

The Ohio Water Table

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49th WMAO Annual Fall Conference: A Lesson in Adapting to Changing Conditions

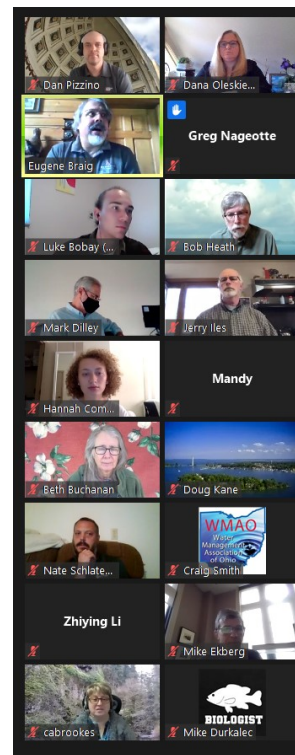
By **Craig Smith**, Ohio EPA, Division of Drinking and Ground Waters

When the WMAO Fall Conference Planning Committee began meeting last January, we were looking forward to another gathering of friends and colleagues at the Crowne Plaza Columbus North-Worthington Hotel in November. As we all know, that was not to be. In March, before we had the chance to begin the heavy lifting, most of us were told to work from home where many of us still are conducting our work hours.

The global COVID pandemic forced us to make unprecedented decisions about how we would meet. But, it was never a question of “if”.

The 2020 WMAO Fall Conference was held from November 2 through 4, 2020 with the theme “*Clean, Safe Water*”. To keep us safe, we met in a new venue – cyberspace – and we adapted to attendee needs by adopting a new format – two-hour morning and afternoon sessions each day. As usual, our speakers gave informative and timely presentations on various topics from across the spectrum of water resources management.

Starting with our keynote address, “Clean, Safe, Drinking Water beyond 2020 - The Columbus Perspective” by Danella Pettenski of the City of Columbus Division of Water, through to the final session on Education, we heard from professionals



A familiar visual lately. Participants listening in at the 2020 WMAO Annual Meeting.

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President's Column

Eugene Braig, WMAO 2020-2021 President

Beside the point: I find the current state of unrest in this country personally disturbing. As a trained scientist who imagines himself to have relatively high standards for what qualifies as evidence, I'm also disturbed by the recent seeming prevalence of conspiratorial thinking. I can cope with global pandemics; irrationality among fellow humans, however, really troubles me. Still, I find sincere comfort in community, in conversation, in camaraderie—both professional and personal. If you ever find yourself in need of conversation, I'm a willing participant and relatively easy to find.

On to water... And, much like water in the absence of channel or basin, I'm likely to offer a bit of a directionless ramble this cycle.

Hold the date! **Our annual spring mini-conference and joint water event with Ohio State's (OSU) Environmental Professional Network (EPN) will occur on 9 March 2021.** Our student affiliated organization,

TerrAqua at OSU, will assume their traditional co-host role. I'm excited for the program we're developing in collaboration with the EPN's Dr. Joseph Campbell. We're also planning an associated student networking event. Stay in touch and hold the date (details on page 7); I hope to "see" some of you there.

Thanks to all events happening in virtual space in the current era, I experienced (endured?) a first (for me). I attended two different professional conferences in two different time zones spanning the first week of November—the Water Management Association of Ohio (WMAO, of course) and the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference (UMISC)—a thing that's not even possible (thankfully) with physical presence and airports intervening. The overlap occurred because UMISC, having originally planned in the pre-COVID era for an in-person event, rescheduled when it moved to an online format. I was on the planning committees for both, but only had speaking/moderating duties at ours. Still, whenever possible, I felt a sense of obligation to look in on the UMISC presentations that I recruited and thus did so. Frankly, I hope to not do that again (not least of all because I like a properly defined lunch break within a single time zone).

I propose that the first-ever virtual incarnation of our annual conference, 2–5 November 2020, can reasonably be declared a success. Even though I was flitting between events, I was pleased with the general function of our conference. Having attended (and helped organize) several now, I think our interface was among the better. The American Fisheries Society's (14–25 [!] September 2020) may have been the virtual platform that I found most disengaged and frustratingly overwhelming. UMISC's (2–6 November 2020) was perhaps my favorite for ease of use. The North American Lake Management Society's (NALMS; 16–20 November 2020, where I also had some moderating/panel duties) was pretty good and somewhere in-between regarding user ease. However, NALMS's chosen conference-management platform embedded presentation function via

"I propose that the first-ever virtual incarnation of our annual conference, 2 – 5 November 2020, can reasonably be declared a success."

