



Black River Advisory Committee

LoCo 'Yaks | Facilitating Organization
138 Alabama Avenue
Lorain, OH 44052
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QUARTERLY MEETING | Tuesday, May 19, 2020 | 1:00 PM

MINUTES

- ❖ Welcome / Call to Order – 1:07PM, Don calls meeting to order.
- ❖ In attendance: Don Romancak, Lorain County; Stephanie Koscho, LoCo 'Yaks; John Schwartz, Soil & Water; Steve Holland, ODNR; Chip Wendt, Coldwater Consulting; Kristen Risch, Coldwater Consulting; Max Schaefer, OEC; Stephanie Lesco, LCPH; John Sabo, LCPH; Kate Golden, City of Lorain; Melanie Barbis, Ohio EPA; Kristen Isom, USEPA; Matt Nahorn, Beaver Creek Watershed; Jack Caruso, Coldwater Consulting; Christen Brandon, Lorain County; Jennifer Wasilk, City of Amherst.
- ❖ Fiscal Report
 - FY2019 support grant – spent \$32,000+. Haven't spent anything since March. No spending April or May except for Zoom costs. Will meet with Cherie next month to see where we're headed. Don asked about current needs. Stephanie is looking for outreach ideas.
- ❖ Approval of Meeting Minutes 01/06/2020 – John Sabo motions to accept as is; Max Schaefer seconds. No discussion. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carries.
- ❖ Jennifer makes motion to use Thumbs Up in Zoom options for a Yes vote; Max seconds. Once everyone figured out their version of Zoom, all in favor via Thumbs Up/ Raised Hand. None opposed. Motion carries.
- ❖ Black River Restoration Project Updates
 - County
 - Don – Ickes is on unpaid administrative leave due to COVID-19 since late March until June 1. No field work has been done. Had a conference call with (K. Isom & Noel) USEPA – Phase III grant extension was approved for another year.
 - Phase II final financial report was submitted.
 - Ordered sprayer for use from boat to get areas inaccessible from land.
 - Risch asked if Ickes has employees. Don said they had 3 as of layoff time, but will still need to recruit.
 - Don asked Kate if Kings Woods is still on the table. Has not been discussed with new administration. Planning to continue with original treatment plan.
 - City
 - Kate – continuing progress at the Rec Site... Deferred to Chip because he has been on site.

- Chip – weather has been good. Contractor brought in soil to cap the slag that’s been graded. Brought elevations up to subgrade. Then covered with topsoil, seeded, and covered with erosion control blanket to hold everything in place. Already seeing seed germination. Can see the progress across the river from Parker Marina on Colorado Ave. Trending towards finishing construction in July, though very dependent on the weather. But progress has been great so far.
- Kate – MAPs – completing Rec site will also complete MAPs. Additionally, making minor modifications to the SEEP system and completing some aquatic work that will be completed next year, but that work is outside the scope of our Management Actions. All work within Management Actions is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2020.

❖ Ohio AOC Program Updates - Melanie

- BUI 11
 - Removal documents should be submitted for TRL’s review end of July or August. After we address their comments, we will submit to BRAC for review, comments, etc. Looking at the end of 2020 for official removal of #11.
- Fish & Wildlife – tumor sampling was scheduled for early June, but that may not be feasible with current COVID working conditions. Possibly move to later in the summer.
- Working with BRAC & GLNPO into next year to create a draft timeline for all other BUI evaluations & removals. Since we’re finishing MAPs, would like a plan on paper moving forward. See if we need more evaluations & sampling. Aesthetics maybe later this summer, then probably dredging after that. Will send a spreadsheet with plans/dates for input and comments.
 - Don – looking at Fall meeting to discuss BUI 11.
 - Kristen – any idea when you can get back to fieldwork & site visits? Melanie – still working from home and waiting for word on travel logistics for getting back into the field.

❖ Event Updates

- Summit - Pending a grant extension... Overall consensus - postpone or offer virtual option. With virtual, will need tech-savvy person to facilitate. Don wants us to talk to OH EPA about extension. Since we are hitting such a huge milestone (MAPs Complete), it’s important to have the general public attend an outdoor event on the river in order to get the full impact of the work that is coming to an end. Jennifer agrees. Steve also agrees and suggested maybe doing a combination event – with small group at Black River Landing utilizing the stage, Facebook Live, and recording from various perspectives to create a clean, edited version for viewing later.
 - Risch – even with rescheduling, we need months to plan the Summit and confirm speakers/presenters.

