

**Little Cuyahoga River
Balanced Growth Plan Meeting**
Friday, February 15, 2013

Goodyear Branch Library
60 Goodyear Boulevard
Akron, OH 44305

Meeting Summary

I. Welcome and Introductions – Eric Akin, NEFCO

- The meeting began with an overview of the Little Cuyahoga River Watershed.
- The Little Cuyahoga River is 17.4 miles in length and drains 61.7 mi² of Portage and Summit Counties.
- The watershed includes four HUC 12 watersheds, two cities, two villages, and four townships.
- The basin also includes Springfield Lake, Wingfoot Lake, Mogadore Reservoir.
- Introduction of the meeting attendees followed.

II. Ohio's Balanced Growth Program – Sandra Kosek-Sills, Ohio Lake Erie Commission

- Ms. Kosek-Sills gave a presentation on the Ohio Balanced Growth Program.
- The program links land use and water resources.
- It was designed to improve environmental, recreational, and economic resources within the Lake Erie Basin. It has since been adopted state-wide.
- Balanced growth watershed planning is voluntary, locally led, and incentive-based. It is supported by the state through alignment of policies and program with balanced growth plans.
- Balanced growth is a geographic information system (GIS) based process that requires local government buy-in.
- Significant local support is needed for state endorsement. Support from 75 percent of the population, land area, and watershed communities are needed.
- The Plan identifies priority conservation areas, priority development/redevelopment areas, and can include priority agricultural areas.
- Ms. Kosek-Sills provided examples of these different types of priority areas.
- The general plan development process consists of creating maps showing these priority areas. Typically the maps are developed with assistance from a technical committee with oversight from a steering committee consisting of members from the various watershed communities.
- Examples of the maps created by other balanced growth planning efforts in Ohio were shown.
- The special incentives available to communities that support a balanced growth plan were discussed. The special incentives range from technical assistance from state agencies to extra points on funding applications to percentage points discounts on certain loan programs.
- The incentives are for both economic development and water resource protection/restoration.

- The Ohio Balanced Growth Program also has information for local communities on best local land use practices.
- More information on the Balanced Growth Program can be found at www.balancedgrowth.ohio.gov.

III. Summary of Work Completed – Eric Akin, NEFCO

Previous Planning Efforts:

- NEFCO previously completed a Phase I Preliminary Assessment Report for the Little Cuyahoga River to determine the need and acceptance of a watershed planning effort.
- The report included preliminary mapping of the watershed including jurisdictions, 2005 land use, impervious area, and aerial photos.
- The conclusion was that time was right for a watershed planning effort.
- In 2012 NEFCO held a public meeting to discuss watershed planning options. There are two state-endorsed watershed planning methods in Ohio: Watershed Action Plans and Balanced Growth Plans.
- At the 2012 meeting it was agreed that NEFCO should initiate a Balanced Growth Plan for the Little Cuyahoga River Watershed. The two primary reasons for selecting the planning approach was funding and consistency with the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization's (CRCPO) previous watershed planning efforts. Watershed Action Plans are significantly more costly due to the time needed to acquire, process, and utilize the required data to develop water quality improvement actions. Without a dedicated funding source like a watershed coordinator grant, NEFCO did not have the resources available to complete a watershed action plan in a reasonable timeframe. Second, the CRCPO has already completed Balanced Growth Plans in other Cuyahoga River tributaries in Summit, Medina, and Cuyahoga Counties. This will benefit NEFCO by utilizing the CRCPO as a resource in the development of the Little Cuyahoga River plan.

Balanced Growth Mapping:

- NEFCO has been working on creating maps to assist the watershed communities in determining priority conservation and (re)development areas.
- NEFCO has already completed 17 draft watershed maps for use by communities. These maps can be found at: http://www.nefcoplanning.org/little_cuy.html.
- Maps will be posted on this webpage as they are created and/or updated for the Balanced Growth Plan.

Water Quality Monitoring:

- NEFCO has been working with the Sierra Club – Portage Trail Group to establish a volunteer monitoring program in the Little Cuyahoga River.
- The Sierra Club has a state-wide initiative to increase volunteer monitoring of local water resources.
- Sierra Club volunteer sample 36 sites in the Little Cuyahoga River quarterly.
- The volunteers collect or document various chemical and physical features of the River, including temperature, total dissolved solids, conductivity, pH, phosphate, and nitrate.
- The Sierra Club is working with Ohio EPA to get their program approved by Ohio EPA as a credible data program.

- The information will be mapped and presented to the communities as another tool in determining areas for conservation and (re)development.

IV. Community Conservation & Development Priorities

- The Balanced Growth Plan is locally driven, so the watershed communities determine what conservation and (re)development priorities are.
- To assist the communities, NEFCO is developing a community survey aimed at helping determine these priority areas.
- NEFCO is following the methods used by the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization (CRCPO) in creating Balanced Growth Plans for other Cuyahoga River tributaries.
- The development of the survey will be the focus of the next Little Cuyahoga River meeting.

V. Watershed Updates

Akron's Combined Sewer Overflow Long-Term Control Plan:

- Akron's plan is still being reviewed by the Federal Judge presiding over the case.
- The plan calls for zero untreated overflows during a typical year precipitation.
- The projects include two underground storage tunnels, several above ground storage basins, and the separation of sanitary sewers from storm sewer in select locations.
- The current cost is over \$800 million to be paid by rate payers to the system in Akron and surrounding communities.
- It is not known when the Judge will rule on the proposed agreement.

Little Cuyahoga Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Project:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and URS is conducting an ecosystem restoration feasibility study which will address restoring an eight-mile section of degraded riverside habitat along the Little Cuyahoga River.
- The City of Akron is the project sponsor.
- The focus area is from river miles 8 to 2 along the Little Cuyahoga River in Akron.
- The funding is from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI).
- The feasibility study will be completed in 2013.

Other Watershed Updates:

- The City of Akron is in the process of lowering the dam at Kelly Avenue by the Goodyear Headquarters.
- This is the second phase of Akron's Little Cuyahoga River Restoration project.
- The lowering of the dam will reduce stagnate water and improve sediment transport along the River.
- The project will also create functional floodplains.

VI. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in March. Date, time and location to be determined.