our restoration/delisting efforts.

## Old RAP Structure

When the **Cuyahoga River RAP Coordinating Committee** was formed in 1988, the membership and chair were officially appointed by the Director of Ohio EPA. This tradition has continued to the present although it should be noted that this is not a requirement. In fact, only two of Ohio's four RAP Committees are appointed this way; the other being the Black River RAP. The Ohio EPA is considering revising or dropping this appointment process in the future as staff and funding resources dwindle.

The Coordinating Committee was originally composed of four caucuses; **State & Federal Agencies, Industry/Commercial and Private Interests, Community Interest Groups and Local Public Jurisdictions.**

In 2005 a fifth caucus was added, **Tributary Watershed Groups.** The current RAP Steering Committee and CRCPO Board has not yet recognized this group with members elected to those bodies.

The **RAP Steering Committee** and non-profit **CRCPO Board of Directors** are comprised of the same representatives from the four original caucuses. The function of the Steering Committee is to set the Coordinating Committee meeting agenda and to frame any discussion or issues that may arise. The function of the CRCPO Board is to oversee the staff and their work plan as well as provide fiduciary responsibility.

To date, the membership of these groups has changed very little since their original election almost 20 years ago. Meanwhile, the

focus of the RAP and its members has changed significantly – from identification and research on sources and causes of pollution to identification and implementation of remedial measures.

Additionally, the CRCPO Board does not currently have members with the needed skill sets and business experience to allow the non-profit organization to remain viable for the long term.

The recent resignation of Tom Denbow as the RAP Chair/President of the CRCPO Board along with the decrease in numbers of Steering Committee/CRCPO Board members signals an urgent need to look at the RAP membership, organizational structure and commitment as we move forward into the future.

## Proposed RAP Structure

To this end, the motion has been made to reorganize the RAP Coordinating Committee by the work that is proposed or already underway to remove/reduce the sources and causes of the beneficial use impairments – thus leading us towards eventual delisting or restoration of our Area of Concern. The future RAP Coordinating Committee will be comprised of representatives from area stakeholders that are directly involved in the implementation of actions that address our BUIs. Current and future members are or will be involved in the following work areas or groups:

### ***Sediment Management***

Current focus is on implementation of community storm water management

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programs and dredging/disposal of river sediments.

### ***Navigation Channel***

A work group has been formed to implement demonstration “green bulkhead” habitat improvement projects.

### ***Dams***

Work is underway on dam removal projects in Euclid Creek, West Creek and the Station Road Dam. These projects are being led by RAP member organizations.

### ***Habitat & Wetland Restoration***

RAP staff, tributary watershed groups, and park managers are working on projects to identify and implement habitat/wetland mitigation, restoration, or protection projects throughout the Cuyahoga watershed.

### ***Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)***

NEORSD and the City of Akron currently have their Long term Control Plans for elimination/reduction of these pollutant sources on hold pending litigation. Ohio EPA is working to resolve the litigation and get these plans/projects underway.

### ***Tributary Watersheds***

Groups have been established in Big Creek, Euclid Creek, Doan Brook, West Creek, Tinkers Creek, Yellow Creek, Chippewa Creek, Mill Creek, and Brandywine Creek. Furnace Run and Mud Brook are being targeted to establish future watershed stewardship groups. RAP staff and other RAP members are working to develop and implement effective watershed action plans for these important tributaries.

### ***Recreational Uses – Beaches and Access***

RAP member organizations (Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Cleveland Metroparks, Metroparks Serving Summit County) along with the Ohio & Erie Canalway Association, have developed and built recreational access/trails projects throughout our area and are continuing to expand these links to the Cuyahoga River and its tributaries. NEORSD, Cuyahoga County Board of Health and Cleveland Health Department hold annual workshops on Lake Erie beach monitoring and research.

### ***Sustainable Funding***

The current CRCPO Board has discussed a sustainable funding program over the past several years. A new Board of Directors should be charged with implementing this development if the CRCPO is to remain viable in the future. Sources of funding should be sufficient to support RAP operations, be predictable with adequate planning lead times and be stable with known yields to sustain RAP operations.

### ***Communications and Outreach***

Recently RAP staff has presented a series of outreach programs to engage tributary watershed stewardship programs. Further development and promotion of an ongoing communications effort to build community support for the RAP and watershed stewardship is needed, along with building a support network of communication partners and vehicles to promote RAP programs. RAP members should be encouraged to participate in and support RAP events.

