



# EcoCity CLEVELAND

IDEAS AND TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE BIOREGION

\$2

Volume 5, Number 3 June 1997  
Editor/writer: David Beach

## Inside

Lorain County rediscovers  
the Black River



Medina County plans its own  
transportation future



Brownfield shortcuts



Bioregional calendar



## Good words

People will miss that it once meant something  
to be Southern or Midwestern.

It doesn't mean much now,  
except for the climate.

Out on the Minnesota prairie,  
the little Swede towns are dying  
and the vast suburbs are booming,  
which are identical to the suburbs of Atlanta or  
Charlotte, where people live

on Anonymous Drive in Homogeneous Hills,  
people who, when you meet them, the question  
"Where are you from?"

doesn't lead to anything odd or interesting.

They live somewhere near a Gap store,  
and what else do you want to know?

—Garrison Keillor,

from "The Future of Nostalgia,"

an essay in *The New York Times Magazine*

Reluctant or not, a metropolis is woven tightly  
together and cannot be easily unraveled.

It is possible for us to escape or hide,  
but sooner or later our connections  
to the metropolis pull us back to it—  
and it to us...

Sooner or later, there is no place left to go.

—William Fulton,

*The Reluctant Metropolis*

## LAND AND WATER

Where will sewers permit development in the Chagrin and other watersheds?

### Can a plan to manage water quality in Northeast Ohio also help control sprawl?

Wouldn't it be great if cities and towns in Northeast Ohio  
could agree on a rational development plan for the region?  
Wouldn't it be even greater if that plan were based on environmental  
considerations like the impact of development on rivers and streams?

We have a chance to do just that with a new water quality  
management plan for the region.

The question is whether the many communities of Northeast Ohio will  
overcome parochial, competitive pressures and cooperate  
on a long-term plan for the common good.

It will be a major test case for regional cooperation.

See pages 8-12

# Thumbing noses

Our transportation system is a *regional network*—changing one part of it sends ripple effects throughout the system. So it's important that transportation investments be well planned at the regional level.

But there are signs that our regional planning process is breaking down. For example, the story on page 3 tells about the new Medina County Transportation Improvement District. Frustrated that regional plans do not meet their expectations for new roads, Medina County officials are trying to raise local funds to accelerate a massive construction program. What's really going on is this: a small group of landowners and developers have found a loophole (promoted by ODOT) that will enable them to dictate transportation policy for the region. They are thumbing their nose at the rest of the region—

saying that if their projects aren't ranked high enough in the regional priorities, they will find a way around the planning process and build anyway.

At first glance, this may seem reasonable. After all, shouldn't a community have the right to develop the way it wants—especially if it is willing to pay part of its own way? Yes, but only if the regional implications of its actions are taken into account.

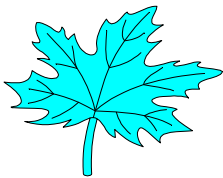
We should all be asking tough questions about the long-term, regional sustainability of these projects. Who will pay for the future maintenance of these new roads and interchanges? Who will pay for the congestion these new roads create elsewhere in the region? Who will pay the environmental costs from increased air and water pollution? Who will pay the tremendous costs of outmigration—the costs of decline imposed on older communities in the region as people and tax base move outward?

Medina County isn't alone in efforts to undermine regional planning. Lorain County just set up a similar Transportation Improvement District. And Lake County recently came up with local funds to accelerate construction of an I-90 interchange at SR 615. Carried to the extreme, we will soon see private development interests buying their own highway projects and interchanges. We've already heard talk of such offers at I-90 and Lear-Nagle Road, I-271 and Brainard/Lander roads, and I-480 in Independence.

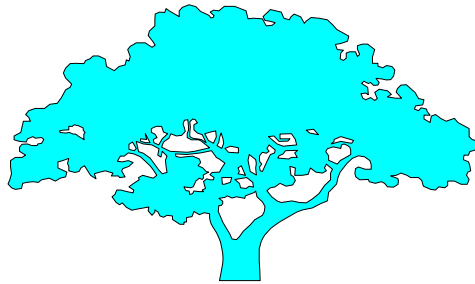
It's time for the region to stand up and say that short-term development interests should not be allowed to distort our transportation system.

## Transportation bulletin

A great way to keep up with transportation issues in the region is to get EcoCity Cleveland's free, twice-monthly bulletin, *Getting Where We Want to Be*. It's available by fax or e-mail. To be added to the distribution list, call us at 216-932-3007 or send an e-mail message to [ecocleveland@igc.org](mailto:ecocleveland@igc.org).



—David Beach  
Editor



## Mission

EcoCity Cleveland is a nonprofit, tax-exempt, educational organization. Through the publication of the *EcoCity Cleveland Journal* and other programs, it will stimulate ecological thinking about the Northeast Ohio region (Cuyahoga Bioregion), nurture an EcoCity Network among local groups working on urban and environmental issues, and promote sustainable ways to meet basic human needs for food, shelter, productive work and stable communities.

## Board of Trustees

David Beach, *Director, EcoCity Cleveland*  
Stuart Greenberg, *Environmental Health Watch*  
Phil Star, *Center for Neighborhood Development, CSU*  
Chris Trepal, *The Earth Day Coalition*  
Carl Wirtz, *Hausser + Taylor*

## Advisory Board

Molly Bartlett, *Silver Creek Farm*  
Thomas Bier, *CSU Housing Policy Research Program*  
James Bissell, *Cleveland Museum of Natural History*  
Diane Cameron, *Natural Resources Defense Council*  
Anne Chaka, *Union of Concerned Scientists*  
Edith Chase, *Ohio Coastal Resource Mgt. Project*  
Sandie Crawford, *Tri-C Center for Environmental Education and Training*  
Lee DeAngelis, *Consultant*  
John Debo, *Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area*  
Lois Epstein, *Environmental Defense Fund*  
David Goss, *Build Up Greater Cleveland*  
Christine Hann, *Cleveland Food Co-op*  
Soren Hansen, *InterGraphic Engineering Services*  
Rick Hawksley, *Fuller Design Group and Northeast Ohio Land Trust Coalition*  
Kim Hill, *Sierra Club*  
Michael Johnstone, *Minority Environmental Association and EnviroSpherics Consulting*  
David Knapp, *United Labor Agency*  
Susan Lacy, *WE-CAN!*  
Craig Limpach, *Wildlife biologist*  
Elaine Marsh, *Friends of the Crooked River*  
Mikelann Ward Rensel, *Cleveland Neighborhood Development Corp.*  
Norman Robbins, *CWRU Program for the Environment*  
Kathleen Tark, *City Architecture*  
Carol Thaler, *Cuyahoga County Planning Commission*  
Jerome Walcott, *Commission on Catholic Community Action*  
Roberta Wendel, *Friends of the Black River*

Organizations listed for identification only.

Articles in *EcoCity Cleveland* do not necessarily reflect the views of board members, although there's a good chance they do.

■  
*EcoCity Cleveland Journal*  
2841 Scarborough Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
Cuyahoga Bioregion  
Telephone 216-932-3007 / Fax 216-932-6069  
E-mail address: [ecocleveland@igc.org](mailto:ecocleveland@igc.org)

■  
Published monthly, except for occasional double issues. Unless otherwise noted, all articles and photographs are by David Beach. Submissions from others are welcome, but please call first. We cannot be responsible for unsolicited materials.

Readers are encouraged to use the information in *EcoCity Cleveland*. Just call for permission to reprint articles. After you're finished with your copy of the journal, pass it on to friends or recycle it. If you are a regular reader, please subscribe.

Supported by operating grants from the George Gund and Nord Family foundations, subscriptions and individual donations.

Printed at Orange Blossom Press in Cleveland on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper using soy-based inks.

ISSN 1084-0885

© 1997 EcoCity Cleveland

By Bradley Flamm

Medina County residents will go to the polls in November with the power to shape the transportation future of the region.

County officials have asked voters to approve a 1/4-percent sales tax to fund a new Transportation Improvement District (TID). If approved, over \$100 million would be spent during the next 20 years on highway and interchange construction projects. The new road capacity would open up thousands of acres of open spaces and farmland to sprawling growth.

In February, county officials negotiated with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to create the Medina TID as the second such district in the state. The two parties agreed to split the financing of over a dozen future highway projects.

