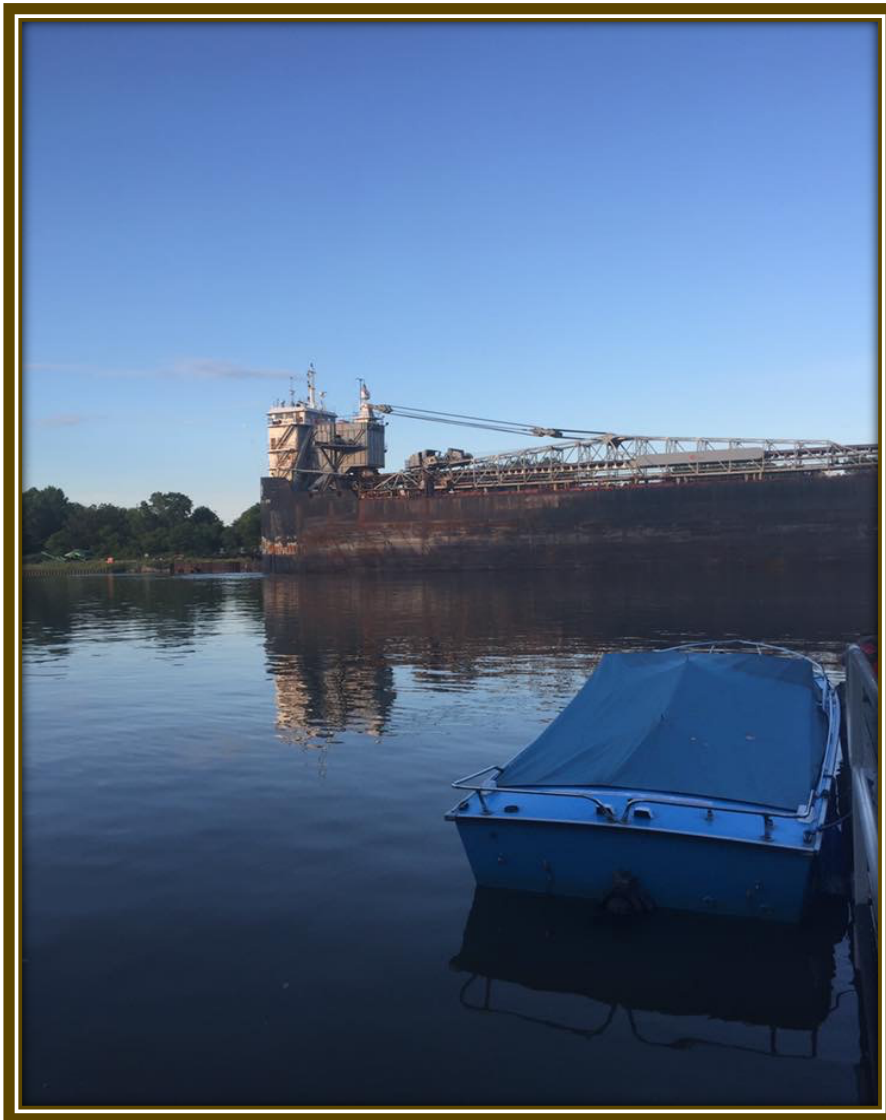




# Black River Advisory Committee

# AOC ANNUAL REPORT



Black River, Lorain, OH – photo courtesy of LoCo 'Yaks

**It is our river.**

**It is our responsibility.**

**It is our future.**

Encouraging stewardship of our valuable natural resource: The Black River. We identify and focus priorities within the Black River Area of Concern; to this end, the Black River AOC Advisory Committee shall support those agencies involved in activities of restoration, remediation of beneficial use impairments, facilitation of public outreach activities & events, and education of all those within the Black River Watershed.

**April 1, 2018 – March 31, 2019**

---

## Message to our Stakeholders

---

Sponsored by the Ohio EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the Black River AOC Advisory Committee (BRAC) assists with funding requests and project designation along the lower six miles of the Black River watershed, extending from Elyria through Sheffield Village and Lorain, before emptying into Lake Erie. While removing the river's "Area of Concern" (AOC) label is the number one priority, the committee also strives to provide community awareness and create public involvement. With all management action projects established, the committee's current focus is on project oversight, data collection, removal of the Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs), and community inclusion.