- Kate asked Isom about MAPs Complete Celebration – Is this something we need to do this year? Isom says that since it's a community event, USEPA, GLNPO will follow our lead. Don thinks we should have some kind of MAPs Celebration this year and then reiterate next year as part of a larger Summit.
 - Kayak-A-Thon
 - Kate – postponed indefinitely. Not even at a point to discuss rescheduling yet.
 - Don – since International Fest is also canceled... it only makes sense to push it out a year MAYBE if even then.
 - Risch – Since this was going to be a big-deal-last-one KAT, next year isn't a bad idea.
 - Black River Clean-Up
 - Reschedule date – probably not even in the fall. Partnering with LCMP and they have postponed the entire Black River Celebration to 2021, so Stephanie expects BRCU will do the same.
- ❖ Old Business
 - River Chatter – Jan & Feb event reports. March (Lighthouses) cancelled.
 - Jan. – Jack from Ruhlin talked about the work on the bridge and donated a light to LY. Very well received. People had lots of questions and were genuinely interested.
 - Feb. – One of 3 speakers showed, but Nate was great and shared a lot of news about what Oasis is bringing to Lorain and the Lakeside Landing marina.
 - March – cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns, but it was scheduled for after the mass gathering guidelines were established so we would've had to cancel last minute anyway.
 - Don – Overall the series went well. There was obvious interest from the community, and it was an economic driver for Union Town Provisions. Moving forward, we should look at continuing this when in-person events are back, providing additional assistance to LY. Maybe host at various parts of the watershed. "In my humble opinion, it was a very successful event, a very successful idea that was well received by the public and accomplished more than I thought it would. Thank you, Stephanie, for taking that on and showing that it could work. And thank you to Max and everyone else who helped out & participated."
 - Steve – Putting River Chatter on video for YouTube would be a good way to keep it going and establish an audience. Could include a video of the Port's River Tour. Plenty of opportunities to make videos & obtain footage/photos while most of us are working from home.
- ❖ Quick break to introduce pets sitting in on the meeting. Kate's cat Rita from the Rec Site. Pam's dog. Steve's rats. Chip's turtles. Max's dog. Finn Risch.
- ❖ New Business
 - Suggestions for outreach events for now?

- Max – echoing Steve’s ideas and capturing content for digital programming. Showing places people can be outside near the Black River. Can combine Zoom with Facebook Live with interviews, so people can just happen to find us and not need an invite.
 - Don – any tutorials on this digital stuff that Robb & Steph can upgrade their skills? Or should we hire someone? We need to make sure that LY has the resources necessary to do this without struggling to learn it as we go.
 - Max – We could potentially use some OEC resources & staff to get this going.
 - Steph – very interested in hiring someone to help us.
 - Risch – There are baby eagles at the Heron Rookery. And cormorants are getting worse. Steve – probably need to go through USDA. Maybe we could try documenting the different bird numbers – cormorants vs. herons vs. eagles. Doesn’t need to be an official Bird Survey, but we need to document what’s going on out there. Chip – it’s clear the cormorants are invasive and taking over the rookery as well as killing vegetation.
 - Don – John, what can we steal from the LCPH? We’re just answering questions all day every day.
 - Next Support Grant
 - Meeting with Cherie next month. I have no information at this time. Will update after meeting.
 - Don’s seat expires in July
 - Jennifer nominates Don to stay on as Chair; Risch seconds it. All in favor. None opposed. Motion carries. Don is still the man in charge.

❖ Announcements/ Other Business

- John Sabo, LCPH – is retiring at the end of the month after 32.5 years. Will be staying with BRAC as his voting status is not through LCPH.
- Max, OEC - \$200 to Audubon Society for bird boxes.
- Max, OEC - \$200 to LY for COVID-relief discount kayaking.
- Max, OEC – working to have 120 solar panels installed in Lorain.
- Steph, LY – waiting for guidance from ODH for reopening
- Kate, City – Martin’s Run property acquisition was approved, so we’re getting closer to controlling that flooding issue.
- Don, County – looking to design a plan for ditch & stream restoration work near Board of Elections. Would help boost water quality within the watershed.
- Don, County – will be working on \$400,000 storm water projects.
- Steve, ODNR – website was destroyed through malware attack. New site coming later this summer.
- Steve, ODNR – Old Woman’s Creek is still closed. Hiring freezes, budget issues like everyone.
- Steve, ODNR – still planning to take grant applications later this year.

- Pam, NOACA – working on maps for the Black River. NPS-IS. Need priority sub-watersheds/ critical areas, HUC-12 code to start mapping. Looking for collaboration from City, Coldwater, ODNR, etc. Risch – Martin’s Run, Sheffield project, Lower Black would all be critical areas that could be mapped. Pam – Let’s email, discuss priorities and make it happen.
- John Schwartz, Soil & Water – Crop cover event just before pandemic shutdown. We are very willing to help with digital outreach however we can.
- ❖ Adjourn – Elizabeth did not want to motion for adjournment, so Kate did. Max seconds. All in favor. None opposed. Meeting adjourned at 2:38pm.