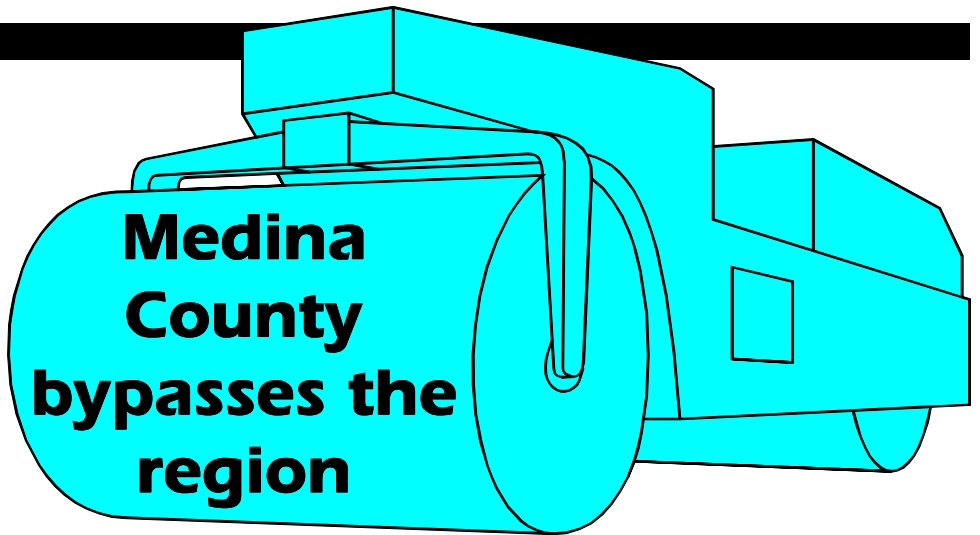
As originally proposed, the TID's first phase would include the widening of SR 18 from Windfall Road to the Summit County line (\$11 million). Phase II would include three projects to build a bypass around the City of Medina (\$30 million). And Phase III would involve four interchange construction and reconstruction projects and four highway widening projects (\$75.6 million). Several other projects have since been added to the laundry list.

To make any of this happen, however, the TID's board—composed of the three County Commissioners, the County Engineer and an unelected member from the county's Economic Development Corporation—had to come up with a source of funding for the local share of project expenses. After considering several options, they recommended the sales tax increase.

Convincing voters to approve the tax initiative is the first and most important hurdle for the TID, and a lobbying group has already been created to campaign on its behalf. But it's not the only challenge. At least five of the proposed projects—two new interchanges on I-71 (at SR 162 and at Boston Road) and three modified interchanges (at SR 303, I-271 and SR 18)—will probably require the widening

### **Lorain County gets TID, too**

Lorain County is also taking matters into its own hands to get stalled transportation projects moving. Following the lead of Medina County, the Lorain County Commissioners recently created a Transportation Improvement District (TID) to leverage additional transportation funding. The TID could pursue projects such as a commuter rail line or a new north-south highway for the county. So far, the commissioners have not decided how to raise local funds for TID projects.



of I-71 before they can go ahead, whether Medina County has its share of the funds or not. This is because they will increase volume on the highway and degrade existing traffic flow. Since the Interstate system was designed for long-distance interstate travel, interchanges meant primarily for local traffic are scrutinized carefully and often cannot be built without additional capacity through new lanes.

This adds urgency to a big project that ODOT has already proposed—the widening of I-71 in southwest Cuyahoga County and Medina County (from US 42 in Middleburg Heights to SR 18 in Medina Township). And this undoubtedly was on the minds of Medina County Commissioners Stephen Hambley and Patricia Geissman when they voted on September 30 to create an I-71 Task Force to lobby for the additional lanes (see sidebar).

If voters approve the sales tax increase, county residents will have to brace themselves for higher levels of residential and commercial construction. By emphasizing highway capacity additions, the TID's efforts will intensify the county's explosive growth without providing incentives for more compact, environmentally-sound development. (Between 1970 and 1990 Medina's population grew 48 percent while the five-county NOACA region as a whole decreased 9 percent.) None of the proposed projects include transit or rail, so private automobiles will remain the only realistic alternative for transportation within the county. One project, a Southwest Parkway, may include a small amount of money for a bikeway and walking paths.

Residents in other parts of Northeast Ohio have reason to worry as well. Details of TID funding arrangements have not been finalized, but it appears that ODOT would reimburse its 50-percent share of expenses only *after* construction of a TID project is completed. This means that, for project evaluation and ranking purposes, the TID projects will be funded entirely with local financing and may

be exempt from some of the requirements faced by other highway capacity projects that receive state or federal funds. For example, NOACA, our regional transportation and environmental planning agency, may have no power to review the projects, regardless of their impact on the region's economy, growth patterns or air and water quality. And it's still uncertain whether the TID will have to conduct Major Investment Studies, which require serious consideration of alternatives to adding highway capacity.

For all these reasons, the TID could seriously undermine rational transportation and land use planning at the regional level.

For more information on the TID, contact the Medina County offices at 330-225-7100 or the Medina County Engineer at 330-723-9555. A citizens group opposed to the TID tax increase, known as CLIMB, can be reached at 330-723-2790. □

*Brad Flamm is coordinator of EcoCity Cleveland's Transportation Program.*

### **Pushing I-71 widening**

In September, Medina County Commissioners Stephen Hambley and Patricia Geissman voted to establish a Medina County I-71 Task Force to promote ODOT's plan to widen I-71 between Middleburg Heights and SR 18. The resolution complained that people questioning the widening project are using the I-71 case "as a scapegoat for the new in vogue theory on preventing urban decay."

Not mentioned in the resolution was that the worst traffic congestion on I-71 occurs in Cleveland near I-480 and that adding lanes in Medina County will only send more vehicles to this bottleneck and make problems worse.

# In the Black

## Action in the Black River watershed

Lorain County is turning more and more to the Black River. In the past few years there's been an upswing of attention focused on the river—the natural feature that binds the county together.

Increasingly, the attention has been focused on land use impacts from residential development and agriculture—the biggest threats facing the Black. Since private landowners control 95 percent of the land along the river, activities are focusing on assisting landowners to maintain habitat and prevent the runoff of polluted stormwater.

The projects also are involving a diverse array of partners—environmental groups, local and county governments, health districts, soil and water conservation districts, state agencies such as Ohio EPA, local schools and colleges, park districts, farm groups and the building industry. The Black River Remedial Action Plan (RAP), a local committee working to restore the river, is helping to coordinate the efforts.

Here are some updates on Black River activities.

### Patching streambanks

Loss of streambank (or "riparian") habitat adjacent to the Black River and its tributaries is one of the primary reasons for increasing sediment loads in the river. Vegetation along a stream filters out sediment and pollutants and provides habitat for a wide variety of wildlife.

Several years ago the Lorain Soil and Water Conservation District used aerial photographs to estimate how much riparian habitat was missing in the watershed. The district found that 1,400 acres needed to be restored in a strip 33 feet wide on either side of the river. Ideally, these areas should be stabilized with trees and other permanent vegetative cover and allowed to revert to native conditions.

During the past two years the Black River Stream Team has helped landowners employ "bioremediation" techniques to stabilize several sections of eroding streambanks. Bioremediation uses natural plant materials, such as willow plantings, to slow currents and anchor soil.

These demonstration projects are working, so the stream team now hopes to stabilize longer stretches of river bank. Possible candidates for restoration include an area upstream of the Lodi wastewater treatment plant in Medina County and several miles by the Indian Hollow Lake Golf Course. The stream team also plans a workshop to teach citizens simple methods of restoring streambanks.

The stream team partners include the Black River RAP, Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

### Septic systems and farm runoff projects

The Lorain County environmental group, Seventh Generation, is working with the health districts and soil and water conservation districts in Lorain and Medina counties to reduce polluted runoff (also called nonpoint source pollution).

The health districts will conduct field tests to determine where home septic systems are failing and then will develop inspection and maintenance programs to correct the problems. The soil and water districts will study how high-tech farming methods ("precision farming" to reduce the amount of tilling and chemical application) can reduce farm runoff.

These projects have been recommended for a \$300,000 grant from U.S. EPA, which will be matched with in-kind contributions from the partners.