Zoom, and the two bits of software didn't always play well with each other. Extension's North Central Region Water Network's first Harmful Algal Bloom Research Symposium (6–7 January 2021) was pretty good and most similar to our own in sharing direct links to Zoom meeting spaces with registrants. Etc. You'll see more WMAO recap within this issue. Of course, if you have any input or observations to offer regarding the virtual platform, please feel free to reach out to our Conference Committee in conversation.

Personally, I'm not very good at doing much stuff. However, I am good at knowing who *is* doing stuff. This has led to the one thing that I am perhaps good at: collecting titles. My latest acquisition is Co-chair of the Mississippi River Basin Panel (<http://www.mrbp.org/>), the largest of the regional advisory panels to the national interagency Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force (<https://anstaskforce.gov/>). Their work may interest you (and we do sponsor small, related research projects). If you have any questions or concerns regarding the management of aquatic invasive species, I would again appreciate the conversation.

Finally, I've been inspired by increasing participation by students and/or university faculty and staff at our events. (I started naming institutions, but the sentence became unwieldy; thus, you all know whom you are!) There's potential for so much more from so many others. I'd like to renew our efforts to recruit student affiliate organizations and will make a small push in advance of the joint EPN mini-conference in March. If you know of any student organizations at colleges or universities throughout Ohio with an interest in the management or science of water, please help to keep me informed. I'm keen for conversation with them and their advisors.

...And be well out there in continued trying times.



Continued from Page 1

about new ideas and innovative practices. This year we were also joined by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas and Preserves for its Rivers Symposium.

All things considered, it was a successful conference: 100 individuals attended at least one of the sessions and approximately 40 people were in each session. Despite the lack of exhibit space, there were 11 organizations that sponsored the conference with an additional three sponsoring the Rivers Symposium. Six students made impressive poster presentations.

I would like to thank the members of the Committee - Alex Covert, Susan Grover, Melissa Menerey, Greg Nageotte, Kim Shaffer, Eugene Braig, Dennis Clement, Don Pickett, Anthony Sasson, and Qing Wan - for the perseverance and adaptability needed make the fall conference happen. Special thanks to Dana Oleskiewicz for her work with the Committee and all of the behind the scenes work she did to make this conference happen.

The conference planning committee hopes you enjoyed the 2020 WMAO Fall Conference. The Conference Proceedings and other information about the conference are available on our website: wmao.org.

We hope to see you all in November for the **50th Annual WMAO Conference!**



The 2020 WMAO Awards Ceremony was a show that must go on, with safety protocols in place! Mike Durkalec with Cleveland Metroparks accepts the Innovation in Lake Management Award presented by Ohio Lake Management Society.

Ohio Lake Management Society



High Praise for the 2020 OLMS Award Recipients

By **Mandy Razzano**, Ohio EPA and OLMS President

At the 2020 WMAO Virtual Conference, Ohio Lake Management Society recognized leaders in education, conservation, and research of Ohio's lakes. Recipients of the President's Award, Innovation in Lake Management Award, and the Lifetime Achievement Award were presented during the awards ceremony. The award recipients were nominated and approved by OLMS board members.

Dr. Robert Heath received the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Heath is Professor Emeritus of Biological Sciences at Kent State University. He has multiple publications that have been largely focused on the water quality of Lake Erie. His work has been published in international journals and more local journals, such as, the Journal of Great Lakes Research. Additionally, Dr. Heath has been president of international research associations and been the chairman, director, and member of numerous Advisory Councils, Boards, and Institutes. Currently, he is the Chairperson of Old Woman Creek Advisory Council and is on the Board of Directors for Cleveland Water Alliance. Dr. Heath has received several awards in leadership and excellence in service during his tenure. As a result of his contributions to lake research and abundant career accomplishments, Dr. Heath was presented with the 2020 Lifetime Achievement Award.



Dana Oleskiewicz presents the OLMS Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. Robert Heath.

Mike Durkalec received the 2020 Innovation in Lake Management Award

Mike (pictured on page 3) is an Aquatic Biologist at Cleveland Metropark (CMP), where he is head of the fisheries and aquatic research programs. Mike received this award for his Active Fisheries Management strategy for CMP lakes. The Cost Recovery Fisheries program, what Mike calls a win-win-win arrangement, is especially innovative. He collects and transfers fish from non-fishing lakes to public fishing, so the public wins by having more fish to catch at CMP public fishing lakes. CMP wins by not purchasing fish to stock fishing locations, and the non-public lake owners win by getting a tax write off for fish harvested from their property. Also, during his fish harvesting, Mike removes any



Susan James presented with OLMS President's Award.

invasive fish caught. Yet another win for the native fish! Mike's approach to lake management fosters local environmental stewardship by connecting citizens with accessible excellent fishing opportunities. Accordingly, he was presented with the 2020 Innovation in Lake Management Award.