### ***Monitoring and Reporting***

USEPA continues to ask for details of progress leading towards delisting or restoration of our Area of Concern. Many RAP member organizations conduct biological and water quality monitoring throughout our area on a regular or semi-regular basis to provide information on changes and improvements. The formation of watershed stewardship groups, development of watershed action plans, along with completion of individual action items are also measures that can be monitored and reported by the RAP and its partners. Information provided by the RAP membership on each of these “Delisting Management Unit” work areas/groups can also be measured and reported to the entire RAP group as progress occurs. From this reporting effort an annual or biannual “State of the River” report detailing these measurements can become part of regular RAP reporting to State and Federal agencies.

As noted, several of these proposed Delisting Management Unit work areas already have RAP members and other stakeholders working in previously formed work groups or tributary watershed groups to identify and implement remedial actions. Other areas, such as sediment management, tributary watersheds, and monitoring & reporting should plan to meet to discuss and review identified issues, projects, programs and coordination of actions. These activities can then be reported to the entire RAP Coordinating Committee at their regular meeting. Over the past year the RAP CCC has heard reports from its members and others on their activities relating to these

delisting/restoration actions. As the vote to reorganize the RAP takes place later this month, it should be recognized that the proposed structure is already being utilized to a great degree. Under new organization, the RAP Coordinating Committee can continue to evolve as needed.

## Next Steps

Once the motion for a new structure is approved it becomes necessary to modify the RAP leadership to reflect the change and engage the membership to a greater degree.

### **It is proposed that a new RAP Steering Committee be elected from the general membership.**

This new Steering Committee would have the same function as the current one – to set the Coordinating Committee meeting agenda and to frame any discussion or issues that may arise. The major difference is that the members of the new Steering Committee would not be required to serve on the CRCPO Board of Directors. As such, many members who find it difficult to allocate time for running the non-profit organization may still contribute by serving in this function.

This separation of the Steering Committee from the CRCPO Board will also allow the non-profit to recruit Board membership with the unique business, communication and fund development skills that it currently lacks.

## Upcoming Meetings

Several meetings and events that may be of interest include:

- **Cuyahoga River RAP Coordinating Committee – April 24 at 5:00pm at Brushwood Shelter, Furnace Run Metropark.** Contact Jim White at 216-241-2414 ext 307 for details.
- **EarthFest 2008 – April 20 from 10am – 5pm at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo.** For more information contact Chris Trepal at 216-281-6468 x 227.
- **Friends of Yellow Creek – April 21 at 7:00pm at Bath Township Hall.** Check out their website at <http://www.yellowcreekwatershed.org/index.htm>
- **Big Creek Watershed Management Plan Meeting #2 – April 29 at 4:00 pm at Parma Senior Center.** For more information contact Chuck Hambly at 216-241-2414 x253.
- **Mill Creek Watershed Project Meeting #2 – April 30 at 4:00pm at Garfield Heights Civic Center.** Contact Carla Regener at 216-443-3700.
- **Migration Mania at Dike 14 Nature Preserve – May 3 from 7:30am – noon.** For more information contact Chris Trepal at 216-281-6468 x 227.

- **Northeast Ohio Stormwater Conference – May 21-22** at Cuyahoga Community College – Eastern Campus. For details and registration go to [www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org](http://www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org) and click on the conference logo.

## **RETURN OF THE CUYAHOGA**

(WVIZ - Tues 4/22, 9-10pm; Thurs 4/24, 8-9pm; Sat 4/26, 9-10pm; Sun 4/27, 7-8pm) is a locally produced program that will be aired on PBS stations across the country. On June 22, 1969 the polluted Cuyahoga River caught on fire. The river didn't just burn in Cleveland - it burned in the nation's imagination. The country was beginning to pay attention to what was happening to its natural resources. The fire started a whole chain of events that hasn't stopped yet. These events included the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, Earth Day, the creation of Environmental Protection Agencies at the federal and state levels, and a rapidly growing consciousness about the environment in America. The Cuyahoga is America's best example yet of a watery success story. The dead river came clean - and back to life again.

*If you have any items or meeting notices for the next RAP-Up newsletter – please contact me at 330-963-1117 or email at [kelvin.rogers@epa.state.oh.us](mailto:kelvin.rogers@epa.state.oh.us)*