### Soil conservation loans

Farm runoff is a major water quality problem in the Black River watershed. Prevention involves tillage methods that do not expose bare soil to rain and wind, as

well as plantings that check erosion and buffer strips that filter stormwater.

To promote the adoption of such practices, Ohio EPA has made about \$12 million in low-interest loans available in the Black River watershed. Farmers can get low-interest loans to buy equipment for conservation tillage, revegetate erosion-prone areas, plant stream buffer strips and other projects. The funds are being administered by the soil and water conservation districts in the watershed.

### Managing growth in townships

Sediment loading from agricultural practices and suburban development is the biggest threat to the Black River today. Unfortunately, most of this problem originates in townships that don't always have the resources or expertise to manage land use in ways that protect the environment.

To provide more tools, the Lorain County Commissioners recently received a \$71,000 grant from the Lake Erie Protection Fund to develop a model

**Rediscovering the watershed: West Branch falls in Elyria's Cascade Park.**

township comprehensive land use plan. The project will focus on Carlisle Twp. and will demonstrate planning and zoning practices that protect natural resources. It's intended to offer a model for other townships in the county.

The project will develop a system of computerized land use maps for Carlisle Twp. The maps will be in a format that can be easily updated, so planners will always have current information. In addition, the grant will fund workshops for township trustees and zoning officials. National experts in zoning and natural resource protection will be brought in to speak.

### When it rains, it floods?

Much of northern Lorain County used to be a swamp forest—flat land with poorly drained soils. In recent years, a lot of this land has been cleared for agriculture and, increasingly, for development. The trees are gone, but the poor drainage remains.

In fact, the drainage problems are much worse because the natural, wet areas have been turned into roads, parking lots and rooftops. Stormwater can't soak into these impervious surfaces. It runs off at high velocity and in high volumes—and it carries sediment and other pollutants.

Thus, stormwater management is becoming a big challenge for the future of Lorain County. It's also a challenge that's hard to address because the runoff problems are not discrete "point sources" of pollution that can be regulated with a permit. Solutions will require the cooperation of all parties who influence the way land is used—local governments, developers, farmers, and landowners along streams.

The Lorain County Community Alliance and the Black River RAP have begun discussing a county-wide stormwater management program. For example, an effective urban sediment program would include stormwater review procedures for subdivisions, education of developers and



public officials, required construction techniques to prevent soil erosion, monitoring and enforcement.

To help educate the public about the problems of development and runoff, the environmental groups Seventh Generation and CleanLand, Ohio, are working on a video about land use and impacts on water quality.

### Conservation subdivisions

Even with the best city or township land use plan, a new subdivision can still cause ecological havoc by tearing up all the available land at a development site. One alternative is conservation development—clustering homes to preserve open space and natural resources. Instead of a subdivision with 100 homes on 100 one-acre lots, for example, a developer can cluster the 100 units on quarter-acre lots and permanently preserve 75 acres as woods, fields or wetlands.

To promote conservation development practices in Lorain County, the Black River RAP and other partners are working with local developers to design and build a conservation subdivision. The goal is to demonstrate ways to develop that will protect rather than degrade water resources nearby.

This local demonstration project is part of the Great Lakes Watershed Initiative sponsored by the Council of Great Lakes Governors. It is administered by The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit group which conserves land and water by integrating economic and environmental goals.

### Construction site runoff

If land must be developed, it's essential that builders employ the best erosion-prevention practices possible to keep soil in place during construction. One rainstorm can carry away tons of soil from an exposed construction site. The sediment then chokes adjacent streams.

Seventh Generation, the Lorain County environmental group, recently received a \$17,000 grant from the Great Lakes Commission to demonstrate best management practices for construction sites. Project partners are local soil and water conservation districts and homebuilders associations.

### Addressing sprawl

Much of the development pressure in Lorain County is the result of regional patterns of urban sprawl—people from Cuyahoga County moving farther out from the region's urban core, as well as people moving out from Lorain County's older cities.

In recent months, groups in the county have begun sponsoring a series of dialogs on sprawl and growth management issues. A forum on

## Pollution problems fixed

In the past decade, a number of the Black River's major pollution hotspots have been eliminated, thanks to investments in municipal sewage treatment plants and cleanups at industrial sites:

- The communities of Lodi, Wellington, Oberlin and Grafton finished upgrades of treatment plants in 1988.
- The city of Elyria installed new equipment in its treatment plant in 1989.
- Moen (then Stanadyne) eliminated a major industrial discharge to the river in 1988.
- In 1990 USS/Kobe Steel dredged sediments contaminated with coal tars. (These were the sediments causing fish tumors and deformities.)
- The city of Lorain opened a second sewage treatment plant in 1988.

## Remaining problems

Today pipe discharges are not the major source of water pollution in the Black River. Significant river degradation comes from three sources:

- Sediment volume from loose soil that washes off farmland and construction sites.
- Bacteria from human and animal wastes (from sewer overflows, home septic systems and livestock feedlots). It's estimated that 75 percent of the 15,000 rural septic systems in the Black River watershed are not functioning as designed. About one quarter of the 184 major livestock operations in the watershed have no waste management facility. As a result of bacterial pollution washing into Lake Erie after storms, the Lorain City Health Department posted swimming advisories on 22 days during the summer of 1996 at Lakeview Beach.
- Contaminated sediments in the harbor's river bottom which contain heavy metals and organic toxics.

Sources: Black River Remedial Action Plan 1995 *Annual Update*; Black River Joint Board of Supervisors *Watershed Management Plan for Abatement of Nonpoint Source Pollution*, 1994.

### Sources of sediment

- In 1996 Lorain County ranked ninth in Ohio with over 3,240 acres under development.
- The areas experiencing the most rapid development are in Avon, North Ridgeville, Avon Lake, the south side of Elyria, the west side of Lorain, Amherst and Carlisle Twp.
- Cropland accounts for about half of the land area in the Black River watershed. Average cropland soil loss in the watershed is 3.5 to 4 tons/acre/year.

October 15, 1997, on "Smart Growth in Lorain County," is being sponsored by the Lorain County Community Alliance, Lorain County Chamber of Commerce, Lorain County 2020, the Public Services Institute of Lorain County Community College and Oberlin College.

In addition, Seventh Generation has organized an Urban Sprawl Education Coalition to engage the community in discussions about the county's land use future.

### **Watershed education project**

How do you help young people develop a sense of place? How do you get them involved in local watershed activities?

The Black River Watershed Education Project aims to do both by translating watershed information into curricula and lesson plans for Lorain County schools. The project is a joint effort of Seventh Generation, the Oberlin College Environmental Studies Program and the Orion Society, a national organization that promotes environmental literacy and place-based nature education. The Orion Society selected Oberlin College as one of five sites in the country to pilot this watershed education pilot program.

During the 1996-97 school year, the project helped organize teacher-student projects at five schools. Elyria High School students cleaned up litter along the river. Sheffield Middle School students monitored water quality in French Creek, a major tributary to the Black River. Avon High School students worked with Oberlin College students to survey the plants in a local wetland. Eastern Heights Jr. High School students started a garden and learned about organic food production. And Oberlin High School students designed a model ecological house.

Recently, Seventh Generation hired an environmental education director, David Cornicelli, to coordinate the watershed education project, develop a teacher network, organize teacher training sessions, and build an environmental education resource library. □

**Nonpoint source pollution: Construction sites, like this one in a wetland area near I-90 and SR 254, contribute to urban runoff problems in the Black River watershed.**

### **Black River contacts**

- Friends of the Black River/Seventh Generation (440-322-4187).
- Russell Gibson, Northwest Ohio Scenic River Coordinator, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (419-981-6319).
- Linda Lagunzad, Black River Remedial Action Plan coordinator, Ohio EPA (216-963-1169).
- Dan Martin, Lorain County Metro Parks (800-LCM-PARK).
- Brad Masi, Oberlin College Environmental Studies Program (440-775-8409).
- Medina Soil and Water Conservation District (330-722-2605).
- Ken Pearce, chairman of the Black River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) and Lorain County Health Commissioner (440-322-6367).
- Karl Schneider, Lorain County Soil and Water Conservation District (440-322-1228).
- Andy Vidra, study team coordinator for the Black River Remedial Action Plan, Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency (216-241-2414).

