

PEORIA LAKES BASIN ALLIANCE
Wednesday, January 8, 2019 at 1:30 pm
456 Fulton Street, Suite 401
Peoria, IL 61602

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Ingram called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

Attendees:

The Nature Conservancy:	Jason Beverlin
Heartland Water Resources Council:	Tom Tincher, Wayne Ingram
US Army Corps of Engineers	Chuck Theiling (phone)
Tri-County Regional Planning Commission:	Eric Miller, Reema Abi-Akar, Ray Lees, Michael Bruner

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes for November 13, 2019

Miller moved to approve the November 13, 2019 minutes and Beverlin seconded. Motion passed.

4. Project Development Recap

Abi-Akar gave a presentation regarding what has been done in the past during the Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan process. This illustrated the layers of organization, planning, and prioritization that have already taken place, setting the table for the upcoming discussion for this meeting.

Beverlin said before the group prioritizes any location or measure, we should conduct the hydrological study and consider it the highest priority. Seeing that Agriculture BMPs was ranked as the top priority measure, Beverlin asked if agriculture even fits into the scope of the PLCCP since these fields would fall outside of the bluffs. Others around the room agreed they might be out of scope. Members discussed the boundary of the plan as bluff to bluff. Theiling said that there were stakeholders in the farm and agriculture field who attended the meetings.

Tincher recommended that there should be two areas of focus: Bluff to Bluff and Beyond the Bluff, the latter would be used to implement broader goals and consider the larger effect of sedimentation on our region. Theiling said that there is 100 years' worth of sedimentation entering from the streams in our region.

Ingram noted that the group originally focused on the bluff to bluff scope because this is the area that we can control; we have no control over other regions. Miller said we can support

what other people are doing in their regions while simultaneously doing what we can in our own region.

Bruner said that that is the point of today's exercise, to identify what we can do in our region. Beverlin said it doesn't matter; we'd need to conduct the scientific studies first. Ingram suggested that the group can plan to begin with the hydrological study, but while we wait for funding to come in place, we can select a project to focus on. Theiling said that there are measures that can be undertaken to intercept sediment and direct it within tributaries.

Tincher suggested we therefore focus on projects that utilize and develop sediment while also managing and reducing it. Ingram said we can identify smaller, mid-sized tributaries to conduct projects on. Miller said that whatever we must do, we must implement it locally. He said that we can't rely on money from the US Army Corps because we will keep waiting. Therefore, it would be useful to identify a top one or two project list that we implement specifically.

5. Prioritize Location

a. Reach (Lower, Middle, Upper)

b. Specific Location (Tributary, In-Lake, Adjacent, Etc.)

Tincher said that the only way to save the lake is through economic development and to market the lake. He suggested to leverage our planning to get more money, like Kim Blickenstaff is already doing. Lees suggested we just focus on Blickenstaff because he is the one with the money.

Beverlin said that Blickenstaff is not focused on sediment and environmental issues like this group is. Beverlin said it is too risky to back a project (such as Blickenstaff's) when we don't know what the ecological benefits would be. Beverlin once again brought up the importance of beginning with scientific studies. He said we should be very actively trying to find money to cover this hydrological study.

Lees said that Blickenstaff has not been briefed on the PLCCP before. The group brought up Dwayne Atherton and what he is planning to do in Spring Bay. Beverlin asked, why would we want to work on that project if he is already doing it and paying for it? Lees said, why wouldn't we participate? Miller said that this looks like a project we can design on someone else's dime, and one that we can have more input in.

Tincher said that sediment flow reduction should be a significant priority in any project we should be a part of. Ingram stressed that we must think about long-term maintenance costs when it comes to anything related to sedimentation.

Beverlin asked for more details about Atherton's plan. Theiling responded that they want a mix of lake habitat for trout. He said that upstream is deeper, which leads to better fishing.

Theiling said Atherton wants to create a backwater in the new cove by their marina. Beverin asks what PLBA's role or authority is in that project.

Tincher asked how we can take what we have done and move it to a formalized setting, like when the EPA forced the City of Peoria to do something about stormwater and the CSO issue. Ingram mentioned that we already have a TMDL that recommends environmental changes that we have talked about in the PLCCP.

Beverlin said, "We're flailing around in the wind," regarding the PLBA's direction. He said that this group does not have good direction because it has no authority. He said that the priority should be finding money to conduct studies, not selecting studies when we don't know what's going on under the surface. Ingram said that he agrees, but we also know for sure that erosion is a high priority issue.

6. Prioritize Measures

Beverlin said that education should be a top priority, especially since not many people come to our meetings (small percentage of the total Peoria area population). He said that it is critical to get people to understand what is realistic and viable in the Peoria Lakes.

Tincher said that the group should all come together around one area that we agree with. He said that should be the reduction of sediment, specifically from the tributaries. Beverlin said that the NRDC, IDNR, SWCD, and others are already doing on-the-ground scientific work around this issue. Beverlin then asked a series of questions: Is it even possible to build enough sediment basins to make an impact in reducing sediment? If so, when will the areas fill back in with sediment again? How much will this process cost? Will it be sustainable? Will it solve the problem?

Ingram said that he can investigate the sediment loading in each tributary to understand the size and cost of what it'll take to solve the problem. Beverlin agreed that that could be a useful research project. Theiling said that sediment issues have changed over time, and they were different in the 1970s: Agricultural tiles caused water to flow faster into tributaries and erode them. Miller asked Theiling if the answer to Beverlin's questions lies in a hydrology study. Theiling said no, it would be part of a watershed sedimentation study.

Theiling mentioned a 2006 document produced by the US Army Corps that lays out the locations of catchment basins. Miller said we need a study to pinpoint these locations. Theiling said that the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) is already conducting a state study on this, but they are leaving out the Illinois River. This is part of Section 708, a congressionally authorized study. Ingram said, "we can do that," referring to a study to find sediment basin locations. Miller said we should discuss this with UMRBA staff.

Tincher presented about his 10 projects and mentioned REDCO: Regional Economic Development Coalition among cities like Chillicothe and Peoria Heights.

Beverlin said the group should focus its efforts on finding funding to benefit our projects, and if this funding would overlap to other groups' needs in the region, that would be ideal. Miller asked Tincher if he'd be interested in bringing some of his stakeholders to PLBA meetings to discuss the linkage to the PLCCP. Beverlin said that we could also meet others at their meetings. This could help with the education component.

Tincher and the group discussed the future of Heartland and PLBA, regarding its structure, leaders, and funding. Lees said that Tincher's plan seems most fitting with a group like GPEDC or the Peoria Convention & visitor's Bureau rather than PLBA. Miller said that the river should be marketed as an asset rather than a liability.

Theiling said that the UMRBA has been so successful because they communicate among five states, and there is a commitment of executive level resources through the states.

7. Other

a. Next scheduled meeting: February 12, 2020.

Bruner reminded Beverlin that it is The Nature Conservancy's turn to chair the PLBA. Beverlin or a TNC representative will now chair the PLBA for one year.

8. Adjournment

Ingram adjourned the meeting at 3:53 p.m.