

**WLEB Leadership Committee
Draft Minutes
Thursday 12 March 09
Oregon, OH**

8:30 -8:40 Opening Remarks (LTC Snead, Terry Cosby)

- LTC Snead thanked everyone for coming to today's Western Lake Erie Partnership Leadership Committee meeting.
- LTC Snead shared that he met with the mayor of Findlay yesterday – the USGS flood warning system was able to provide the city with 24 hrs notice on the river's height – it has been extremely helpful for the city.
 - The Village of Ottawa is very interested in a similar system as well.
- LTC Snead noted that over the last two days, we have learned a lot about the problems and opportunities facing the WLEB watershed. Today, we will focus on the findings and potential actions identified in the Corps' WLEB watershed management plan.
- LTC Snead stated that we continue to need everyone's participation with review and input to the list of recommended actions and the Watershed Management Plan.
- Everyone was asked to introduce themselves.
- Terry Cosby discussed the stimulus funding that may become available in the next few weeks, which will need spent quickly – staff will be working hard in the watershed to deliver the funding and programs to help improve the watershed.

8:40 -8:45 Approvals of Minutes (LTC Snead, Terry Cosby)

- LTC Snead asked for any comments or questions on the meeting minutes?
- The minutes were not distributed by email – they are available on the website.
 - Approval of the minutes will be held over until the next meeting.
- Craig Forgette, reviewed the open action items. (**Attachment 4**)
- LTC Snead asked how many comments were received on the assessments.
 - Approximately 30-40 comments were received.

8:45 – 9:45 Committee Reports - (Steve Davis)

- Discussion has been held about building a grants committee to increase capacity.
 - Ed Crawford will have a report on that.
- Most of Steve's time has been spent on the conference planning/preparation.

- Outreach Committee – development of content area teams has been worked on over the past few months. These people would feed information to the Committee for use on the website and other outreach avenues.
 - We are still welcoming more people onto the groups.
 - The goal is to connect people doing the work and provide additional leverage and support, as well as increase the work done through partnerships.
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- Projects Committee – The database continues to grow in quantity of information.

- Grants were made to 7 organizations to help fund watershed groups.
- Note on Allen Co SWCD – working to create a watershed group around the St. Mary’s as well.
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- Research Committee – group is struggling a bit with leadership and mission issues. Steve Davis did work on the conference – something the research group perhaps should have done – so thank you to Steve for that.
 - A webpage has been added for the Research Committee to share information that Dick Bartz has collected.
 - Part of the mission is how to share things of interest – trying to determine what that means and how to do it. Capturing, filtering, and sharing that is difficult.
 - Formulating research objectives for the basin is an option – which is also difficult to do.
 - Trying to determine the right work to do, and the right way to do it, rather than wasting or duplicating effort.
 - What do we want to accomplish?
 1. Be looking for research results that could have impact – provide that to the group.
 2. Help identify research needs so people out there are aware of it.
 3. Association of GL Researchers & Lake Erie Millennium Network – we need to tap into those two networks and work with them.
 4. Need for additional research to understand why we are getting more DRP off the land and how it works in the basin.
 5. GLNPO is about to announce \$600K in funding – a lot of this effort should have relevance to the group. This group could help to find the remaining gaps and how to address those gaps.
 6. What has come out of the past 2 days is important – things have come out of these conversations that may give us some good guidance.
 7. IAGLR is holding their annual conference in Ohio in May. This will be a chance for this group to interact with this group. Perhaps a chance to facilitate a research priorities discussion within this setting would be good.
 8. Serving as a clearinghouse or coordinator – for helping identify gaps in research, gaps in the plan, and implementation avenues. It is a complex role.
 9. Tools to help those working in the landscape know where to start and where to focus their efforts – there are such examples in Michigan.
 10. Helping locals know how to put new recommendations from specific research into specific on the ground actions.
 11. Given the complexity of what is out there, perhaps its not about the broad research, but about activities coming from the partnership. Perhaps focusing on what outcomes the group may produce would be important.

12. A summary of the talks from the past 2 days in “plain English” would be good – including links to the research papers that are behind those would be good as well.
 13. Are we able to track our progress on what we have done since this partnership came together? It would be good to show what has happened on the land – i.e. Conservation tillage has increased by x%, or there are x acres of additional buffer strips.
 14. Measuring progress of future projects against baseline data will be important. Research, data, and metrics should all be looked at.
 15. By-Laws provide some guidance on the Research and Data Coordination Team – we should certainly look back at these. It is important that we find a way to define our results.
 16. More focus on data, less on the research portion.
 17. Measuring progress for an action oriented group is important. Not to ignore the research portion, but the emphasis on measuring progress is important.
 18. Would like to refine the purpose of the committee, and realize that it’s a large charge to track and show benefits from all of this work. It may take additional efforts to do this – another committee or subgroup.
 19. We may be at a point where we need to look at permanent staff that is dedicated to the WLEB effort. Everyone here is involved in a lot of other tasks as well – there really is a full time job associated with keeping this moving.
 20. The committees are meant to stair-step from each other. The Committee chairs perhaps need to talk more regularly to help improve coordination between the committees.
 21. The Corps. Reports should provide more actionable plans that the groups can work within – it should help with determining where to put efforts.
- Funding Committee – Focusing on 3-4 things that NGOs can do to advance Great Lakes restoration. OEC has an intern working on organizing an effort to promote the funding programs within the basin.
 - Question about ability to combine the WLEB databases with other databases (funding, projects). If other databases can be linked in, there is information in the WLEB database that could prove useful in that projects in the WLEB database are well designed and have a lot of good information that could be useful.
 - If we can begin to fund projects from the various databases, they will become more viable as places for people to submit projects.
 - A website link can easily be done at the very least.
 - Data integration is becoming a huge issue regionally – communication about the purposes and the information in databases is important.
 - We need to link to the GLRC database, among others.