# Ready to be a scenic river?

With all the interest now focused on the Black River, some observers are suggesting that it might qualify for inclusion in the Ohio Scenic River System. The purpose of establishing scenic rivers is to assist in the protection and preservation of the few remaining natural rivers in the state. The primary objectives of the program are to protect aquatic species and maintain sufficient stream-side forest corridors. The honorary scenic river designation imposes no restrictions on local landowners, but it can help a community recognize that it has a special resource to protect and can provide a framework for preservation efforts.

At the prompting of local communities and Rivers Unlimited, a statewide advocacy group, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) has been studying whether portions of the Black qualify as a scenic river. ODNR scientists are looking for segments at least 10 miles long with good water quality, a diversity of aquatic life, and protective forest cover along at least 25 percent of the river banks.

A final recommendation awaits the results of water quality studies conducted this summer by Ohio EPA. Preliminary findings indicate that one part of the Black's East Branch—the segment through the Metro Parks' Indian Hollow Reservation—comes close to meeting scenic river standards.

"Parts of the East Branch are as nice as any river in Ohio," Russell Gibson, ODNR's Scenic River coordinator for Northwest Ohio, said at a recent meeting.

Unfortunately, while this stretch looks like an unspoiled stretch of river, its fish and insect communities have not been as diverse as they could be. It's hoped that this summer's fish studies can

determine if the fish are recovering or whether they are still being impacted by poor conditions upstream.

Other parts of the river are much less likely to qualify. The mainstem of the river, which begins at the confluence of the East and West branches in Elyria, has too many bridge crossings and problems with urban runoff. The West Branch is heavily impacted by farm runoff and sediment loading.

Thus, it seems like ODNR will not recommend any part of the Black for scenic river status. A final decision should come next spring.

## Special habitat

The Black River watershed provides critical habitat for a number of state threatened and/or protected plant and animal species:

- **Rare plants:** Northern water-plantain, Canadian buffalo-berry, long beech-fern, radiate sedge, closed gentian, purple sand-grass, northern fox-grape, yellow vetchling, round-leafed dogwood, American chestnut, swamp cottonwood.

- **Rare animals:** Bigmouth shiner, common snipe, sedge wren, and possibly the common barn owl.

One hopeful finding from Black River fish studies: While the West Branch has poor water quality and fish communities tolerant of polluted water, its tributaries are the only place in the watershed where the sensitive bigmouth shiner is found. Thus, there are refuges of high quality fish which can re-establish diverse fish communities in the river if water quality can be improved.



## Vermilion wild and scenic?

While the Black River has been getting a lot of attention, its neighbor to the west, the Vermilion, is still a largely unrecognized jewel. The relative obscurity has suited the Lorain County Metro Parks just fine, as the park district has been quietly buying up land along the river. This protected river corridor will be a great natural legacy for Lorain County.

Local river watchers believe the Vermilion will easily qualify as a state scenic river. Portions of it might even qualify for "wild and scenic" status, given the extent of intact forest cover along its banks. (Only two other stream segments in Ohio have been designated wild and scenic—portions of the Grand River in Lake County and Little Beaver Creek in Columbiana County.)

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources has not yet evaluated the Vermilion for scenic river designation. But it would do so if it received indications of grassroots support, such as resolutions from cities and townships along the river.

"The Vermilion has strong attributes," says Russell Gibson of the state's Scenic River program. "We are very interested in studying it."

East Branch falls of the Black River.

Extra capacity: The development future of eastern Lorain County will be tied to the French Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant.

# Land and water

## Managing growth and water quality in Northeast Ohio

*Wouldn't it be great if cities and towns in Northeast Ohio could agree on a rational development plan for the region?*

*Wouldn't it be even greater if that plan were based on environmental considerations like the impact of development on rivers and streams?*

*We have a chance to do just that with a new water quality management plan for the region. The question is whether the many communities of Northeast Ohio will overcome parochial, competitive pressures and cooperate on a long-term plan for the common good.*

*It will be a major test case for regional cooperation.*

### **Sewers are destiny**

Along with highway access, the availability of sewers has determined where large-scale development happens in Northeast Ohio.

Without a public sewer system, water quality concerns typically limit development to low-density housing, such as single-family homes on lots large enough to accommodate individual septic systems. Sewers create the potential for higher density housing, as well as commercial and industrial development.

So the location of sewers and wastewater treatment plants is a key planning issue—an issue that determines regional development patterns, the environmental quality of our streams and the long-term costs of infrastructure in our communities.

Unfortunately, it's also one of those complex infrastructure issues that lurks below the radar screens of the media and the general public.

### **The 208 water quality management plan**

During the next two years, however, citizens will have an opportunity to help shape a 20-year plan for wastewater facilities in Northeast Ohio. It's called the "208 plan" after the section of the Clean Water Act which authorizes it. And it will set criteria for future issuance or renewal of wastewater treatment plant permits by Ohio EPA.

The plan could be the most important planning exercise our region has seen in years. Indeed, in our highly fragmented region it may be the closest thing we get to a regional land use plan.

The plan's significant points include:

- A regional approach to water pollution control—a watershed approach that transcends political boundaries the way a river flows through many municipalities.



Specifically, the plan will cover five watersheds in seven counties (the Black, Rocky, Cuyahoga, Chagrin and Grand river basins in Cuyahoga, Lorain, Medina, Summit, Portage, Geauga and Lake counties).

- A long-term consideration of the impacts of land use and development on water resources. The plan will help local elected officials determine the density of development that should be allowed in certain areas.

- An attempt to create cooperative regional agreements for the protection of critical natural areas.

The 208 planning process is being led by a task force of public officials from the seven counties. It's being staffed by the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) and the Northeast Ohio Four County Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO). Funding comes from a \$315,000 planning grant from U.S. EPA and \$150,000 from NOACA and NEFCO.

### Key questions

The plan seeks to address a number of important water quality questions:

- **Sewered areas.** What areas of the region will get sewers and what areas won't? Where should sewer lines be extended in order to correct existing water quality problems (such as malfunctioning home septic systems) or to accommodate future development? How far should interceptor sewers (large pipes which convey wastewater directly to treatment plants) be extended? For example, should the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District extend its interceptors into Lorain or Geauga counties? Should Akron continue extending its lines into surrounding townships as part of joint economic development agreements?

As part of the 208 plan, the operators of all the wastewater treatment plants in the region will be asked to map their anticipated service areas. The more these "facility planning areas" are expanded, the faster development will sprawl in the region.

- **Wastewater treatment**



**plants.** Which plants will be expanded or upgraded to handle increased flows of

sewage from future growth? Where are new plants needed?

- **Home septic system regulation.** The thousands of small, on-site wastewater systems in the region are a growing water quality problem. Many are old and poorly maintained. Some were installed on lots with heavy, clay soils, which do not allow wastewater to percolate into the ground. As a result, local streams and ditches are polluted with sewage. County health departments are responsible for regulating home septic systems. Can they agree on standards for installation, maintenance and inspection that will prevent pollution problems? Will new treatment techniques, such as spray irrigation, be permitted to give developers greater flexibility in planning subdivisions?

- **Nonpoint source pollution.** In many parts of Northeast Ohio, the worst water pollution comes not from large, distinct sources (such as industrial dischargers or public treatment plants) but many diffuse sources as rain washes pollutants and sediment off streets, parking lots, lawns, construction sites and farm fields. To protect our streams and lakes from these nonpoint sources, we need programs to prevent erosion, create vegetated buffer zones along stream corridors and control stormwater. Will local governments agree to require such steps?

- **Protection of critical resource areas.** Can we come to a consensus on what critical water resources we want to protect as a region? What rivers, water supplies, wetlands or natural areas deserve the highest level of protection from development? If we can't protect everything, how do we decide what resources are the most important?

### Background on 208 planning

The original 208 plan for Northeast Ohio was completed in 1979 and updated in 1984. It came in the aftermath of the Clean Water Act, when the burning Cuyahoga River was fresh in public consciousness. As the federal government prepared

## Goals of Northeast Ohio's water quality management plan

- The plan should take a *watershed approach* that coordinates management agencies addressing point and nonpoint pollution sources. The intent is to take a holistic approach and address all the factors which affect water quality.

- The plan should *optimize use of the existing investment in infrastructure*, not encourage public investments in new infrastructure. It will make sure that the region's \$2-3 billion investment in water quality improvements during the past 25 years continues to pay dividends.

