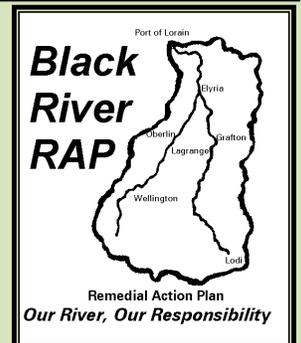


# 2006 Annual Report

## Black River Remedial Action Plan



The purpose of this Annual Report is to inform the watershed community on the progress made by the Black River RAP in its efforts to restore impairments to beneficial uses in the Black River watershed Area of Concern.

The Annual Report provides background information on many of the projects being undertaken by the RAP and its members.

If you would like more information on any of the topics covered in the Annual Report, feel free to contact the RAP Coordinating Committee members referenced at the end of this report.



The Black River, between Elyria and Lorain

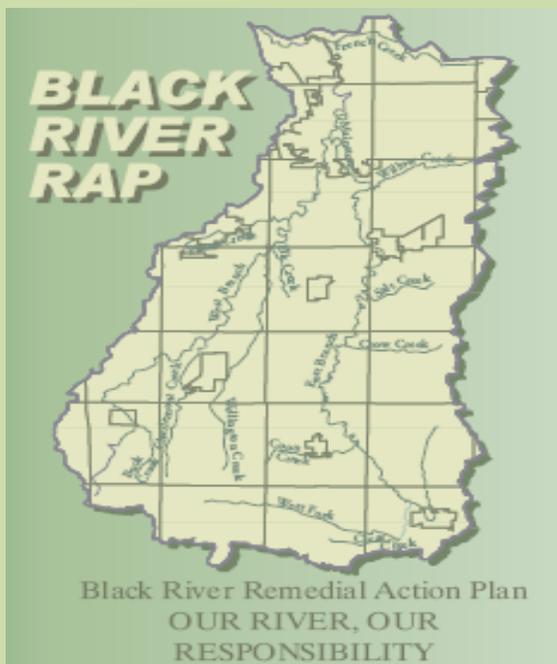
### **Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs)**

The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, as amended, calls for remedial action plans (RAPs) to be developed to restore and protect any of 14 beneficial uses in Areas of Concern (AOC). An impaired beneficial use means a change in the chemical, physical or biological integrity of the AOC 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 or wildlife populations \*
4. Fish tumors or other deformities \*\*
5. Bird or animal deformities or reproductive problems \*\*\*
6. Degradation of benthos \*
7. Restrictions on dredging activities \*
8. Eutrophication or undesirable algae \*
9. Restrictions of drinking water consumption, or taste and odor problems
10. Beach closings (recreational use) \*
11. Degradation of aesthetics \*
12. Added costs to agriculture or industry
13. Degradation of Phytoplankton or zooplankton populations \*\*\*
14. Loss of fish and wildlife habitat \*

- \* Impaired in the Black River AOC  
\*\* In Recovery Phase  
\*\*\* Unknown, but impairment is unlikely

## AOC conditions, in a nutshell



*Prepared by:*

**Black River Remedial Action Plan  
Coordinating Committee**

**Ken Pearce, Chair**  
Lorain County General Health  
District

**Northeast Ohio Areawide  
Coordinating Agency**  
Black River RAP Secretariat

**Anne Marie Vincent**  
US EPA RAP Liaison

**Ted Conlin**  
Ohio EPA RAP Coordinator

### **Environmental Conditions**

Fish and other aquatic life are improving throughout many areas of the watershed.

Except for widespread violations of coliform bacteria, water quality is generally meeting Ohio Water Quality Standards. There is a major concern for the amount of sediment and nutrient getting to the river system.

Although Polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) levels in the lower river sediments have improved and are nearing levels expected for any urban setting, the sediments in the mainstem still contain elevated levels of metals and some organic compounds and cannot be disposed in the open lake.

Great Blue Heron numbers continue to increase in the lower mainstem.

### **Causes of Impairment**

The loss and degradation of streamside vegetation continues to impact fish and wildlife communities and facilitate stream bank erosion.

High sediment loads continue to impact fish and benthic communities and decrease the aesthetics of the river system.

The amount of litter seen in the streams is degrading the aesthetic value of the resource.

Poorly maintained and failing home sewage treatment systems are a major source of coliform bacteria in the rural upper watershed areas. Combined sewer overflows continue to be a problem in the urbanized portions of the watershed.

Rapidly developing areas are increasing the imperviousness of the watershed and leading to flashier stream flows and erosion of stream banks.

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

By Ken Pearce, Chairman of the Black River RAP Coordinating Committee and Commissioner of the Lorain County General Health District

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.

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## The Tie That Binds Lorain County

By Commission Betty Blair

"From the southernmost 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.

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 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 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."



**The Black River mainstem**

**Thank you, Betty.** With such an important natural resource, 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**

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## **FORD ROAD INDUSTRIAL LANDFILL CLEANUP PLAN**

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 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 areas that are found to contain contamination beyond safe levels of contaminants, such as PCBs, will 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.

