

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
Remote Meeting
Environmental Stewardship Working Group
Meeting Notes

April 28, 2025

Consolidation of Working Groups

Karina Peggau explained that the Central Ohio Blueways previously had three specific working groups: User Experience, Water Trail Designation, and Environmental Stewardship. The User Experience and Water Trail Designation Groups were consolidated due to the significant overlap in their work, focusing on designating waterways as water trails and enhancing the quality of the user experience. The designation helps inform the public that these waterways are available for recreational activities such as kayaking and ensures that the quality of the user experience is maintained. This designation is crucial for promoting the use of waterways and ensuring they are well-maintained and accessible. This overlap led to the decision to consolidate the groups to streamline efforts and improve efficiency in achieving their objectives.

Onion Bag Project Implementation Plan

Members and staff discussed the Onion Bag Project implementation Plan, including the process of acquiring approval for installing Onion Bag Project signage. They highlighted the importance of reaching out to municipalities and recreation departments for approval. Due to the variability in protocols across municipalities, it is suggested to use general language when reaching out for approval. This approach ensures that the request is clear and can be directed to the appropriate person or department for further action.

Member Sehen shared his experience with the Village of Plain City, where he reached out to their recreation department to inform them about the project. He mentioned that they were open to discussing the project further once more details were set in stone. This example highlights the importance of initial communication and follow-up with specific municipalities.

Maintenance of Onion Bag Project Sites

Members discussed the maintenance responsibilities for the Onion Bag Project sites.

- Member Fay explained that FLOW is responsible for maintaining their Onion Bag Project site at Northmoor Park. This includes checking the site regularly, restocking bags as needed, and ensuring the site remains clean and functional. FLOW also coordinates with Columbus Recreation and Parks for trash disposal and any necessary structural repairs.
- Member Sehen mentioned that the Village of Plain City would be responsible for maintaining their Onion Bag Project site. This includes ensuring the site is well-maintained, restocking bags, and addressing any issues that arise. He emphasized the importance of clear communication and agreements with the local recreation department to ensure the site's upkeep.

Inclusion in Water Trail Designation Brochure

Karina proposed including the Onion Bag Project in the Water Trail Designation Brochure to promote the use of waterways for recreation and environmental stewardship. She also emphasized the importance of engaging the community and jurisdictions along the rivers in the Onion Bag Project.

Future Environmental Stewardship Projects

Members and staff discussed future Environmental Stewardship Working Group projects, such as river cleanups, and potential partnerships with organizations like Keep Columbus Beautiful and Hughes Outdoor for kayak-based litter cleanups. Member Fay noted that kayak-based litter cleanups have been successful in the past and involve volunteers using kayaks to collect litter from the waterways, promoting both environmental stewardship and recreational use of the rivers.

Next Steps

Staff will:

- Send members a follow-up email with access to the Onion Bag Project Implementation Plan.
- Research potential river cleanup projects and present them at the next meeting.

Member Fay will send a picture of the Onion Bag box and signage to Karina.

Adjourned

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Members Present

- Laura Fay, Friends of the Lower Olentangy
- Broc Sehen, Madison Soil & Water Conservation District
- Pam Steck, City of Columbus

Staff Present

- Lynn Kaufman
- Jessie Kuenzli
- Meghan Means
- Karina Peggau
- Edwina Teye

Public Present

Tina Mohn, City of Columbus