- The plan should be *protective of what has been gained* in environmental quality with particular attention to enhanced protection of critical water resource areas, such as those tributary to State Resource Waters. In other words, protect the gains made in urban areas, and guard against the degradation of pristine waters in rural areas of the region.

- The plan should provide a *regional framework for locally determined development density* that is protective of water quality. The 208 process will help communities think through various development scenarios and what forms of development will be sustainable in the long run.

- The planning process should be a *tool for educating local public decision makers* on regional water quality management issues. It can help them understand the regional impacts of local actions. And it can help them appreciate the regional significance of water resources in their communities.

## Major initiatives of the plan update process

- Identification of critical environmental resource areas to be protected in the region (e.g., high quality streams, wetlands, habitat areas, drinking water supplies). Seek a regional consensus on these critical areas. What do we really want to save?

- Update of the region's wastewater facility planning areas (the "sewer-sheds" served by treatment plants). Operators of local sewer systems are being asked to map out their current service area, areas programmed for sewers in the next 20 years and areas for which no sewer plans exist. Options for future sewer growth include regional interceptor sewers, local centralized treatment plants or large-lot septic systems with no discharge off site.

- Identification of areas of projected development in currently unsewered areas. These will likely be areas of future water quality problems.

- Improved state agency procedures for evaluating and approving wastewater management plans so critical areas are protected and infrastructure can be planned in a rational manner.

- Recommended improvements with county agency procedures for evaluating and approving wastewater management plans that are protective of critical areas. Differing standards for home septic systems among county health departments are among the concerns.

- Recommended land use guidelines for protection of riparian zones (areas along river banks).

- Recommended improvements in county agency procedures for urban sediment and storm water runoff control.

- Coordination with existing watershed planning efforts.

to invest billions to upgrade wastewater treatment plants in urban areas, it wanted to make sure that local wastewater authorities had sensible plans for spending the money. So it required regional coordination to address the most serious water quality problems.

The first 208 plan essentially laid out a 20-year program for building and financing the wastewater treatment system we have today. In many respects, the plan was successful. Most of the facilities were built. Most of the region's public sewage treatment plants are now meeting clean water standards. And our streams and Lake Erie are not so grossly polluted.

### **New development pressures**

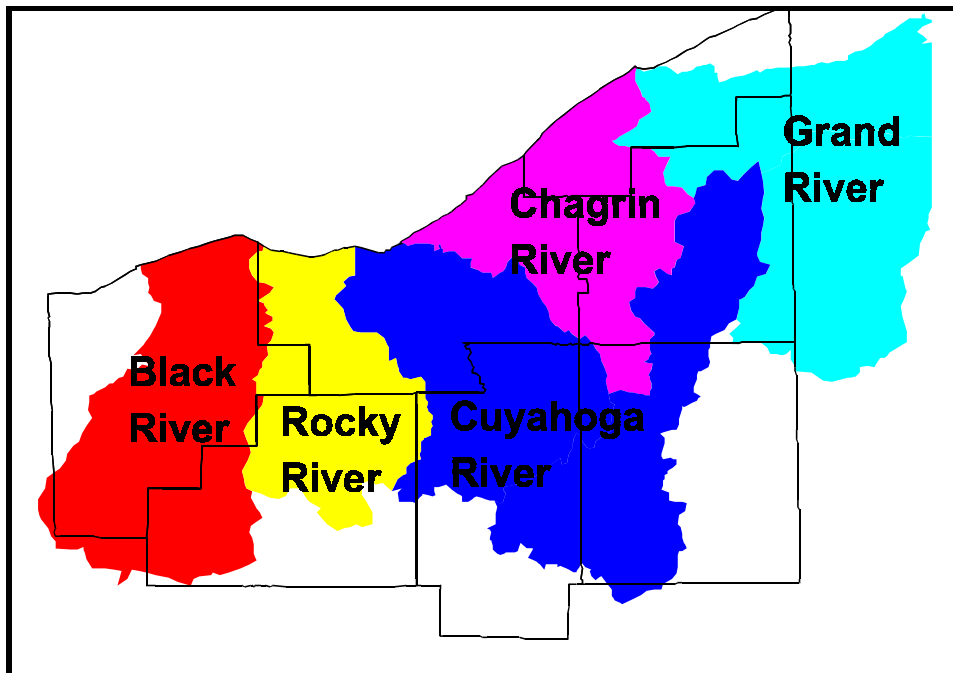
Today, the federal grants for wastewater improvements have dried up, so no federal carrot is motivating the region to do 208 water quality management plans. But a new set of circumstances has prompted a revival of the 208 process in Northeast Ohio.

First, there is a growing awareness that many of our worst water quality problems now begin as land use problems—specifically, the sprawling development patterns of suburbanization. As shopping malls and subdivisions push into previously undeveloped areas, fragile streams are turned into silt-laden drainage ditches, valuable wetlands are filled, and more polluted stormwater flows off streets, parking lots and rooftops. It is hoped that a new plan for protecting water quality can address some of these development issues.

Second, water quality advocates in Ohio also are concerned about recent changes in the state's antidegradation rule. "Antidegradation" is the anti-backsliding principle of the Clean Water Act. It basically says that clean water should remain clean, and dirty water should not be allowed to get any dirtier. The state should not allow water to be degraded unless there is a

compelling social or economic reason, and only when there is no alternative.

The Ohio EPA formerly could use the antidegradation rule to stop new water pollution sources near high quality streams. Developers had trouble obtaining discharge permits for shopping centers and other big projects in unsewered areas. But in 1993



**Planning area: Five Northeast Ohio river basins in the Lake Erie watershed, superimposed on seven counties in the region (Cuyahoga, Lorain, Medina, Summit, Portage, Geauga and Lake).**

state legislators snuck a provision into a budget bill which required Ohio EPA to weaken Ohio's antidegradation rule. The new rule, which is being challenged in court by environmental groups, allows big pollution increases in many clean streams in the state.

"The rule allows discharges in streams where we used to deny permits," said Ohio EPA's Keith Riley at a recent meeting of the 208 plan task force. "Whole new areas of the region are now opened up for development."

These worrisome trends are motivating local officials to take a more thoughtful approach to development.

"We need to look 20 years ahead again," says John Beeker, manager of NOACA's environmental programs.

"We've succeeded in building large wastewater treatment plants, but large problems remain. We need a broader perspective."

### **Challenges of regional cooperation**

It's a challenge to get the more than 200 sovereign communities in Northeast Ohio to agree on anything, much less something as fundamental as a water management plan that shapes development patterns. Indeed, just the mention of a "regional plan" raises suspicions of some local officials.

So the planners at NOACA and NEFCO are going out of their way to emphasize that they are not trying to take away land use controls from local communities.

"The agencies are not trying to drive an agenda," says Beeker. "But we can help establish critical areas for protection and broker agreements to protect them. Ultimately, the plan will have to be something local elected officials will buy into."

To forge a regional consensus, the plan will have to be persuasive, Beeker adds. It will have to rely on "good arguments, good science and good sense."

When a consensus plan is completed, it will then go through a complex ratification process involving the boards of NOACA and NEFCO and then local governments. The plan must then be certified by the state and U.S. EPA.

Once the 208 plan is in effect, however, it could have regulatory teeth. For instance, if a community wants to offer extra protections for a drinking water supply or other critical water resource, it can get its desires written into the plan. Then Ohio

***As a region, we can declare our intent to protect certain resources—scenic rivers, high quality headwaters, drinking water supplies—and the 208 plan can be the legal tool to enforce our desires.***

EPA will have to enforce the plan—perhaps by requiring stricter effluent standards for new dischargers or by refusing to issue permits.

Another thing the plan could do is set enforceable priorities for who gets to use public wastewater treatment plants. Currently, if a plant has excess treatment capacity, new customers often can hook up on a first-come, first-serve basis. But a community could decide to reserve some of that capacity for development in areas designated for growth and restrict tie-ins from areas best left undeveloped.

In that sense, the plan could become a tool for managing development. As a region, we can declare our intent to protect certain resources—scenic rivers, high quality headwaters, drinking water supplies—and the 208 plan can be the legal tool to enforce our desires. It can help give power to local land use controls.

