

# **2006 Annual Update**

# **Black River Remedial Action Plan**



**The purpose of this Annual Report is to inform the watershed community on progress made by the Black River RAP in restoring Beneficial Use Impairments. It provides background information on many of the projects being undertaken. If you would like more detailed information on any of these topics, feel free to contact the watershed stakeholders referenced on the back of this report.**



Cover photos courtesy of  
"A Hidden Treasure: Rediscovering the Black River"

## **BENEFICIAL USE IMPAIRMENTS (BUIs)**

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement calls for Remedial Action Plans (RAPs) to restore and protect 14 beneficial uses in Areas of Concern. An impaired beneficial use means a change in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the Great Lakes system sufficient to cause any of the following:

- 1. Restrictions on fish and wildlife consumption \***
- 2. Tainting of fish and wildlife flavor +**
- 3. Degradation of fish wildlife populations \***
- 4. Fish tumors or other deformities \***
- 5. Bird or animal deformities or reproduction problems \*\***
- 6. Degradation of benthos \***
- 7. Restrictions on dredging activities \***
- 8. Eutrophication or undesirable algae \***
- 9. Restrictions on drinking water consumption, or taste and odor problems +**
- 10. Beach closings \***
- 11. Degradation of aesthetics \***
- 12. Added costs to agriculture or industry +**
- 13. Degradation of phytoplankton and zooplankton populations \*\***
- 14. Loss of fish and wildlife habitat \***

+ *Not impaired*

\* *Impaired in the Black River Area of Concern*

\*\* *Unknown but impairment not specified*

# BLACK RIVER RAP



Black River Remedial Action Plan  
OUR RIVER, OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Prepared by  
**Black River Remedial Action Plan  
Coordinating Committee**

**Ken Pearce, Chair**  
Lorain County Health Commission

**Black River RAP Secretariat**  
provided by  
**Northeast Ohio Areawide  
Coordinating Agency**  
1299 Superior Avenue  
Cleveland, Oh. 44114  
www.noaca.org

**Stephen D. Hambley**  
Medina County Commissioner  
2006 NOACA Governing Board President

**Howard Maier**  
Executive Director, NOACA

**Pamela Davis**  
Manager of Environmental Planning  
NOACA

**Andy Vidra**  
Editor, NOACA

**Daniel Boyle**  
Graphic Design, NOACA

# 2006 Annual Update

## Black River Remedial Action Plan

### Environmental Conditions

Fish and other aquatic life are doing well in the mainstem but poorly in the upper watershed.

Water quality is generally meeting Ohio Water Quality Standards except for widespread violations of the fecal coliform bacteria criteria.

Fish tumor levels appear to be decreasing, and fish tissue contaminants were found to be below current FDA action levels for fish consumption advisories, leading to the hope that fishing bans may soon be lifted along the mainstem.

Although sediments with high levels of PAH's have been removed, sediments deposited in the mainstem continue to contain elevated levels of metals and some organics and are considered to be "highly polluted" according to USEPA guidelines.

Great Blue Herons have established rookeries at three sites in the basin in the last few years

### Contributing Causes of Impairment

The loss of streamside vegetation has a major impact on the fish communities in the basin (particularly in the upper watershed).

High sediment loads, which further impact the fish and make the river look bad, result primarily from the lack of adequate control measures on agricultural lands and on construction sites.

Poorly maintained and failing septic tank systems are a major cause of high bacteria levels in much of the watershed. Large herds of farm animals also contribute to the problem in the upper watershed.

Combined sewer overflows and separate sewer overflows are still a problem in heavily urbanized portions of the watershed.

Runoff from urban yards and streets contribute substantial pollution to the mainstem area.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### BLACK RIVER REMEDIAL ACTION PLAN

#### Stage 1 Report

### Public Involvement

Friends of the Black River have organized clean-up activities and sponsored educational and stream monitoring programs.

The RAP continues to be challenged by the limited level of community awareness and needs to overcome the lack of feeling of connectedness to the river on the part of local residents.

There remains a belief that economic development and environmental health cannot go hand in hand.

There is a need to involve everyone in the cooperative effort to restore the river.

### Early Action Items

Restoration of the area surrounding the river and the planting of streamside vegetation are vital to the recovery of aquatic life throughout the basin.

Regulations effecting municipal sewage treatment plants and sewer overflows will continue to be enforced.

Expanded pollution prevention activities will need to be emphasized by all industrial dischargers.

