



Maumee AOC Advisory Committee

December 11, 2025, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Location: Ohio EPA Northwest District Office, 347 N. Dunbridge Rd., Bowling Green, OH 43402

Virtual Option: Microsoft Teams

Minutes

Attendance: Bill Burkett, Jenny Carter-Cornell, Sally Gladwell, Brandon Heaney, Shawn Duke, Beth Landers, Mike Pniewski, Zuri Carter, Amber Bellamy, Cherie Blair, Cassie Lovall, Leah Medley, Bryan Hinterberger, Archie Lunsey, Jesse Stock, Kris Barnswell, Sara Guiher, Matt Kovach, Don Nelson, Ross St Clair, Vanessa Steigerwald, Melissa Hopfer, Matt Genchur

1. Welcome & Call to Order

Jenny Carter-Cornell, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Meeting logistics were reviewed for in-person and virtual participants.

2. August Meeting Minutes. Jenny requested a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Zuri Carter made the motion, Beth Landers seconded, and the motion passed.

3. U.S. AOC Conference Update / AOC Cross-Agency Partnership Summit Recap. Jesse Stock provided a recap. The 2025 AOC Cross-Agency Partnership (ACAP) Summit convened a broad and highly representative group of 284 participants from 134 unique organizations across nine industry sectors, reflecting the full scope and complexity of Great Lakes AOC work. Attendees included 38 federal representatives from agencies such as U.S. EPA, USACE, NOAA, USFWS, and NPS; 52 state agency staff—the largest sector represented—from Ohio EPA and AOC agencies across Michigan, New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio; and 27 local and municipal partners from cities, counties, sewer districts, stormwater utilities, and environmental offices, underscoring the critical role of on-the-ground implementation. Seventeen members from the Maumee AOC Advisory Committee (MAAC) attended the Summit.

The Summit also included private-sector professionals (34) from engineering, consulting, and construction firms; 29 nonprofit and environmental NGO representatives engaged in stewardship and public outreach; 18 academic participants from universities across the region; seven scientific research organizations; one tribal government representative; and 11 community members, students, or independent participants, highlighting continued public interest and commitment. Designed to strengthen cross-agency collaboration and shared learning, the three-day event combined plenary sessions, panels, breakout discussions, poster sessions, networking events, and highly valued field trips showcasing GLRI-funded restoration projects. Participants emphasized the importance of peer-to-peer exchange, applied learning, and relationship-building in advancing AOC cleanup, restoration, and delisting efforts across the Great Lakes basin.

Evaluation results demonstrated high participant satisfaction and confirmed the Summit's effectiveness in improving knowledge-sharing, reducing silos, and strengthening partnerships across agencies and AOCs. Travel support was critical to ensuring broad geographic and organizational representation, particularly for local advisory council members and practitioners without dedicated travel budgets. Lessons learned highlighted the need for earlier agenda finalization, clearer registration deadlines, and fully accounting for staff time and logistical demands in future budgets.

4. U.S. EPA Task Force Leader Report, Leah Medley, U.S. EPA GLNPO

Leah acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding federal continuing resolutions and thanked partners for their continued work and adaptability.

5. Ohio EPA AOC Coordinator Report / Year in Review, Cherie Blair, Ohio EPA

a. Beneficial Use Impairment (BUI) Status Updates

Cherie Blair provided a comprehensive year-end update on the status of Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) within the Maumee AOC. For BUI 4 (Fish Tumors and Other Deformities), Ohio EPA had anticipated potential removal in 2025; however, while bullhead tumor targets are being met across all assessment units, the Lower Ottawa River remains impaired for DELTs (deformities, erosions, lesions, and tumors). This result was not unexpected, as the remaining impairment is located near the former landfill area. As a result, removal of BUI 4 is now tentatively delayed until after the next major fish sampling event, currently planned for 2027, and/or completion of the associated Great Lakes Legacy Act (GLLA) remediation. Based on current information, removal is estimated for 2028–2029.

With respect to BUI 3 (Fish Populations) and BUI 6 (Degradation of Benthos), Cherie noted that extensive aquatic habitat projects continue throughout the AOC and remain the primary path toward meeting removal targets. Ohio EPA is also participating in a statewide evaluation of estuarine conditions along the Lake Erie shoreline, including both AOC and non-AOC sites. This effort is intended to determine whether existing benthic targets are realistic, given that many AOCs are experiencing similar challenges. Field sampling was completed during summer 2025, with support from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USGS. A draft report is expected in December 2025, followed by a final report in January 2026. Any resulting target revisions are anticipated in 2026 or 2027, though current projections for BUI removal remain around 2028, pending project completion and data review.