The Black River AOC Advisory Committee's facilitator, LoCo 'Yaks, is a Lorain County grassroots nonprofit dedicated to the health and recreation of our regional waterways.

The purpose of this Annual Report is to inform the watershed community and our stakeholders of the progress made on removing BUIs and restoring the AOC. If you would like more information on any of the topics covered, or would like to join the effort to restore the Black River, please contact any of the AOC Advisory Committee members listed at the end of this report, or visit [www.blackriveraoc.com](http://www.blackriveraoc.com).



Bascule Bridge and Freighter historical photo courtesy of Google Images

---

## Quarterly Meetings

---

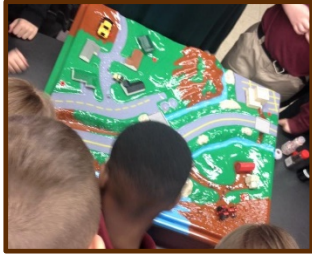
The BRAC held four quarterly meetings during the 2018-2019 grant cycle: April 23, 2018; July 16, 2018; October 22, 2018; and January 29, 2019. Meeting business focused on updates on restoration projects occurring within the AOC, BUI removal updates, and Management Action Plan accordance. Meeting agendas and minutes can be found at [www.blackriveraoc.com](http://www.blackriveraoc.com). All meetings are open to the public, and the summer meeting specifically targets news media, new members, and area stakeholders. With a pre-meeting luncheon, and a trolley site tour afterwards, a larger-than-normal meeting attendance was experienced with several visitors from the US Army Corps of Engineers. Regular quarterly meeting attendance has also increased, as well as our active and voting members lists.

---

## Community Outreach Events

---

### Marine Debris Prevention Clinics & Virtual Reality (VR) Headsets



Environmental education clinics continued with the Enviroscape Watershed Model and other activities designed for discussing storm drains, marine debris prevention, and various BRAC activities & events. This year, we were also able to purchase a 360° sport camera, iPods, and VR headsets so that we can show footage of the Black River and her many restoration projects from the comfort of a meeting or conference. Presenting at various watershed festivals and sharing our educational information with schools, community groups, businesses, watershed associates, and local activists, has allowed the LoCo 'Yaks to share the river's status, progress, and prospective future, while educating on ways everyone can help protect our waterways.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Black River Clean-Up (BRCU)

In May 2018, the BRCU saw 296 volunteers who removed 12.69 tons of debris from the Black River, her banks and adjacent lands. This total includes more than 2,610 pounds of scrap metal and 438 tires that were repurposed or recycled. In the last six years combined, BRCU has removed 99.4 tons of marine debris. Without this group of dedicated and hard-working volunteers, the river would not be nearly as close to de-listing. Grassroots community groups are key to the overall success of environmental preservation achievements. Those nearest to nature are continuing to make a great effort for change so that rehabilitative grant dollars can continue working for the health of the Black River.

### 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Kayak-A-Thon

The City of Lorain hosted the Annual Black River Kayak-A-Thon on Saturday, August 25, 2018, welcoming approximately 40 casual paddlers to the Black River. This year's Kayak-A-Thon was rescheduled due to weather and featured a casual float for kayakers, canoeists, and SUPs, although no SUPs participated this year. Float participants launched their boats from the Lorain County Metro Parks French Creek kayak launch, located in Sheffield Lake, and ended at the Lorain Port Authority's Black River Wharf Boat Launch. They were also encouraged to stop at designated locations to learn about the restoration projects and get rubber tokens that were later exchanged for prizes at the awards ceremony, which was also held at the Wharf.

The Kayak-A-Thon is a public outreach activity intended to showcase the restoration work that has been accomplished by the City of Lorain and other partners on the Black River. This restoration work has included the removal of slag (a by-product from ore smelting) from the floodplain with planting of native grasses & trees; creation of fish shelves near the heron rookery; stream bank stabilization, invasive vegetation removal, and native live-stake plantings. The Kayak-A-Thon also serves to encourage water recreation and promote eco-tourism on the Black River.

Organizational and monetary support for the Kayak-A-Thon comes from specifically appropriated grant funds and is also donated by the City of Lorain, Lorain County, Coldwater Consulting, LoCo 'Yaks, as well as other river & restoration stakeholders.

