



Black River Advisory Committee
Lorain County Conservation District | Facilitating Organization
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BLACK RIVER ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BRAC) QUARTERLY MEETING

Tuesday, February 11, 2025, 2:00 PM

Location: Lorain County Public Health – Community Room & online via Zoom

MINUTES

❖ **Welcome / Call to Order:** 2:00 PM by BRAC Chair Don Romancak

- Attendees: **Kate Golden** (City of Lorain Stormwater Manager); **Don Romancak** (LC Stormwater District); **Duane Cribley** (LC Public Health); **Mike Jindra** (LCPH); **Chip Wendt** (Coldwater Consulting); **Lauren Corrigan** (Coldwater Consulting); **Jennifer Scott-Wasilk** (Amherst City Council/Sandstone Environmental Health Services); **Lexi Rohrbaugh** (Lorain County Metro Parks – Sr. Recreation Specialist); **John Timmons** (ODA Watershed Manager); **John Sabo** (LC resident); **Steve Holland** (ODNR - Ohio Coastal Management Program); **Patti Donnellan** (LC Conservation District) **ONLINE:** **Matt Nahorn** (Beaver Creek Watershed); **Amber Bellamy** (USFWS); **Janet Deardorff** (GLRI/USFWS); **Julie Mackey** (Lorain County OSU Ext.); **Pam Davis** (NOACA); **Max Schaefer** (Main Street Lorain); **Bruce Kole** (US Coast Guard Aux – Lorain County); from Chagrin River Watershed Partners Inc.: **Kim Brewster-Shefelton, Laura Bonnell, Maggie Ensign, Kevin Saracino, Josh Myers, Danielle Dejak**

❖ **Fiscal Report** – Q3 (Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2024) report included in agenda

- \$2534.80 submitted for reimbursement for salary, website, merchandise, and Zoom.
- Motion to accept: John S. / Second: Kate G.

❖ **Kim Brewster-Shefelton from Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. hosted 319 planning meeting**

- Project development assistance for the 3 target HUC-12s will include landowner, community and stakeholder discussions, negotiating contracts with landowners or partners, completing habitat assessments, developing pollutant load reduction estimates, and developing concept plans and project budgets. Specific deliverables:
 - Concept plans for ~9 projects
 - Secure 8-10 letters of support from local government for projects
 - Secure 1-2 implementation contracts with landowners in the above HUC-12s
- Develop NPS-IS plans
 - Black River Watershed (all NEW plans)
 - Black River HUC-12
 - Lower West Branch Black River HUC-12
 - Jackson Ditch-East Branch Black River HUC-12
- Education/outreach deliverables
 - Conduct outreach to disadvantaged communities at a minimum of 1 public event, such as a family fishing event or a community hike.
 - Hold 3 public meetings (Fall 2025/Early 2026) to gather input on watershed challenges and opportunities for Black River, Jackson Ditch-East Branch Black River, and Lower West Branch Black River HUC-12s. We'll work with Lorain SWCD to plan these public meetings.
 - Develop 2 press releases and 1 website describing watershed plan development or updates and public input opportunities in the targeted watersheds.

○ **Review project timeline**

Grant period: November 1, 2024 – October 31, 2026

TASK	2025				2026		
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
Issue consultant RFP; hire consultant		X	X				
Draft Chapters 1 & 2 for Black River NPS-IS	X	X					
Hold 3 public meetings for Black River plans		X	X				
Project development assistance (4 HUC-12s)		X	X	X	X	X	X
Draft Ch. 3 & 4 for Black River NPS-IS			X	X	X	X	
Rain garden installations		X	X	X	X	X	X

○ **Partner roles and responsibilities. Partners will help us identify needs and priorities for these watersheds and help us generate project ideas. Can this group help us refine this list today?**

- Ohio EPA – funder
- CRWP – award sponsor, project manager
- Black River Watershed partners:
 - Lorain County SWCD
 - Black River AOC
 - Lorain County Stormwater
 - City of Lorain has committed to sharing its ideas for restoration projects in the Black River HUC-12
 - City of Elyria
 - Lorain Metroparks – we’ll ask them to share project opportunities on their properties along the Black River in disadvantaged areas
 - Black River Audubon Society
 - Community Foundation of Lorain County. Cindy Andrews – CEO
 - Lorain Metro Housing Authority. Runs largest public housing agency in Lorain County. Could maybe host an event at one of their venues. Judith Carlin – CEO
 - Townships – reach out to township trustees. They may be happy to hold a public input meeting.
 - Kate Pilacky of WRLC said she would be interested in being in loop on watershed plans. She is a resident of the Black River watershed (Plum Creek - not the HUC-12s where watershed plans are being developed).
 - WRLC Thriving Communities offered to be a resource for us if we need help making connections in Lorain County. Otherwise, they only want to be involved by being updated about this project at a high level.
 - Lorain County Farm Bureau – for rural areas such as Jackson Ditch
 - Coast Guard Auxiliary – stationed on the river. Bruce Kole is the point of contact, he serves on AOC as well.
- NOACA – has a draft NPS-IS for the mainstem of lower Black River. Pam Davis has maps and draft plans that she will share via Dropbox.