9:50 – 10:15 Break

10:15 – 10:16 USACE Need for WLEB Potential Actions and Support (**LTC Snead**)

- The leadership committee has received a list of potential actions identified in the WLEB watershed management plan. **The representatives here need to take this list back to their respective agencies and have them make sure that potential actions they know about are included on the list, and quickly provide us with any other input they may have by Friday March 20, 2009.**
- Also, the WLEB's federal partners need your support on this project. If your agency can send in a letter of support, please do so.
- **Finally, LTC Snead recommends that scheduling a meeting with Congresswoman Kaptur jointly and the Federal Agencies of the WLEB Partnership.** He asked if the other Federal agency representatives had any reservations about doing this.
 - None were expressed.

10:16 – 10:18 Explanation of the process for the Potential Actions and Support (**Forgette**)

- We would like to ask each agency to provide a point person for this review process.
- We will provide the FTP site access information for everyone as well.
- URS has prepared a one page summary sheet to detail the response process and provide the links to the documents for review and comment. (**Attachment 6**)

10:18 – 11:50 Presentation of Key Findings & Potential Actions in Draft Report (**Forgette**)

- Presentation by Tom Denbow. The presentation is included in the meeting handouts on the website.

Questions:

- Q Is the input process complete for the plan?
 - A It has all the input received to date – there will always be more.
- Q How do we filter this into projects that we should do.
 - A The High, Medium, Low list should do that. The focus should be on the High items. The Low items are more of a wish list.
- Q The plan seems well put together, well written. Is the St. Joe part of what we can review?
 - A Yes, it is. It has the potential actions.
- Q It looks like the St. Joe has a lot of gaps in it – actions, etc.
 - A The potential actions are in there, but they need a lot of narrative yet. More actions can be added.
- Q Have you done the NRCS Rapid Assessment in St. Joe?
 - A We are about 80% done. We can provide the data to Tom before the final report is printed.
- Q How do we set a wetlands acre goal? How were the numbers given set?
 - This plan was done using “accepted practices” – but we need to consider out-of-the-box options – such as small burms upstream in a watershed – which can create wetlands, but are outside the regulatory framework at this time.

A We know how to create ditches, and there is work OSU has done on two-stage ditches, but there is need to push the envelope on other projects to begin to look at other options. Pilot studies can help do this. We will take the flip-charts from the last 2 days, and translate those into things that we need and things that we can or cannot do right now. We can use these to help determine priorities. We also need to evaluate the potential of projects outside of what we now consider acceptable practices.

Q Wanted to check in on the synthesis of the WLEB plan, the GLRC priorities, and the USACE plans. All of these should feed the WLEB strategic plan, and should tie in with local planning, state planning, etc. Is that a correct characterization of this?

A Yes.

Q We are at a point where looking at the plans and creating a list of actions based on available funding and tied into the GLRC and the WLEB strategic plan, is an important task. The committees need to begin working together to come up with annual recommendations for work plans for the WLEB partnership.

Q Congresswoman Kaptur asked what is needed. We have that list. For many of those needs, there are a lot of programs that fund these practices. It will be tough for this group to prioritize those mechanisms/programs. Getting funding for the partnership to address priorities will be important. How do we see this rolling out?

A This is phase one – we are developing the list of what needs done. From there we can begin to prioritize what should be done first. We can focus funding – and give others information on the priorities within the watershed.

Q Once we get the plans together – do we have the capacity to do the work to spend the money to get the plans implemented?

A That's the difference in the projects and the funds. With CSOs they give out funding and hire consultants. With wetlands, NRCS gets money, but not the people to get it out.

A There is a structural capacity within the local groups – SWCDs, watershed groups, etc.

Q When we talk about funding, what sources are we talking about – that may impact how we fund them.

A NRCS annual appropriation and stimulus dollars are both sources. Example – there is \$8million in WRP that may get handed back because we don't have the staff to get the money out.

A DU has the ability to get things on the ground, but regulatory permitting issues are in the way of implementation.

A Teaching sessions to get the various groups/staff on the same page can help eliminate the timeframes/hurdles in the way of implementation.