### Lake Erie Starts Here Stenciling

In partnership with the City of Lorain we have continued the Lake Erie Starts Here storm drain stenciling initiative where and when time allows. Volunteers were able to stencil 57 drains throughout the city. With plenty of paint and stencils waiting for warmer asphalt, this program will continue throughout the county until further notice.

### Black River Summit

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Black River Summit was held at the Antlers Ballroom in Lorain, Ohio on March 21, 2019. Presenters included Chris Korleski, Director of the Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) for the U.S. EPA in Chicago, Lorain Mayor Chase Ritenauer, Lorain County Commissioner Matt Lundy, and Lynn Garrity from the Lake Erie Commission. Following, we heard from Max Schaefer and Kurt Hernon regarding Lorain downtown “Success Stories”. Ending the Summit, we were fortunate enough to see a Broadway Streetscape presentation from Phil Enderel of The Collaborative – a design & planning firm who exists “to create alongside our clients, designing environments that capture their unique spirit” and completed Lorain’s Streetscape concept leading to inception, which, in turn, created an interest in downtown Lorain and the many business opportunities available. And finally, Radhika Reddy closed the Summit discussing why she is currently investing millions into the rehabilitation of a nearly dilapidated hotel on the Black River in downtown Lorain, Ohio.

**City of Lorain:**

- 1) Lower Black River AOC Remediation & Restoration Program
  - a. Seep Site
    - i. Construction of the Seep Remediation System has been completed. Monthly effluent sampling and monitoring are on-going to ensure that the system reaches equilibrium and continues to operate as designed.
  - b. Black River Fish Shelf Site
    - i. Design was completed, the project went out for bid, and a contractor was selected. Construction was initiated in late 2017 and scheduled to conclude in mid-2018.
  - c. Reclamation Site
    - i. Collection and analysis of various field data was completed throughout 2017 to inform the remediation design alternatives. Constituent-specific treatment technologies have been identified and design-related activities will continue into 2018.
- 2) Lakeview Park Beach Beneficial Use Impairments
  - a. Gathering and review of existing data was performed to facilitate the development of a hydrodynamic model.
  - b. The Quality Assurance Project Plan was completed in anticipation of field data collection and analytical processes to follow in 2018.

**Lorain County:**

- 1) Willow Creek Stream Restoration Project
  - a. Final Completion of the project was achieved and in doing so, restored 0.3 miles and 0.75 acres of riparian corridor and floodplain habitat respectively along Willow Creek within the Eaton Township Park. 10.84 acres of wetland habitat was enhanced at the Margaret Peak Nature Preserve.
  - b. Planning and coordination of additional upland habitat restoration that will utilize remaining funds in 2018 was initiated.
  - c. A Supplemental Assistance Agreement was executed on 9/18/2017 to provide funding for stream, riparian, and floodplain restoration activities on Fortune Ditch at the Margaret Peak Nature Preserve.
- 2) Fortune Ditch Stream Restoration Project
  - a. On 9/18/2017 a Supplemental Assistance Agreement to the Willow Creek Stream Restoration and Enhancement grant was executed to provide funding for the Fortune Ditch Stream Restoration Project at the Margaret Peak Nature Preserve.
- 3) Invasive Vegetation Control in the Lower Black River Area of Concern, Phase II
  - a. As of 12/31/2017, 62 acres of invasive vegetation has been controlled
- 4) Invasive Vegetation Control in the Black River and Lake Erie Tributaries, Phase III
  - a. As of 12/31/2017, 36 acres of invasive vegetation has been controlled

## BUI Status

Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs): An **impairment of beneficial uses** means a change in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the Great Lakes system sufficient to cause any of 14 specific, defining properties. The Black River's BUIs and their statuses are listed below:

	BUI	STATUS
1	Restrictions on Fish and Wildlife Consumption	REMOVED
2	Tainting of Fish and Wildlife Flavor	N/A
3	Degraded Fish and Wildlife Populations	IMPAIRED
4	Fish Tumors or Other Deformities	IN RECOVERY
5	Bird or Animal Deformities or Reproductive Problems	N/A
6	Degradation of Benthos	IMPAIRED
7	Restrictions on Dredging Activities	IMPAIRED
8	Eutrophication or Undesirable Algae	REMOVED
9	Restrictions on Drinking Water Consumption or Taste, and Odor Problems	N/A
10	Beach Closings	IMPAIRED
11	Degradation of Aesthetics	IMPAIRED
12	Added Costs to Agriculture or Industry	N/A
13	Degradation of Phytoplankton and Zooplankton Populations	N/A
14	Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat	IMPAIRED