"Towns often lack tools to control growth," says Andy Vidra of the NOACA staff. "This process will give them a few more tools."

### **An opportunity**

A good water quality management plan will need widespread public support,

otherwise it will be vetoed by those who have a stake in business as usual. Citizens throughout the region need to become engaged in the process and tell their elected officials that they want a plan that will slow wasteful sprawl and promote more sustainable patterns of development.

The 208 planning process gives us all an opportunity to think about what's happening to the land and water in Northeast Ohio. If we can think through what we want, we can create strong controls to protect water quality. If we can agree on where development is desirable, we will all be better off as a region. □



## **Water/land pressure points**

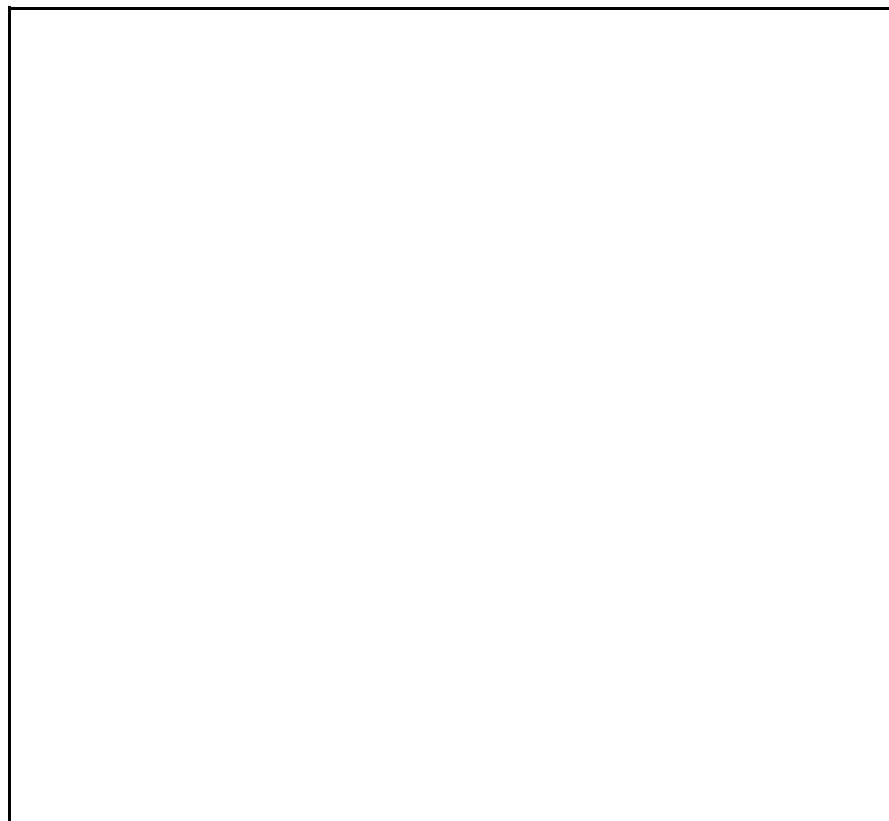
■ **Geauga County:** Geauga is a headwaters area, the location of many small, high quality streams and the source of Akron's water supply. As a result, it lacks sites where big sewage treatment plants can discharge without severely damaging water resources. This, and the need to protect well water from contamination by home septic systems, has helped to limit development in the county. But wastewater treatment technologies are improving, and there will be increasing pressure to site new treatment plants to accommodate development sprawling eastward from Cuyahoga County. The weakening of the state's antidegradation rule also will open the door to more intense development.

■ **Medina County:** Two big treatment plants in Medina County—one on the west branch of the Rocky River and one on the east branch—could probably be doubled in size under current water quality regulations. That would pave the way for tremendous growth. If residents want to limit development and preserve some of the county's rural character, they should seek tougher water quality standards for the Rocky River.

■ **Lorain County:** Some political leaders want townships near Elyria to develop with new sewers. But they want the sewer lines to tie into the French Creek treatment plant instead of Elyria's on the Black River. That way the townships can avoid being annexed to the city. Both plants can accommodate growth, but Lorain County has a lot of flat, poorly drained land where development will be threatened with chronic flooding problems.

■ **Portage County:** Land uses in northern Portage County must protect the water quality of Lake Rockwell, which is Akron's primary water supply reservoir. Groundwater quality is also a concern for people with wells.

■ **Summit County:** The City of Akron is forming Joint Economic Development Districts (JEDDs) to extend water and sewer lines to surrounding townships in exchange for tax revenues. One controversial plan would divert Cuyahoga River water to areas south of Akron outside of the Lake Erie basin. Most of the water would be returned as effluent from the Akron wastewater treatment plant.



**View from US 422: The upper Cuyahoga River in Geauga County is a relatively pristine area of abundant wetlands. But development pressures—and the push for new sewer systems—are spreading out along the new US 422 highway.**



# Fact Sheet:

## Northeast Ohio Water Quality Management Plan

### **What is the Northeast Ohio 208 Water Quality Management Plan?**

In 1975, the Governor of the State of Ohio designated the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) as a Water Quality Management Agency under Section 208 of the Clean Water Act. NOACA continues to serve in this capacity on behalf of Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, and Medina counties. The Northeast Ohio Four County Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) serves the same role in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne counties.

Together, NOACA and NEFCO are undertaking a major update of the region's Water Quality Management Plans which were originally developed in the late '70s. A 208 Water Quality Planning Task Force has been formed to assist in this undertaking. The task force includes representatives of municipalities, counties, sanitary sewer agencies, boards of health, planning commissions, county park districts, soil and water conservation districts and watershed advisory bodies from each of the counties in the Northeast Ohio 208 planning area. They are charged with updating the Northeast Ohio 208 Water Quality Management Plan to guide future land use and watershed management decisions in the region. This task force is chaired by Erwin Odeal of the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District and David Crandell of the Akron Department of Public Utilities.

### **What is the planning area?**

The planning area encompasses five watersheds in Northeast Ohio that are tributary to Lake Erie. From east to west, these are the watersheds of the Grand, Chagrin, Cuyahoga, Rocky and Black rivers. The planning area also includes interbasin areas (such as Doan Brook) which drain directly to Lake Erie in Lake, Cuyahoga and Lorain counties.

### **Why develop a water quality management plan?**

People in Northeast Ohio continue to migrate out of the established urban cores. They are leaving homes and neighborhoods in the urban core while consuming undeveloped land for new homes, factories, and businesses. This is subjecting the region's population to increased burdens of financing infrastructure, including wastewater treatment capabilities, to meet new demands for

service. It is also subjecting our water resources to a variety of environmental stresses.

Previous water quality management efforts have resulted in marked improvements in local water quality by concentrating on the control of large existing treatment plants and major sources of hazardous materials. Now it is necessary to move to protect those gains by developing a regional strategy that manages growth in a manner that is friendly to the environment, that minimizes the need for costly new treatment works, and that maximizes the use of existing infrastructure. The development of a water quality management plan affords an opportunity to do this.

### **How will the public be involved in the water quality management planning process?**

Meetings with the public are planned to take place at the outset of the project (Spring, 1997), halfway through the planning process (Spring 1998) and during the review of the 208 Water Quality Management Plan (Fall, 1998). The purpose of the first set of meetings is to inform the public of the 208 planning process, ascertain the public's concerns on environmental and regional issues of importance in their watersheds and utilize that information in formulating the 208 plan update. The second set of meetings will provide the public an opportunity to review the planning findings and tools that have been developed. The purpose of the third set of public meetings is to provide for public review and comment on the draft plan update and ensure that the public's original concerns have been addressed in the final plan.

### **For more information**

If you are interested in becoming involved in the Northeast Ohio 208 Water Quality Planning Process, please contact:

- Cindy Petkac at NOACA, 668 Euclid Ave., Suite 400, Cleveland, OH 44114, (216-241-2414, ext. 252).
- Claude Custer, at NEFCO, 969 Copley Rd., Akron, OH 44320, (330-836-5731).

Source: NOACA and NEFCO

**ISTEA at the wire**

The reauthorization of the key federal transportation bill, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), is reaching its final stages in Congress. Transportation activists are urging citizens to contact their senators and representatives with the following messages:

- Keep the bill's provisions for local control over transportation funds, flexibility in the use of funds, and opportunities for public involvement in transportation planning.
- Keep the bill's environmental provisions, such as requirements for environmental review and funding for projects to reduce congestion and improve air quality.
- Keep the emphasis on maintaining existing roads and bridges, not on costly new highways.
- Make sure there is adequate funding for transit and job access programs for people coming off welfare.