For BUI 8 (Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae), additional clarity was gained regarding data requirements. Because the removal criteria require recent data (within three years), Ohio EPA anticipates repeating data collection in 2027. Assuming results meet targets, removal could occur shortly thereafter, with 2028 identified as a reasonable estimate.

Regarding BUI 10 (Beach Closings), data collection and review are ongoing. Documentation is being prepared during winter 2025–2026. Cherie indicated that while the committee may receive a briefing as early as February 2026, a full document and formal discussion are more likely at the May 2026 meeting.

Finally, BUI 14 (Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat) reached a major milestone. All wildlife habitat targets have been met, and that portion of the BUI is complete. The remaining fish habitat component is dependent on post-construction monitoring and the next Ohio EPA sampling cycle. If monitoring results are favorable, removal of BUI 14 could occur as early as 2028.

b. Wildlife Habitat Projects

Target: Enhance, restore, or acquire 3,427 acres. Achieved: 3,517 acres (exceeding the target by 90 acres).

Funding: ~\$19 million in AOC wildlife habitat funding. ~\$85 million leveraged from additional sources. All 20 wildlife habitat projects were completed by May 2025.

c. Aquatic Habitat Projects

Nearly \$36 million received since 2021. 37 projects or project phases underway. Status summary: 5 in assessment/design and 4 mobilizing for construction and 2 under construction. 19 substantially complete. Goal: All aquatic management action projects substantially complete by 2027.

d. Highlighted Project Updates

Cherie provided updates on several major habitat restoration projects throughout the AOC. The Delaware Horseshoe and Clark Island project on the Maumee River was highlighted as one of the largest habitat projects implemented in the

river to date, with an investment of approximately \$13.8 million. The project included installation of more than 200,000 native plants, over 1,200 trees, and a wide range of in-water habitat features designed to improve ecological function and fish and wildlife habitat.

Packer Creek projects, implemented by the Ottawa Soil and Water Conservation District, were described as a multi-site effort occurring largely on private lands. These projects demonstrated strong landowner engagement and resulted in measurable improvements to flood capacity and stream function.

The City of Toledo's stream restorations at Bandor Park and Jermain Park were completed successfully despite weather-related and logistical challenges encountered during construction.

The City of Oregon's Taylor–Yarrow–Berlin stabilization project restored approximately 2,500 linear feet of stream. During construction, contaminated but non-hazardous material was encountered and appropriately handled and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations.

e. Contaminated Sediment Projects

An update was provided on contaminated sediment projects within the AOC. For the Lower Maumee River Sway Bridge and Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) sites, 100 percent design completion has been achieved, with the total project cost estimated at approximately \$53 million. Funding awards are anticipated in 2026, with remediation activities expected to begin in 2027.

In the Ottawa River, a newly identified contamination hot spot was discussed. Additional sampling confirmed that contamination is more extensive than initially anticipated. As a result, a feasibility study and remedial design are planned, with funding for these efforts anticipated in 2026.

The Swan Creek contaminated sediment project is currently paused due to resource constraints. It was noted that work on this site is expected to resume following progress on higher-priority sites elsewhere in the AOC.

6. Facilitating Organization's Report, Jesse Stock, PCS

Financial Update: Total facilitation award: \$209,000 (multi-year through March 31, 2027). Expenditures to date: \$37,197.52.

2026 Planned Activities: Increased focus on project tours (including potential urban tours). GLRI and Healing Our Waters tours are targeted to align with elected officials' availability. Preparation of the 2026 Annual Report. Staffing Update at Partners for Clean Streams. Marketing & Communications position to be refilled following recent vacancy.

7. MAAC Membership, Jesse Stock

a. Membership Renewals

Renewing committee members: Sean Duke, Zuri Carter, Bill Burkett. Mike voiced a motion to approve renewals. Approved unanimously.

b. New Member Application. Jesse Martin (The Nature Conservancy) recommended as a replacement member. Motion to approve new members. Approved unanimously.

Appreciation was expressed to outgoing members Ashley Decker and Brandon Heaney for their service.

8. Partner Updates

No partner updates were brought forward.

9. Proposed 2026 Meeting Schedule

Proposed schedule (second Thursday of each quarter at 1:00 PM): February 12, May 14, August 13, December 10. Dates generally acceptable; meetings to continue to be held virtually, with December being in-person.

10. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

11. Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:34 PM.