---

## Management Actions Plan

---

“Management actions ... are the reasonable and realistic actions that could be taken to remove the relevant BUIs and, hence, delist the AOC. These actions may not result in the immediate removal of a set of BUIs, but they are expected to remove the contaminant threat that will allow environmental conditions to improve over time and lead to eventual delisting of the AOC. All management actions necessary for delisting are considered implemented once those actions have commenced and the work is completed over the life of the project.” [[www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)]

In 2017, BRAC’s Management Actions Plan was amended because new data indicated that revisions would be needed to ensure achievement of the programmatic goals. In a letter from Tinka Hyde, Director of the Great Lakes National Program Office, the EPA agreed “that modifying the revised management actions as [proposed] will result in completing all necessary actions for removing BUIs at this AOC,” and accepted our revisions. With these changes, BRAC has set a timeline goal of September 2019 for completion of all management actions.

---

## Other Committee News

---

### New BRAC Logo

With the reorganization of the committee over the last few years, the time came for re-branding. Coordinating with graphic design students at Lorain County Community College, and several weeks of discussion, BRAC selected a new logo to represent the AOC. Once de-listed, the logo will transition with the group into a watershed protection. Thanks to Genesis Rivera for the logo design.



### Regional AOC Conference

In March 2017, the Regional AOC Conference was in Grand Rapids, MI, with outstanding representation from the Ohio AOCs, Black River had more than eight delegates in attendance. Several topics were discussed and presented, offering all who attended new ideas and varying perspectives on the work still to be completed. At our next quarterly meeting, the committee confirmed that although the end result will change BRAC’s purpose and direction, and end our government funding, the most important part of this work is *saving the river*, first and foremost. The societal and economic benefits of de-listing an AOC are well-beyond anything an impaired river can offer.

---

## Outlook & Future Events

---

The BRAC’s journey to rehabilitate the Black River has been a decades-long adventure, but thanks to the Ohio EPA through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), if we complete our management actions by the end of 2019, we hope to be ready for de-listing just a few short years later.

In the meantime, our grant cycle for 2018 began April 1<sup>st</sup> with new and continuing community outreach projects. With plenty of paint and drains available, the Lake Erie Starts Here storm drain stenciling program will continue throughout the year as long as the streets are warm and dry. The Marine Debris Prevention Clinics have also continued to be very popular with county schools, and with the addition of Helpful Homeowner Clinics we expect to be busier than ever sharing information to help every citizen do their part to aid our watershed. Additionally, with a coordinating grant from the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, virtual reality tours will be ready for public presentation later this summer. For more information on community outreach events or to volunteer your services, please contact the facilitating organization.

---

## Contact Information

---

### Black River AOC Advisory Committee Facilitating Organization: LoCo 'Yaks [www.locoyaks.com](http://www.locoyaks.com)

- ◆ Stephanie Moore Koscho  
(419) 239-3779, LoCo 'Yaks Co-Founder & CFO
- ◆ Robb Koscho  
(440) 308-7296, LoCo 'Yaks Co-Founder & Executive Director
- ◆ [lorainblackriveraocac@gmail.com](mailto:lorainblackriveraocac@gmail.com)



### Black River AOC Advisory Committee

- ◆ Chair – Don Romancak, Director, Lorain County Community Development Department  
(440) 328-2323, [dromancak@loraincounty.us](mailto:dromancak@loraincounty.us)
- ◆ Vice-Chair – Tom Brown, Executive Director, Lorain Port Authority  
(440) 204-2269, [tbrown@lorainportauthority.com](mailto:tbrown@lorainportauthority.com)
- ◆ Liaison – Kate Golden, Storm Water Manager, City of Lorain  
(440) 204-2003, [Kathryn\\_Golden@cityoflorain.org](mailto:Kathryn_Golden@cityoflorain.org)



This publication was published in part/totally through a FFY 2016 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. The contents, views, opinions, findings, &/or conclusions or recommendations contained in this publication are those of the authors and have not been subject to any Ohio EPA review and may not reflect Ohio EPA views and does not infer endorsement.