Susan M. James received the 2020 President's Award

Since 2015, Susan James has been the Field Manager for OLMS's Citizen Lake Awareness and Monitoring (CLAM) program. She started with the CLAM program as a volunteer with her husband monitoring Pleasant Hill Lake for 8 years before she became the program's Field Manager. For the CLAM program, Susan manages a network of volunteers across Ohio, providing training, oversight and general coordination of the sampling and data collection. Susan was presented with the 2020 President's Award as gratitude for all of her work educating, guiding, and coordination within the CLAM program,

Congratulations 2020 WMAO Award Winners!

Distinguished Service



***Nate Schlater
Rural Action***

R. Livingston Ireland



***Mark Dilley
MAD Scientist Associates***

Technician of the Year



***David Reutter
Franklin SWCD***

Ohio Water Hall of Fame



***Jerry Iles
The Ohio State University***

Wayne S. Nichols



***Craig Smith
Ohio EPA***

President's Award



***Tom Butch
Ohio Scenic Rivers Association***

Project WET Facilitator of the Year



***Jacki Zevenbergen
Cuyahoga SWCD***

Voices for Water



***Mandy Razzano
Ohio EPA***



***Industrial
Best Maintained Dam

Eramet Waste Retention Dam***



***Local Public
Best Maintained Dam

St. Henry WWT Lagoon***



***Private
Best Maintained Dam

Goodrich Lake Dam***

Meet the WMAO 2020 Scholarship Winners

The Water Management Association of Ohio selected two undergraduates and one graduate student to receive a 2020 scholarship of \$1000 each. The Scholarship Committee was so impressed with the qualifications of these candidates that we decided to award one additional scholarship for the academic year. Congratulations on this recognition of their achievements!



Eva Birk-Petri
Ohio Wesleyan University
Environmental Science



Luke Bobay
The Ohio State University
Environmental Science



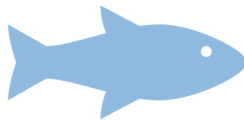
Parul Baranwal
University of Toledo
Environmental Engineering

Environmental Remediation Contractor



Environmental Remediation

Soil Remediation
Storage Tank Removal
Landfill



Ecological Restoration

Stream & River Restoration
Wetland Construction
Nutrient Reduction
Dam Removal



Environmental Services

Emergency Services
Hazardous & Non-hazardous Cleanup
24 Hour Emergency 877.683.7724

Environmental Remediation Contractor
Chris McGovern
P: 614.769.6535 x2100
E: chrism@ercontractor.com

A Force for Nature



WMAO - EPN Spring Seminar

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

Zoom Meeting

*Equity strategies in water affordability
for marginalized communities*

General Session

with panelists

Crystal M.C. Davis, Alliance for the Great Lakes

Constance Haqq, Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District

Betsy Taylor, Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network

Student Networking Roundtable

Facilitated conversations within breakout rooms will allow representatives from business sectors (academia, governments, nonprofit, and private) to offer guidance to students as they prepare for a career in the water industry.

Attendance is free

\$10 for certification credit (CEUs or PDH)

\$250 for event sponsorships

*Hosted by the Water Management Association of Ohio in collaboration with the
Environmental Professionals Network and TerraAqua*

[Agenda and Registration](#)

Ohio Wetlands Association (OWA) Enters into Partnership with H2Ohio

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Contributions by Giovanna Reising and Ohio Wetland Association (OWA)

On August 3, 2020, Ohio Wetland Association (OWA) announced a partnership with H2Ohio. As H2Ohio's mission closely aligns with the core values and mission of OWA, board members sought a partnership with the program. H2Ohio is Governor Mike DeWine's effort to effectuate a real, long-term strategy to improve water quality. According to H2Ohio's website, in July of 2019, \$172 million was approved by the Ohio General Assembly to clean up Ohio's waterways.



As the plan is data-driven, the initiative's first steps include top experts conducting water quality studies prior to making firm decisions on how to move forward. Because several agencies are part of the team (including the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency), multiple angles are being considered with each water improvement project. This multi-systemic approach also takes into consideration economic impacts on communities.



H2Ohio funds “targeted solutions to help reduce phosphorus runoff and prevent algal blooms through increased implementation of agricultural best practices and the creation of wetlands; improve wastewater infrastructure; replace failing home septic systems; and prevent lead contamination in high risk daycare centers and schools”(<http://h2.ohio.gov/about-h2ohio/>).