For updates on the transportation policy debates in Congress, check the Web site [www.istea.org](http://www.istea.org).

**Housing hero**

Our good friend Tom Bier recently won national recognition for helping to change the capital gains provision of the federal tax code. Bier, the director of the Housing Policy Research Program at Cleveland State University, has spent many years studying homebuyers in Northeast Ohio. He has documented that the overwhelming majority of people move up to more expensive homes—homes which tend to be located farther out from the urban core of the region. One motivation for moving up in price was avoidance of capital gains taxes—a 28-percent hit on the profits from selling a home.

Bier argued, therefore, that the capital gains tax promoted outmigration and the decline of older communities: "This single federal policy virtually dictates central city decline, and eventually inner-ring suburban decline, because it creates an extremely strong push toward more expensive homes."

This year, Bier's research and testimony before Congressional committees helped change this capital gains provision. Now individuals get to keep up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for couples) of their profits tax-free when they sell their principal residence. The change will help level the playing field

for the redevelopment of older cities.

**Sprawl in the media**

Our local public radio and TV stations have teamed up to produce a series of programs, "Your Land...My Land," on the environmental and social issues related to urban sprawl. WCPN 90.3 FM will produce about 10 radio spots, and WVIZ-TV Channel 25 will produce two documentaries. The series will run between September and December, 1997.

The goal is to help citizens and communities understand the implications of current development patterns in the region and to promote discussion of how the region should develop in the future.

**Cleveland Heights stays pedestrian-friendly**

Traffic calming—slowing cars to make streets safer for people—has become a big issue in Cleveland Heights. After residents complained, the city recently turned down federal funds for the reconstruction of Cedar Road at Cedar Hill because the project would have required the road to be widened and straightened to speed traffic flows.

Now the city will invest \$300,000 more of its own money so the work can be done according to its own local standards—preserving its walkable neighborhoods rather than making it quicker for residents of outer suburbs to race through those neighborhoods. Cuyahoga County Engineer Thomas Neff also should be congratulated for contributing \$300,000 in county funds to help pay for the sensitive design.

**Spiritual environmentalism**

■ The Northeast Ohio Group of the Sierra Club has started a Religion and the Environment Committee to examine the relationship of religious issues to the environment and open a dialogue with religious groups in the area. For information on getting involved, call Dennis Worthem at 216-243-2768.

■ Imago, a green cities organization in Cincinnati, is organizing a Midwest Earth/Spirit Conference for May 22-24, 1998. To be a part of the planning committee, call 513-921-5124.

**Pressure points**

■ **Barefoot and pregnant:** We often say that communities need to plan for their future and need the resources and staff to do so. But development forces often lobby against the civic capacity to manage growth. We recently talked to a public official in Lorain County who complained that "the civic fathers" of some communities are intentionally keeping local planning and zoning functions operating at starvation levels so there is weak oversight of development. "They just want to ram those subdivisions through as fast as they can," he said. After the short-term profits are made, the communities bear the long-term costs of poorly planned development.

■ **Avon out of control:** Problems with flooding and crumbling streets have prompted Avon, the fastest growing city in Lorain County, to call a 90-day moratorium on new approvals for development. Avon officials are also considering an annual growth cap on new housing permits, as Hudson has imposed.

■ **Hudson parks:** Hudson officials want to turn residentially zoned land into new parks—for better recreation, as well as to limit growth and save on infrastructure costs. The city park district has placed a 0.87-mill property tax levy on the November ballot. The levy will generate \$7.3 million over 20 years and will allow the purchase of 460 acres that the park board already has under option.

■ **Columbus sprawling:** They haven't even paid off the construction bonds on Centennial High School in Columbus, yet school officials are already thinking about closing it because of declining enrollment. Meanwhile, taxpayers just built a new \$27 million high school in nearby Dublin. Thus, in one generation sprawl is forcing the Columbus area to throw away one school and neighborhood and duplicate infrastructure farther out.

■ **Can't drink sprawl:** U.S. EPA estimates that the country will have to spend \$140 billion for drinking-water infrastructure over the next two decades. But that amount can be significantly reduced with a modest investment in watershed protection, according to a recent report, *Protecting the Source*, by the Trust for Public Land. The key is to protect watershed lands from unwise, uncontrolled development.

■ **Phrase of the month:** "Cocoon citizenship," the practice of retreating into cloistered suburbs to avoid the life and responsibilities of the surrounding metropolitan area, coined by William Fulton in his book, *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles*.

## Brownfield cleanup shortcuts

Under new rules intended to speed up the redevelopment of contaminated "brownfield" sites, Ohio EPA is beginning to relax cleanup requirements in urban areas where people do not use groundwater. The first such Urban Setting Designation (USD) was approved recently for a site owned by Catholic Charities in Cleveland's Hough neighborhood.

Ohio's Voluntary Action Program allows someone to voluntarily clean up contaminated property without the risk of state liability. Under the program, groundwater cleanup is required where contaminated groundwater poses risks to the community or the environment. In urban areas where no one uses groundwater, however, a USD can lower costs of cleanup. The designation says, in effect, that it makes little sense to clean groundwater to drinking water standards if no one is drinking it.

The Hough site at 6710 Lexington Ave. formerly was occupied by a dry cleaning company, and soil is contaminated with solvents. Catholic Charities plans to build a community center and cover the contaminated soil with a parking lot designed to prevent the soil from coming into contact with people.

While appreciating the need for a new community center in a low-income neighborhood, environmental activists in Cleveland are concerned about a designation that will allow groundwater contamination to be paved over and forgotten. They fear that, even if present risks are low, the contamination could eventually migrate to streams and public water supplies.

Now the City of Cleveland is working with neighborhood development groups to obtain an Urban Setting Designation for large parts of the city. If allowed, the city will have a blanket designation for high priority development areas, and individuals will not have to apply on a site-by-site basis for each new project. Officials in Akron and Toledo are also pursuing USDs for large areas of their cities.

The issue highlights how hard it is to balance environmental concerns and the need for urban redevelopment. For more information, call Neighborhood Progress Inc. at 216-268-6240 or Citizen Action at 216-861-5200.



## No low-level rad dump

We reported in our April/May issue that the process to site a low-level radioactive waste facility in

Ohio was running into trouble. Now the process is dead.

On June 26, the commission responsible for developing a facility for six midwestern states voted to halt siting activities in Ohio. The commission cited several reasons for their action, including decreased volumes of waste produced, access to currently operating disposal facilities elsewhere, and the projected high costs to construct a regional facility (possibly more than \$200 million).

Not cited was the growing political opposition to the dump in Ohio. More than 250 communities and 17 counties passed resolutions opposing the dump, thanks to grassroots activists around the state.

Anti-nuclear activists are continuing to promote a state constitutional amendment to prohibit out-of-state radioactive waste from being stored in Ohio. And since nearly all radioactive waste comes from nuclear power plants, activists are working to close the plants and accelerate the transition to energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. For more information, call Citizens Protecting Ohio at 614-294-8206.

## All-American river?

Local efforts are under way to nominate the Cuyahoga River as an "American Heritage River." President Clinton announced the new heritage program in his 1997 State of the Union Address. By early next year the federal government will select 10 rivers to be recognized for their notable resource qualities, restoration programs and broad community support.

Supporters believe the Cuyahoga has a good chance of being selected because it is such a national symbol—first as the "burning river" symbol of environmental crisis and more recently as a promising symbol of recovery. Designation also would complement the National Heritage Corridor designation won recently by the Ohio & Erie Canal Corridor, which follows the Cuyahoga River between Akron and Cleveland.

If designated, the Cuyahoga River would receive special recognition and more focused and coordinated federal support. A "River Navigator" would be assigned to help implement the community's vision for river protection. No new federal regulations would be imposed.

For information on how to support the nomination, contact the Cuyahoga River

Remedial Action Plan Coordinating Committee at 241-2414, ext. 253. A public meeting on the nomination will be held at 7 p.m., October 22, at the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area's Canal Visitors Center, Canal and Hillside roads in Valley View.