Existing septic tank management programs need to be expanded and intensified.

There is a need to enhance on-going erosion control initiatives in agricultural areas.

The RAP will actively support the continuation of public awareness building programs.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, Ken Pearce

Chairman of the Black River RAP Coordinating Committee and Lorain County General Health District Commissioner

Every year, I get the chance to open the Black River RAP Annual Report with a few words about the efforts being made to improve the Black River. Recently I read comments that Commissioner Betty Blair wrote about

the River that capture the essence of why so many people have worked so long to restore and protect the Black River. I can't say it better, so I will let Betty speak for us.



## THE TIE THAT BINDS LORAIN COUNTY

By Commission Betty Blair

“From the southern-most beginnings of both the East and West Branches of the Black River, to the point where they join as one in Cascade Park in downtown Elyria, to its end at Lake Erie in Lorain, the Black River binds our community together. It ignores political boundaries as it meanders northward. Sometimes it moves slowly, peacefully and serenely through long pools and over various falls. Sometimes it flows ferociously as it did recently after the June 23, 2006 storm. Standing on the banks of the East Branch on that day, the water flowed with such force and vengeance that the noise itself was frightening. Anyone visiting Cascade Park on a sunny day would probably not believe how high the water rose over its banks during this storm.

destructive powers during the 1969 flood when it folded my brother's two-car garage in half and scattered its contents every which way before disappearing downstream. I saw firsthand that the force of water can be very destructive.

But, the River's beauty can also be enjoyed when the waters are calm during the rest of the year. And, the River



As a youngster, I played on the banks of the East Branch and swam in its waters. But, I never had to welcome it into my home when it reached flooding levels. I did witness its terrible

serves as our drinking water source both directly, or through Lake Erie. Day in and day out, the Black River really does bind our community together.”

**Thank you, Betty.** With such an important natural resource in our county, we would be wise to help protect and preserve the river's beauty, wildlife and waters. Since being designated as one of the most polluted rivers in the Great Lakes, the Black River has seen significant improvements. Now, let's get with it and finish the job.

—Ken Pearce

## FORD ROAD INDUSTRIAL LANDFILL CLEANUP

The Black River Remedial Action Plan Committee (RAP) has been charged with the restoration of the Black River Area of Concern (AOC). The AOC is impaired for several beneficial uses, two of which are Restriction on Fish Consumption and Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Habitat.

Fish consumption advisories for the Black River mainstem are primarily due to PCB contamination and the advisory area begins near the Ford Road Industrial Landfill site and follows the flow of the river to Lake Erie. Although the Ford Road site has been discussed as a potential source of the PCB contamination, environmental monitoring has been inconclusive.

The US EPA has proposed a two-part cleanup plan for the Ford Road Industrial Landfill site. To reduce environmental and human health risks, exposed waste material needs to be relocated within the landfill and the existing cover needs to be improved.



Any specific areas that are found to contain contamination beyond safe levels, such as PCBs, should be removed and if necessary, relocated to another facility capable of handling such waste materials.

Any steep slopes where waste material has been exposed, or has the potential to be exposed through erosion, may need to be modified and appropriately covered with clean material.

The Black River RAP Committee understands the complexity of the remediation but has asked that all efforts be expended to impact as little of the riparian

corridor vegetation as possible, in order to preserve natural habitat features and wildlife migration corridors. The Black River RAP also requested that the site, when remedial measures are completed, be returned to its natural state.

The Black River RAP feels the remediation of this site will lead to improvements to water and habitat quality of the Black River.

## BLACK RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT

Lorain County has been awarded a Watershed Coordinator Grant that will allow for the development of a Watershed Action Plan for the West Branch of the Black River and French Creek. Brian Straka, the Watershed Coordinator, has convened two local advisory committees to aid in the development of the plan.

There are many ways in which individuals and groups can get involved in the Black River Watershed Project. Please explore the opportunities available to you.

### JOIN THE LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

- Attend meetings
- Provide advice and assistance

### BECOME A VOLUNTEER:

- Help with water quality sampling collection
- Help with the implementation of project components
- Help provide assistance with fundraising

### BECOME A SPONSOR:

- Provides: funding, project materials, equipment, use of land for projects, etc.