❖ **Old Business**

- Approval of meeting minutes from 11/18/2024 by Julie M./ Second by Kate G.
- Kate to follow up with William Brion from Lorain High School

❖ **New Business**

- Review/certify voting members list – committee members will reach out to their assigned contacts for membership status
- By-laws accepted as written. Motion approved Kate G. / Second: John S.
- Cleveland Metroparks Tree Selector Tool
 - Please take their Qualtrics user survey to provide valuable feedback

- Advertising: Committee opts to run another billboard campaign this summer. Will coordinate with Sara Fondran with Lamar, Inc. to implement. Will need to choose locations within the AOC/Management Plan Areas
- [Vermilion River Watershed Open House](#) – volunteers: Coldwater Consulting, possibly Don Romancak, possibly Kate Golden. Will coordinate to get tabling materials to the event.
- [2025 National Watershed & Stormwater Conference](#), April 8-10 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The theme for 2025: “Collaboration for Successful Watershed Stewardship” & is hosted by the Center for Watershed Protection.

❖ **Black River Watershed Project Updates**

- **County:** Don Romancak
 - Brentwood Lake/Alexander Ditch area in Grafton/Eaton – land could be donated to create a public green space.
 - \$1 million H2Ohio award, \$1 million Save Our Great Lakes award, \$1 million private donation, & \$1 million from the County for the 60-acre Gerber wetland project.
 - Converts previous ag land into 23 acres of wetlands and more than 1000 linear feet of stream restoration in the Willow Creek watershed.
- **City:** Kate Golden
 - Geopools received 62,000 cubic yards of material in August/September 2024, which is still dewatering and will be removed from geopools this spring after assessment.
 - One-half of the dewatered dredge material will be used on the last uncovered slag pile, which is adjacent to the site. The other half will be available for projects like brownfield remediation &/or use on other projects. Some shale was present in the material. Material dredged in 2025 is not expected to be placed in the Dredge Dewatering Facility and may be placed in a Combined Disposal Facility (CDF) in Lorain Harbor.
 - The four geopools that were damaged in a severe windstorm in early August will be scrapped and the City is working through an insurance claim for the pool replacements.
 - City of Lorain received money from USFWS for invasive plant species removal at the heron rookery and reclamation site. Approximately 20 acres have already been treated. Additionally, onsite tree planting will occur in soil berms created utilizing on-site stockpiled soil
 - Waterfront redevelopment plans still ongoing. Work expected this summer.
 - Three bids received for Pellet Terminal access for Sunset Pier Park which includes a new roadway, all utilities, all infrastructure to support the future installation of bathrooms & a fish cleaning station. These future improvements are being funded under separate grants being provided to the City by USEPA and ODNR.

❖ **Ohio AOC Program Updates & Announcements: Hannah Boesinger**

- Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) is working with USFWS on BUI 6 (Degradation of Benthos) assessment of the validity of the target across AOC as well as non-AOC lacustuaries. This will likely delay final delisting but will provide stronger justification in the removal of the BUI. Sampling is still expected to take place this field season, although funding freezes and timeline uncertainties at the federal level may impact this project.
 - For more information: Guidelines can be found in [“Delisting Guidance & Restoration Targets for Ohio Areas of Concern”](#), beginning on page 39 for BUI 6
 - See also [OLEC presentation](#) by Hannah Boesinger from May 14, 2024 on the [Meetings/Agendas page](#) of the Black River AOC website for an updated plan

- AOC Conference will be held September 16-18 in Toledo, OH. Details will be shared as they are released.
- Ohio AOC Summit: April 1st, 2025 at the Amy H. Levin Learning Center, 1165 N. Ridge Rd., Lorain, OH 44055.
 - Open to only five members plus facilitator: **Don Romancak, Kate Golden, John Sabo, Steve Holland, Max Schaefer, Patti Donnellan**

❖ **Federal AOC Program Updates & Announcements**

- Many federal grants are paused at the moment – not necessarily cancelled, just postponed or on hold until further updates are released

❖ **Announcements | Other Business**

- Our July BRAC meeting may coincide with the OFSWCD Summer Supervisor School
 - Based in Cuyahoga Falls this year. Every SWCD in Area 2 was asked to develop a tour(s).
 - Lorain County is outside the 45 minutes circle but could still be a possibility.
- Patti D. will keep committee updated on details.

❖ **Adjournment**

- Motion to adjourn by Julie M., second by Kate at 3:30pm, February 11, 2025
- Next meeting: Wednesday, May 7th, 2025, 2:00pm at Lorain County Public Health building



Submitted for approval: 2/17/2024 by PDonnellan. Revised & posted to website 2/18/25, 11:20am