

Executive Summary

A Watershed Action Plan (WAP) combines scientific data with community values to identify issues that impact the quality of the receiving stream. Watershed planning identifies impairments to water quality associated with specific land-use practices and then develops strategies to correct those impairments through utilizing partnerships among local, state, and national organizations. Goals and strategies described in this WAP aim to improve, enhance, and protect the waters of Old Woman Creek through the installation of best management practices (BMPs), restoration of streambanks and wetlands, and use of various land use preservation tools.

Old Woman Creek (OWC) was selected to be the first watershed to receive a watershed action plan in the Erie County area for three reasons: (1) Extensive research and monitoring has inventoried both environmental and sociological aspects of the OWC watershed including a Total Maximum Daily Load report completed by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), (2) Strong existing conservation partnerships could be enhanced through the planning and implementation of a management plan, (3) The management area of OWC is relatively small compared to other regional watersheds. This allows for a detailed, fine scale approach to project identification and implementation as well as engagement of the watershed's residents.

An Ohio EPA report identified several impairments to OWC including sediment, nutrients, and altered habitat. By implementing this WAP, the Firelands Coastal Tributaries (FCT) Watershed Program expects to return OWC to a healthy state while empowering its communities to reconnect with the Creek and ensure a clean, productive stream for future Firelands generations.

Water Quality impairments in OWC described by the Ohio EPA TMDL 2005 report, include sedimentation, excessive nutrients, and habitat alteration. These impairments encompass several sources that contribute to the pollutant loads: agricultural run-off, streambank and in-stream erosion, improper wastewater treatment, and loss of riparian buffers and wetlands. Through the use of the OWC WAP, the FCT expects to bring the watershed into full attainment while empowering the community to take ownership of their water resource. This will ensure a clean, clear, productive stream for future generations.

Note to the Reader

This plan is divided into chapters beginning with background information about the purpose of this watershed action plan and the importance of watershed management (Chapters 1 and 2), an overview of policies and programs focused on water resource protection (Chapter 3), a detailed inventory of the OWC watershed (Chapter 4), and a description of water quality impairments (Chapter 5). The last two chapters describe identified impairments in association with pollutant reduction goals (Chapter 6) and develop strategies for achieving those goals and evaluating progress (Chapter 7).

The plan should be used as a guide for future remediation efforts in the OWC watershed and a resource for expediting the grant application process for implementing each strategy. To aid the reader, each chapter begins with a short summary of contents and material covered in that section of the plan. Chapters 1-5 provide detailed information to be used to apply for grant funding and seek support from the community through education. Chapter 6 provides detailed timeline and resource information for each strategy to begin the implementation process.

Acknowledgements

FIRELANDS COASTAL TRIBUTARIES WATERSHED PROGRAM (FCT)

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Working toward environmental improvements at the local level is no easy task, nor is it something new for our communities. Money is always scarce and time is always short. Despite the challenges faced by these groups, it is the willingness to partner, sharing resources, expertise, and commitment that makes environmental improvements possible. The increase of watershed awareness in the Firelands area would not have been possible without the partners of the FCT. Many of these groups have been championing the importance of conservation for years and developed valuable partnerships along the way. By refining these partnerships through the mutual goals of the FCT, resources, knowledge, and enthusiasm are shared to enhance and protect local streams and our state's most valuable natural resource, Lake Erie.

The support from these groups is indicative of the grassroots efforts seen in watershed conservation through the nation. The FCT partners realize our home is truly a unique place that needs to be protected for the enjoyment of future generations. Our work may never been done, however our determination and willingness to work together will always inspire residents to be engaged for the common good of their communities and our most critical resource. The FCT is a partnership and would not exist without the commitment of community, for which we thank you. We would also like to give a special thank you to the Friends of Old Woman Creek, who fearlessly sponsored the grant to initiate the FCT program and to develop the OWC WAP. The Friends continued support of the FCT has cultivated community engagement which will be the catalyst for implementation of this plan.

FCT Partners and Supporters

Friends of Old Woman Creek

Erie Soil and Water Conservation District

ODNR-Division of Wildlife/Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve

Bowling Green State University Firelands College

Erie Metroparks
Western Reserve Land Conservancy-Firelands Chapter
EcoSphere Associates
Sandusky/Erie County Community Foundation
Meadow Environments LLC
Erie County Health Department
Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve Foundation Fund
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Huron Soil and Water Conservation District
Ohio Environmental Council
Friends of Pipe Creek Watershed
Erie County Department of Environmental Services
ODNR Office of Coastal Management
ODNR Division of Wildlife
ODNR Division of Soil and Water Conservation
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association
Ohio Sea Grant College Program
OSU Extension
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Erie County Farm Bureau
Erie County Commissioners
Berlin Heights Village Council
Barnes Nursery
Tribs Team Volunteers
Erie County NRCS
Erie County OSU Extension Office
Erie County Regional Planning Commission
Erie County Engineers
Sandusky River Watershed Coalition
Haag Environmental
Berlin Conservation Club
City of Sandusky
Lake Erie Commission
Erie RC&D
Huron Township Trustees
Berlin Township Trustees
Groton Township Trustees
Perkins Township Trustees
Ed Singer, Perkins-250 LLC
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Sandusky Rotary Club
Erie County Master Gardeners
Huron County Master Gardeners
River Network
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The Erie County Volunteer Center

OLD WOMAN CREEK WATERSHED ACTION PLAN (WAP)

The development of the Old Woman Creek Watershed Action Plan was a dynamic process made possible only through tireless efforts of FCT partners, specifically the participants of the WAP Workgroup. The group was a wealth of knowledge and support that truly made this document a reality. The plan is indebted to the support of Charles (Eddie) Herdendorf and Dave Klarer, for submission of maps, data, and use of the Old Woman Creek Site Profile as a direct source for information for the Watershed Resource Inventory (Chapter 4). The Site Profile is an amazing resource any watershed coordinator would covet, but would take several hours to paraphrase its content into the plan. Thank you for streamlining this process. Eddie and Dave also offered suggestions for WAP content and reviewed the final draft. Heather Elmer, Frank Lopez, and Eric Dodrill provided several contributions to the Watershed Approach (chapter 3). There are additional documents that sculpted this plan, if not for the help of Heather, Frank, and Eric, I might still be reviewing those documents. They also served as early draft reviewers of selected chapters and the final draft. Gloria Pasterak helped to format the plan and did final edits of the document, and also kept detailed minutes at workgroup meetings that were valuable in producing a document that reflected the ideas of the participants. I have learned first hand that formatting can be a nightmare; thank you, Gloria for helping me through it. Mapping was essential in understanding the watershed and providing the reader with visual representations of the watershed; Steve Barry not only developed several maps found in this plan but also provided spatial data analysis. I would also like to thank the Sandusky River Watershed Coalition for permission to use their summaries of several environmental policies that affect watershed efforts in Ohio.

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