H2Ohio illustrates the ten best agricultural practices through the Phosphorus Reduction Impact; which will provide economic incentives to farmers who implement a “nutrient management plan.” The management plans must contain a combination of best practices, which can include soil testing, drainage water management, cover crops, crop rotation, manure incorporation, edge-of-field buffers, and wetland creation.

Wetlands assist farmers in nutrient management in two ways: 1) they absorb phosphorus, and 2) they slow down water runoff. H2Ohio's initial area of focus is to manage the farm runoff into the Maumee Watershed and Lake Erie. Beginning in Spring 2020, farmers in the area were able to enroll in the incentive program. Governor DeWine has stated that at this time, he is not mandating the use of phosphorus reduction best practices but stresses that these changes will benefit both farmers and the surrounding community over time.

Besides recommending that farmers incorporate wetlands on their land, H2Ohio is strategically identifying areas that will benefit from the presence of a wetland ecosystem. H2Ohio is initially focusing much of these efforts in the Western Lake Erie Basin and the Maumee Watershed. This area was once known as The Great Black Swamp, a vast wetland area that was once a highly effective filtration system for Lake Erie. When this area was drained and cleared to make way for fertile farmland and new settlements, the health of Lake Erie suffered.

Now we see that the soil's health has suffered as well; much of the stressed soil requires added nutrients to support the crops. Degraded soil struggles to hold on to nutrients, which exacerbates the nutrient runoff issue. H2Ohio's strategic team is identifying areas to establish self-sustaining wetlands that would aide in both containing nutrient run off and flood management, as well as provide recreational opportunities for the community.

Water Luncheon Seminar

Funding Initiatives Coordinated with the Ohio Lake Erie Commission

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 at 12:00 Noon

Zoom Meeting

[Abstract and Registration](#)



USDA Announces 2021 Priority Watersheds for Water Quality

Article excerpt from a posted press release on the USDA website. To read the full article, visit the USDA-NRCS newsroom [here](#).

WASHINGTON, Oct. 1, 2020 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has named 379 priority watersheds to help agricultural producers improve water quality across the country. Producers in these targeted watersheds will receive focused financial and technical resources through USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) successful landscape-level water-quality efforts, the [Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative](#) (MRBI) and [National Water Quality Initiative](#) (NWQI).

National Water Quality Initiative



[Printable map](#) (PDF)

[List of watersheds](#) (HTML)

Mississippi River Basin Initiative



[Printable map](#) (PDF)

[List of Watersheds](#) (HTML)

“We see a positive impact when we partner with producers to deliver conservation practices to critical watersheds,” said Farm Production and Conservation Under Secretary Bill Northey, who made the announcement at the Hypoxia Task Force meeting today. “These focused partnerships allow us to maximize the delivery of our conservation efforts and achieve greater improvements to water quality, which benefits the participating producers, the public, and our nation’s natural resources.”

NRCS launched MRBI in 2009, focusing on watersheds in the Mississippi River Basin to advance the efforts of the Hypoxia Task Force by supporting each member-state’s nutrient reduction strategy. The Hypoxia Task Force includes federal, tribal, and state agencies in the Mississippi River Basin working to reduce hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico. NWQI was initiated in 2012 to address agricultural contributions to surface waters impaired by nutrients, sediment, and pathogens. Since then, priority watersheds across the country have seen improvements, including the delisting of once impaired streams.

The technical and financial assistance from NRCS assists farmers and ranchers with implementing practices that avoid, control, and trap nutrients and sediment, which can negatively impact water quality. Practices include filter strips, cover crops, and manure management, which promote soil health, reduce erosion, and lessen nutrient runoff.

NRCS strengthened its focus on watershed assessment and partner engagement in priority small watersheds since 2019. NRCS encourages state partners to begin collaboration on MRBI and NWQI priorities for Federal Fiscal Year 2022 which begins on October 1, 2021. See the NRCS website for a list of the watersheds for MRBI and for NWQI.



Articulated concrete block armoring system preserves Lake Jinelle Dam
Richfield, Ohio

#8 ENGINEERING NEWS-RECORD DAMS & LEVEES

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Dana Oleskiewicz, Administrative Director

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The Water Management Association of Ohio (WMAO) is the one organization dedicated to all of Ohio's water resources.

VISION: To be recognized statewide as the go-to community for people who manage and safeguard Ohio's water resources.

MISSION: To support Ohio's water resource professionals with essential information, education, and networking opportunities

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