- Q Its not just staff in the field – there is also a large administrative need. Can USACE send the plan through the review process to help eliminate some of the regulatory barriers ahead of time?
- A Maybe. NRCS has administrative staff, but the time/process for things is long and slow. USACE will do what it can to reduce the regulatory hurdle.
- Q Need to ensure a strong effort to get the feedback loop to the local folks who have helped provide info for plan development.
- A
- Q Is there enough information in the Rapid Assessments to allow us to judge the outcomes of future projects? Do they give a clear enough baseline?
- A It depends on your baseline. There is information on acres of tillage, miles of buffer strips. Meeting goals there – is that success? Or is it measured through a model? Or at the mouth of the watershed?
- A The reports focus on the local documents that provide the baseline information.
- A Measurement is a stepwise process over time – such as IBI from OEPA and number of homes moved from a floodway.

The comment period is open now – the FTP instructions have been provided electronically – the assessments and the management plan are both available there.

Due Dates:

March 12

- Name of point person for your organization or agency.

March 19

- Missing or incorrectly stated potential actions including lead, estimated cost, etc.

March 20

- Specific or potential authorities you have for implementing potential actions.
- Comments on substantive topics presented in the Draft Management Plan
- Individual Watershed Assessments major omissions.

Up to an additional two weeks could be provided if your agency needs it – but we would like the bulk of comments in by the 20th.

Ohio EPA and Ohio DNR have requested and been granted the additional two weeks.

Craig Forgette noted that getting comments in piecemeal is fine, rather than saving them all until the very end. The sooner they arrive, the sooner they can be dealt with.

The deadline for getting this report to Congress is June of this year.

Will this impact the FY10 federal budget?

- It does not seem likely that it will be delivered in time to do that – but it may have impacts there and elsewhere down the line. Authorization for spending on implementation requires additional action by Congress.

11:50 - 11:52 Leadership Team Charge to WLEB Partners (**LTC Snead, Terry Cosby**)

- Within the next two months, the Operations Committee needs to arrange a joint briefing, with USACE, NRCS, USGS, USEPA, and USFWS WLEB leaders so that we present a unified message concerning the health of the watershed. We will compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of building large dams and retention structures all over this watershed, vs. a comprehensive watershed approach for widespread upland land treatment using on farm conservation practices... such as wetlands, riparian buffers, conservation tillage, nutrient management, and others, to meet the watershed resource needs. These go beyond flooding and include sedimentation, water quality, habitat restoration and protection.

11:52 – 11:55 Unfinished WLEB Business and New Action Items (**LTC Snead, Terry Cosby**)

- Craig, was asked to review the list of new action items for today – see Attachment 4.

11:55-11:57 Brief Discussion – Timing and Format of next WLEB Leadership Team Meeting (**LTC Snead, Terry Cosby**)

- As per our tradition, we rotate our WLEB meetings through the watershed. Our last meeting was in Michigan, this one is in Ohio, and our next is scheduled for Indiana.
- Potential dates are Sep 14 or Sep 15 (a Monday and a Tuesday) or Monday Sep 21

11:58 Adjourn

Attachment 4: WLEB 22 SEP 2008 – Leadership Committee Meeting – Action Items

#	Action Item	Person Responsible	Deadline	Status
1	At annual progress meeting in the spring or fall, review Strategic document.	Davis	31 Aug 09	Brief Mar 2009
2	Submit project ideas to the Projects Database	Project Committee	-	Ongoing
3	Submit events to the web calendar.	Outreach Committee	-	Ongoing
4	Submit articles and events for the Fall newsletter	Outreach Committee	26 Sep 08	Ongoing
5	Development of Strategic Plan tracking form – FTP Site – Progress column	Davis	30 Apr 09	Brief Mar 2009
6	Review of watershed assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Auglaize, Blanchard, L. Maumee, Ottawa, Portage, and Tiffin watersheds. - St Mary's, St Joe's, U. Maumee, and Maumee Bay watersheds. 	All	Comments due by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oct 13 - Nov 10 	Complete
7	Plan for January/February 2-day workshop, including Congressional briefing	Operations Committee	28 Feb 09	Complete
8	Annual needs report	Research Committee	20 Nov 2009	Ongoing
9	Revision of website organization, posting of maps and watershed group info for each subwatershed on wleb.org	Outreach Committee	28 Feb 09	Ongoing
10	Develop a White Paper to address the key products of the Research & Data Committee for the WLEB Leadership to discuss at the next Leadership Committee meeting.	Research & Data Committee	21 Sep 09	
11	Add website links to GLRC database, and other databases of relevance	Outreach Committee	21 Sep 09	
12	Review and provide information on the staffing needs and the funding sources necessary to meet that need. -Skills, location for staff, number of staff.	Operations Committee	21 Sep 09	
13	Arrange a joint briefing to Congresswoman Kaptur, with USACE, NRCS, USGS, USEPA, and USFWS WLEB leaders so that we present a unified message concerning the health of	Operations Committee	31 May 09	

	the watershed.			
14	Collect agency input on actions in WLEB Draft Management Plan. - OEPA & ODNR have been granted two extra weeks.	Operations Committee	20 Mar 09	