

# URBANWATERS

## FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

*Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities*

## Western Lake Erie Basin near Toledo (Ohio)



### Co-Leads

**Peg Donnelly (EPA)**

(312) 886-6109

Donnelly.Peggy@epa.gov

**Cheryl Rice (USDA)**

(419) 893-1966

cheryl.rice@oh.usda.gov

**Michael Pniewski (USACE)**

(716) 445-7262

Michael.d.pniewski@usace.army.mil

## Western Lake Erie Basin Urban Waters Federal Partnership Timeline

The Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) has targeted the Maumee River watershed and its receiving water body, Lake Erie. The WLEB Urban Waters area encompasses the metropolitan Toledo area, and smaller communities upstream in the watershed including Ft. Wayne, Indiana and Defiance, Ohio.

In May 2013, the Urban Waters announcement kick-off was held at Toledo Metroparks' most recent urban park acquisition, the Middle Grounds Park. The location represents the foundational vision for urban waters by providing access to the Maumee River in the heart of downtown Toledo, OH. The Middle Grounds Park includes features like green infrastructure as well as a canoe and kayak livery. With over 60 attendees, representatives from the three federal co-leads [United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS)] described the Urban Waters Partnership concept and encouraged support from U.S. Representative Marcy Kaptur on the need for federal support for the Maumee watershed. Building on the momentum from the announcement and first meetings, WLEB partners have been brainstorming major areas of concern, proposing tools and ideas to address those concerns, and

identifying the needs to target solutions. The UWFP has met over the past three years with 30 to 60 participants in attendance at each meeting. Many active local, state, and federal partners are already working in the basin within the existing WLEB Partnership, the Maumee River Area of Concern, and the Upper Maumee Watershed group bringing priorities as well as issues of concern to the table. At the meetings, partners shared information on continued needs in the watershed and potential projects to address them.

Partners identified the following areas of interest or concern:

- **Reconnecting people with the water** - water efficiency, waterways and economic development, connection to drinking water, dredging in river and bay, lake water levels, and climate change impacts.
- Reconnection of water to wetlands, floodplains and groundwater, and lake features of breakwaters and dunes.
- **Agricultural community engaged** in issues - help businesses and communities understand the benefit of watershed improvements farmers make, help clarify and inform the public of what agricultural land based research means and potential impacts, and better connect agricultural communities with the conservation community and lake stakeholders.
- **Create pride in our waterways.**
- Adapt and react to climate change and extreme weather by accessing technology for the mouth of the river into the bay. Determine usability of the Healthy Lake Erie Fund.
- Total maximum daily load (TMDL) for the Bay - determine how to communicate the importance of clean healthy water. Evaluate if basic water quality data is the best approach to inform and increase understanding of current condition of the river.
- Address the open lake dumping issue as well as the impacts of longer-term storage along the river of dredging materials.
- Increase stakeholder base - use funds to educate public through PSAs, posters, billboards, etc. to empower people. For example, the former 'Give Water a Hand' effort. Determine if a survey is the best approach to find gaps in current understanding and find the best modes of communication to the public.
- Determine the best ways **to get businesses involved.**
- **Recreation is crucial** - determine if more access points and better navigation is needed. Discuss a potential water trail for Lake Erie/Maumee, similar to the ones in Lake Superior and Lake Michigan.
- Increase efforts for regional interaction and partnerships and look for technology applications for treatment of algal blooms.
- **Continue to keep education and outreach a priority.**

# List of Partners

## *Federal Partners*

- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Housing and Urban Development
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Department of Transportation
- US Forest Service
- USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service and Farm Services Agency
- US Geological Survey
- US Coast Guard
- National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration

## *State Partners*

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Department of Natural Resources – Wildlife, Watercraft, Soil & Water Conservation (now at Ohio Department of Agriculture), Forestry
- Ohio Lake Erie Commission

## *Local Partners*

- City of Toledo
- City of Ft. Wayne
- City of Defiance
- Toledo Metropolitan Area Region Council of Governments
- Lucas County Commissioners
- City of Toledo Division of Environmental Services

- Deputy Mayor of the City of Toledo
- OSU Extension
- Point Place Business Association
- Sandpiper Boat Line
- Toledo Metroparks
- Tri-state Watershed Alliance
- Allen County IN SWCD
- Visions of Cullen Park
- Save Maumee
- Maumee AOC
- Partners for Clean Streams
- Lake Erie Waterkeeper
- Lucas Soil & Water Conservation District
- Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments
- American Rivers
- Toledo Design Center
- Oak Openings Regional Conservancy
- Hull & Associates
- Mannik & Smith Group
- Toledo Lucas County Sustainability Commission
- Northwest Ohio River Runners
- Junction Community
- Cherry Street Legacy Community
- Toledo Lucas County Rain Garden Initiative University of Toledo (President's Commission on the River)
- Toledo Zoo
- Toledo Lucas County Planning Commission

## Accomplishments

The following projects that would not have occurred unless the Partnership had been at work include: An Urban Waters Small Grant that served to create a community greening plan for the Junction Community, and a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Five Star & Urban waters Restoration Program project (recently funded to the Cherry Street Legacy Community) to engage neighborhood youth in green infrastructure and urban agriculture skills building. The Junction Community has developed the urban greening plan and has implemented some green infrastructure installations in the neighborhood. The community is continuing to be connected to the Urban Waters Federal Partnership through grant research and communication channels. The Cherry Street Legacy community is at the beginning of their project and is organizing resources and schedules to accomplish rain barrel construction, urban agriculture education and a pollinator garden.

Partners are continuing to collaborate on project-based ideas for the key areas listed above and an increasing number of stakeholders are connecting to the urban waters network of local partners. Key ideas in development include: connecting local neighborhood and community based groups to both technical and financial Urban Waters resources, connecting volunteer watershed monitoring groups with Bowling Green State University's new app KNOWARE that allows full access to collected monitoring results to all users, additional outreach workshops and installations of green infrastructure, and more opportunities to get center-city youth on the river (similar to Canoemobile).