For more information, call Brian at 440.328.2336 or check out the Project's website <http://www.blackriverwatershed.org>

## **SUPERFUND AND THE BLACK RIVER**

The Superfund spotlight is on the Black River again. However, this time it is good news! USEPA funded a National Research Council study that looked at the effectiveness of dredging contaminated sediments at Superfund Megsites. Although the Black River is not a designated superfund site, the Black River dredging of 1989-1990 was added to the site study list as a success story of what can be accomplished through restoration efforts. The dramatic reduction in

tumors on Black River bullheads that has been documented over the last decade in the navigation channel is very good news for the Black River RAP. It led to the lifting of the Biological Use Impairment in the mainstem of the Black River due to contaminated sediments, a positive step on the road to full restoration of the River. Hopefully, we have learned our lesson and will never allow conditions to deteriorate as we have in the past.

---

## **THE BLACK RIVER RAP RECEIVES FUNDING FOR A NEW VIDEO EFFORT**

In the fall of 2006, the Black River RAP, through mitigation funding from the Ohio EPA, was able to receive money for a new RAP video. The video will be produced in association with the Lorain County General Health District in 2007 and the video will discuss home sewage treatment systems (HSTS), the potential

problems with these systems and the need for routine maintenance. The video will be widely available throughout the Black River watershed and will be an outreach tool for the Health District, who will present a copy to every new and current owner of HSTS systems in Lorain County during inspections.

---

## **USEPA WATERSHED ACADEMY IS A TOOL FOR BLACK RIVER RESTORATION EFFORTS**

The Watershed Academy is a focal point in EPA's Office of Water for providing training and information on implementing watershed approaches.

- Watershed Academy Web offers more than 50 free, self-paced training modules
- Watershed Management Training Certificate awarded to those that complete 15 required modules and self-tests
- Webcast Seminars sponsored monthly - See schedule for upcoming seminars and listen to audio version of past seminars
- Live watershed-related training courses
- Information Transfer Series which includes key watershed documents



All of this can be found at this address: <http://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/>.

# 2006 Black River RAP Coordinating Committee Members

## Local Jurisdictions

Lorain County General Health  
District  
Chairman, Black River RAP  
Coordinating Committee  
**Ken Pearce**

Lorain County Board of  
Commissioners  
**Commissioner Betty Blair**

Lorain County Community  
Development Department  
**Ron Twining**

City of Lorain  
**Mayor Craig Foltin**

City of Elyria  
**Greg Worcester**

Lorain Soil and Water  
Conservation District  
**Robert Ternes**

USDA/Natural Resource  
Conservation Service (NRCS)  
**Karl Schneider**

Lorain County Metro Parks  
**Daniel Martin**

NOACA  
**Andy Vidra**, Secretary

## State/Federal Agencies

Ohio EPA  
**Ted Conlin**

ODNR  
**Jeff VanLoon**

OSU Sea Grant  
**David Kelch**

U.S. EPA  
**Anne Marie Vincent**

## Industry/Commercial

Lorain Chamber of Commerce  
**Michael Challenger**

Lorain County Port Authority  
**Rick Novak**

Lorain County Farm Bureau  
**Julie Hruby**

Lorain County Community  
Alliance  
**Rebecca Gray**

## Community Representatives

**Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin**

**Charles "Eddie" Herdendorf**

**Brad Masi**

**Jennifer Wasilk**

# Black River RAP Contacts

## **Lorain County Community Development Department**

226 Middle Avenue  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
440-328-2322

## **Lorain County General Health District**

9880 South Murray Ridge Road  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
440-322-6367

## **Lorain County Metro Parks**

12882 Diagonal Road  
LaGrange, Ohio 44050  
440-458-5121

## **Lorain Soil & Water Conservation District**

42110 Russia Road  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
440-326-5800

## **Lorain County Community Alliance, Public Services Institute**

Lorain County Community College  
1005 North Abbe Road  
Elyria, Ohio 44035  
440-366-4160

## **Medina County Soil & Water Conservation District**

6090 Wedgewood Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256  
330-722-2628

## **Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency**

1299 Superior Avenue  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
216-241-2414

## **Ohio Environmental Protection Agency**

### **Northeast District Office**

2100 Aurora Road  
Twinsburg, Ohio 44087  
330-963-1200

## **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

### **Region V - Cleveland Office**

25089 Center Ridge Road  
Westlake, Ohio 44145  
440-250-1720



This document has been prepared with a grant received by NOACA from Ohio EPA under Section 604 (b) of the Clean Water Act and from contributions of local public jurisdictions within the NOACA planning area.