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## **BLACK RIVER WATERSHED PROJECT**

The Black River RAP Coordinating Committee has always thought the best way of tackling all the problems in the watershed was to elicit local support and

participation and tackle impacts to the watershed in a much smaller scale. After unsuccessful attempts to generate the critical local support by the Committee, the effort was taken up in Lorain County when it was awarded a Watershed Coordinator

Grant. This funding opportunity places a coordinator exactly where one is needed within the watershed. Dan Gouch is the new Black River watershed local coordinator and he is responsible for the development of Watershed Action Plans for the West Branch and French Creek. Dan has re-convened two local advisory committees to aid in the development of the plans.

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.

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

### **What you can do to help:**

#### **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:**

- \* Provide funding, project materials, equipment, use of land for projects, etc.

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## **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 Megasites. 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 fish tumor 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.

# USEPA'S 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

- 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

and information on implementing watershed approaches.

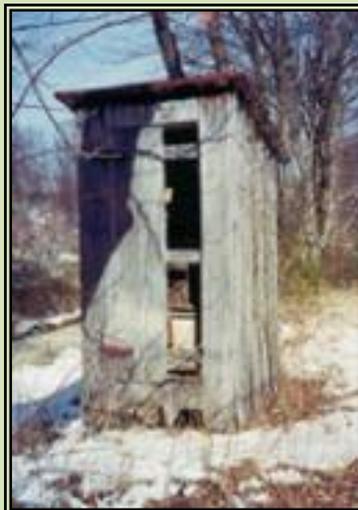
- Webcast Seminars sponsored monthly - See schedule for upcoming seminars and listen to audio version of past seminars
- Live watershed-related training courses
- Information Transfer Series which includes key watershed documents

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

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## THE BLACK RIVER RAP RECEIVES FUNDING FOR AN INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO ON HOME SEWAGE TREATMENT

In the fall of 2006, the Black River RAP, through mitigation funding from the Ohio EPA, received money from the Ohio EPA for a new RAP video. The video will be produced in association with the Lorain County General Health District and it will discuss home sewage treatment systems (HSTS), the potential problems with these systems, the need for routine maintenance, how to recognize system failure and who to contact should failure occur.



The video will be widely available throughout the Black River watershed and will be an outreach tool for Health District personnel, who will present a copy to every new and current owner of HSTS systems in Lorain County during inspections. In addition, copies, without specific county health department contact information, will be made available to every county health department office throughout the Ohio Lake Erie basin.



- Impacted streams            11-25%  
   Imperviousness
- Degraded streams         26-100%  
   Imperviousness

In the Black River watershed, many sub-basins are stressed and a couple of sub-basins can be considered impacted, according to Schueler's scheme. It is probably no surprise that the Black River mainstem is approaching Schueler's degraded classification. Sub-basins of the Black River watershed with the greatest amount of imperviousness include:

- Black River mainstem            20.39%
- French Creek                        11.47%
- East Branch, below Grafton    8.01%
- West Branch, below Plum Cr 6.22%
- Plum Creek                            5.48%

Schueler offers eight tools that can be used to protect watersheds. They are watershed planning, natural area conservation, buffers, better site design, erosion and sediment control, storm water management practices, non-storm water discharges and watershed stewardship. Some of these tools are being incorporated in some areas of the watershed. Some of these tools will be incorporated by localities in their Storm Water Phase II requirements.

As stated above, economic development is both inevitable and desirable. Economic development at the expense of the environment is neither.

It is important to find ways that economic development can occur without imposing a negative impact to the environment. It is a key to the future of the watershed.



# Black River RAP Coordinating Committee Members

## Local Jurisdictions

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

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

Lorain County Community Development Dept.  
**William Ulik**  
**Dan Gouch**, Local Watershed Coordinator

City of North Ridgeville  
**Cathy Becker**

USDA/Natural Resources Conservation District  
**Karl Schneider**

Lorain County Metro Parks  
**Dan Martin**

NOACA  
**Andy Vidra**

USDA/Natural Resources Conservation District  
**Karl Schneider**

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

Medina Soil & Water Conservation District  
**Jeff VanLoon**

NOACA  
**Andy Vidra**

City of Elyria  
**Terry Korzan**

City of Lorain  
**Hon. Craig Foltin, Mayor**

## State/Federal Agencies

U.S. EPA  
**Anne Marie Vincent**, RAP Liaison

Ohio EPA  
**Ted Conlin**, State RAP Coordinator

OSU Sea Grant  
**David Kelch**

## Industry/Commercial Representatives

Lorain County Chamber of Commerce  
**Michael Challender**

Lorain County Port Authority  
**Rick Novak**

Lorain County Farm Bureau  
**Julie Hruby**

Lorain County Community Alliance  
**Rebecca Gray**

National Gypsum  
**Matt May**

## Citizen Representatives

**Cheryl Wolfe-Cragin**

**Charles "Eddie" Herendorf**

**Brad Masi**

**Jennifer Wasilk**

# **Black River RAP Contacts**

## **Lorain County General Health District**

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

## **Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency**

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

## **United States Environmental Protection Agency**

Region V – Cleveland Office  
25089 Center Ridge Road  
Westlake, OH 44145  
440-250-1720

## **Ohio Environmental Protection Agency**

Northeast District Office  
2110 East Aurora Road  
Twinsburg, OH 44087  
330-963-1200

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

42110 Russia Road  
Elyria, OH 44035  
440-366-4160

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

6090 Wedgewood Road  
Medina, OH 44256  
330-722-2628, Ext. 3

## **Lorain County Community Development Department**

226 Middle Avenue  
Elyria, OH  
440-328-2322

## **Lorain County Metro Parks**

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