



State of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ohio EPA Releases Report About Leading Creek Watershed Conditions

Reclaiming mine land, implementing conservation practices and restoring riparian buffers would lead to major improvements in the Leading Creek watershed, according to a final report on local water quality by Ohio EPA.

The Leading Creek watershed is comprised of approximately 150 square miles of drainage area. The watershed's headwaters begin in Athens County with most of the watershed in Meigs County and a small portion in Gallia County.

The report detailing Ohio EPA's proposal to improve water quality in the Leading Creek watershed was approved by U.S. EPA. The report includes the results of a comprehensive study of the chemical, biological and habitat conditions along the river and its tributaries.

The majority of sampling areas in the Leading Creek watershed are polluted as the result of human activity. Many small streams are impaired because of acid mine drainage and unrestricted livestock access to the waterways. Water quality standards are based on designated uses, which reflect the degree to which people potentially will use the water.

Ohio is required by the federal Clean Water Act to identify waters that do not meet water quality standards and to develop methods to bring the affected waters into compliance. This is known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, which generally determines the maximum amount of pollutants a water body can receive on a daily basis without violating water quality standards. The TMDL program can improve the quality of a stream by taking a comprehensive look at all pollution sources. This includes point sources such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, as well as nonpoint sources, including runoff from urban and agricultural areas.

While more than 70 percent of the watershed is forested, the area is heavily mined. In 1993, an emergency discharge of contaminated water from the Meigs #31 Mine destroyed habitat and caused a large fish kill in Parker Run and downstream into segments of Leading Creek. The mine continues to discharge large quantities of water that contain some high concentrations of certain pollutants.

The report proposes several strategies to help the watershed meet its designated use under Ohio's water quality standards. Included are:

- limiting dissolved solids at the Meigs #31 Mine discharge, especially during low stream flows;
- biweekly sampling for chlorides in the water discharged from the Meigs #31 mine;
- agricultural conservation practices for abating sediment, including cattle exclusion from streams, grazing land protection and conservation tillage;
- restoration of riparian buffers; and

- abandoned mine land/barren land/gob pile reclamation.

To solicit community input on the report, Ohio EPA worked with the Meigs County Soil and Water Conservation District, specifically Raina Fulks, and accepted public comments about the draft report last summer. The report is available at <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/tmdl/LeadingCreekTMDL.html>. Additional information about the watershed is available at <http://www.geocities.com/meigsswcd/watershed>. For more information, call Ohio EPA's Division of Surface Water at (614) 644-2001.

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