## Celebrating Doan Brook

It's hard to think of another urban creek in the Cleveland area that has as much potential as a natural and recreational resource as Doan Brook, which flows through the Heights and University Circle. To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the settling of the Doan watershed, the Nature Center at Shaker Lakes has declared 1998 to be the "Year of the Brook."

In cooperation with the Joint Committee on Doan Brook Watershed (the committee arising from the fight to stop the Clark Freeway from tearing through the Shaker Lakes), the nature center has sponsored a brook walk to explore the brook and a "vision workshop" that will form the basis of a watershed protection plan.

For information on future events, call the nature center at 216-321-5935.

## Patching Grand river banks

By paving over the countryside, urbanization is bringing stormwater and erosion problems to the Grand River east of Cleveland. The Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District is now offering to help landowners stabilize their river banks with bio-engineering methods. Bio-engineering uses mostly natural materials and live plants to help heal eroding streams.

The district is seeking five sites along the Grand River and its tributaries in Lake County for the cost-share program. The district will design, supervise the construction and pay half the cost of materials used. People with problem stream banks can call 440-350-2730.

## Urban stream data

The Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District recently updated its report, *Environmental Water Quality Assessment*. The report includes voluminous water quality information, sampling data and maps. It's probably the most comprehensive resource available about urban rivers and creeks in Greater Cleveland. For more information, call Frank Foley at 216-641-6000.

**October 31**

**Critical Mass** bike ride starting at 5:30 p.m. at Cleveland Public Square. Call 216-721-0992 for details.

**November 1**

**Swan search** at East Branch Reservoir to spot migratory waterfowl, 9 a.m. at Geauga Park District Headwaters Park, 13365 Old State Rd.

**November 1-2**

**International Joint Commission Public Forum** in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The IJC is the U.S.-Canadian treaty organization that monitors Great Lakes environmental issues, and the forum is an important opportunity for citizens to express concerns about toxics, biodiversity and other issues. For more information, call Great Lakes United at 716-886-0142.

**November 2**

Organizational meeting for **1000 Friends of Ohio**, a new group focusing on growth management issues, 2-5 p.m. in Columbus. Call EcoCity Cleveland at 216-932-3007 for details and rides.

**November 2-5**

**National Association of Conservation Districts** conference in Columbus, focusing on natural resource conservation in urban and suburban areas. Call 303-988-1810 for registration information.

**November 7-9**

**National Audubon Society's Great Lakes Regional Conference** in Michigan City, IN. For registration information, call 440-236-5768.

**November 8**

Hike to explore the natural history of the **Rocky River valley**, 2 p.m. at the Cleveland Metroparks Rocky River Nature Center.

**November 8**

Benefit for the **Clean Air Conservancy** at Art at the Powerhouse in the Flats. Call 216-523-1111 for tickets.

**November 9**

**Loon lookout**, 9 a.m. at the Geauga Park District Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve, 11620 Ravenna Rd.

**November 10**

**Black River Remedial Action Plan** Coordinating Committee meeting. Call 216-963-1169 for time and place.

**November 11**

Display of **commuter rail cars** at Cleveland Amtrak Station, sponsored by Greater Cleveland RTA.

**November 13**

Cleveland Engineering Society environmental conference on new **air quality standards** and their impact on business. Call 216-361-3100 for registration information.

**November 13 and 15**

**Kids City** program to create imaginary city held in the community room of Solon City Hall. Sponsored by the Cleveland Section of the Ohio Planning Conference and Solon schools. Volunteers needed; call 216-641-9390 for more information.

**November 15**

Workshop on **open space design** for conservation subdivisions, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Holden Arboretum, 9500 Sperry Rd. in Kirtland. Call 440-256-1110 or 216-691-1665 for registration information.

**November 15**

Monthly meeting of the **sustainable energy** group, SEED Ohio, with a talk about photovoltaic research at NASA. Call 216-321-4325 for time and place.

**November 15**

Conference on **new approaches to rural land use planning**, in Springfield, OH. Sponsored by the

Managing Change Coalition in Southwest Ohio. Call 513-933-1187.

**November 19**

Monthly public program of the **Northeast Ohio Sierra Club**, featuring a program on ethical investing. For more



information, call 216-843-7272.

**November 20**

Cleveland Metropark's naturalist David Dvorak will discuss a **naturalists' approach to photography** as part of the Cuyahoga Valley Photographic Society's professional photographer's series, 7 p.m. at the Happy Days Visitor Center on SR 303.

**November 20-21**

Ohio community **economic development** conference in Akron. Call 614-461-6392 for registration information.

**November 22**

Hike to explore **river terraces** in the Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, 1:30 p.m. starting at Bender Farm, half mile north of SR 303 on Riverview Road.

**November 24**

Seminar on regional development, equity and sustainability, 7 p.m. at Middleburg Heights Community Church, 7165 Big Creek Pkwy. Call 216-881-2344 for details.

**December 2-4**

**Partners for Smart Growth** conference in Baltimore, focusing on how to balance development, livable communities and environmental quality. Sponsored by the U.S. EPA and the Urban Land Institute, 202-624-7028.

**December 6**

**Cleveland EcoVillage design charette** hosted by the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization and EcoCity Cleveland. Call 216-961-4242 or 216-932-3007 for more information.

**Can America survive suburbia?**

*"The future will require us to build better places, or the future will belong to other people in other societies."*

Urban critic **James Howard Kunstler** will be making three appearances in Cleveland at the end of October. Kunstler is the author of *The Geography of Nowhere*, a scathing critique of America's auto-dominated landscape. His most recent book, *Home from Nowhere*, offers examples of how to redesign communities to enhance the public realm and strengthen civic life.

■ October 30 at 2 p.m. — Conference of the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies at Marriott Key Center in downtown Cleveland. \$10. Call 614-446-2613 for reservations.

■ October 31 from 9 to 11 a.m. — Meeting with the Northeast Ohio Regional Alliance at the City Club, 850 Euclid Ave. No charge, but register at the Citizens League, 216-241-5340.

■ October 31 at noon — Address to the City Club of Cleveland, 850 Euclid Ave. \$20 with lunch; call 216-621-0082 for reservations. The address will be simulcast on WCLV-FM radio and broadcast on WVIZ-TV Channel 25 at 9 a.m., Nov. 1.

**Enhancing the public realm**

The Committee for Public Art is sponsoring, "Enhancing the Public Realm," a series of free, public lectures on the future of Cleveland's public spaces and urban fabric:

• October 28 — Lecture on revitalizing public parks, waterfronts and streets by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers of the Cityscape Institute.

• November 18 — Lecture on the landscape of cities and great public places by landscape architect Laurie Olin.

Both lectures will be at 7 p.m. at the Cleveland Public Library Louis Stokes Wing, 325 Superior Ave. For more information, call 216-621-5330.

**Transportation and urban sprawl**

Dan Carlson, author of *At Road's End: Transportation and Land Use Choices for Communities*, will speak at a brown-bag lunch seminar, noon, October 30 at the Cleveland State University College of Urban Affairs, corner of E. 18th and Euclid Avenue. Call 216-687-2298 for more information.

# Building permits for single-family homes in the seven-county region, 1980-1995

(1 dot = 5 permits)

Although Northeast Ohio is not growing very much as a whole, certain communities are booming as development follows Interstate highways out from the region's urban core. During the past 15 years, new housing construction has been concentrated in suburbs such as Avon Lake, Westlake, Strongsville, Hudson, Solon, and Mentor. As these communities grow, older communities in the region are declining.

**"Indispensable reading for those who want to know what's really going on in the region or what the headlines may be a decade from now."**

—David Orr, Oberlin College Environmental Studies Program

Subscribe now! Each month, *EcoCity Cleveland* will bring you the ideas and information you need to create a more sustainable bioregion.

NAME

\_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS

\_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_

ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE

\_\_\_\_\_

-

EcoCity Cleveland  
2841 Scarborough Road  
Cleveland Heights, OH 44118  
Cuyahoga Bioregion  
(216) 932-3007

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
CLEVELAND, OHIO  
PERMIT NO. 592

**FORWARDING AND RETURN  
POSTAGE GUARANTEED  
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

**DATED MATERIAL -- DO NOT DELAY**

♻️ 100% Post-consumer waste

Time to renew your subscription?