



Preliminary Draft: Black River Watershed Total Maximum Daily Load Report (TMDL)

A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report for the Black River Watershed was approved by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2008. As a follow-up, Ohio EPA re-surveyed the watershed in 2012. A new Total Maximum Daily Load report has been drafted to address the impairments found during sampling in 2012 and will replace the 2008 TMDL report.

Background

The Clean Water Act requires Ohio EPA to prepare a restoration plan for watersheds that do not meet the State's water quality goals. The restoration plan, known as a total maximum daily load (TMDL) report, specifies how much pollution must be reduced from various sources and recommends specific actions to achieve these reductions.

Black River Watershed

The Black River watershed is located in northern Ohio, west of the greater Cleveland metropolitan area. The mainstem of the Black River forms from the confluence of its two major tributary streams, the West Branch and the East Branch. The headwaters of the Black River watershed are located in southern Lorain County and northern Medina County. The Black River watershed drains 467 square miles in Lorain, Huron, Medina, Ashland, and Cuyahoga counties from its headwater areas to the river mouth at Lake Erie in the City of Lorain.

The Black River was designated as a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) in 1987 because of a legacy of environmental impacts to water and habitat quality. Much of the environmental degradation that impaired the lower Black River was as result of historical industrial land uses in the city of Lorain. In 2015, the Black River AOC Advisory Committee developed a prioritized list of actions projects necessary to remove Beneficial Use Impairments (BUIs) and restore the AOC. Three BUIs have been removed to date and six remain (Fish Tumors or Other Deformities, Degradation of Fish and Wildlife Populations, Degradation of Benthos, Restrictions on Navigational Dredging Activities, Beach Closings, and Loss of Fish and Wildlife Habitat). The Black River TMDL will assist in identifying future measures to remove the remaining applicable BUIs.

Ohio EPA Assessment of Water Quality

Ohio is one of the few states to measure the health of its streams by examining the number and types of fish and insects in the water. A large number of insects and fish that are sensitive to pollution indicate a healthy stream. An abundance of fish and insects that tolerate pollution is an indicator of an unhealthy stream.

Stakeholder Input

The Agency is releasing the preliminary draft TMDL report for the Black River Watershed for review and comment and will accept feedback on any aspect of the report. This preliminary draft is being released to provide stakeholders two opportunities for review and comment in accordance with Ohio Revised Code 6111.562. The next step is the draft TMDL report, which will additionally be available for a 60-day review and comment period.

Providing Feedback

Comments can be submitted by email to EPATMDL@epa.ohio.gov, faxed to (614) 644-2745 or sent by postal mail to:
TMDL Program
Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

All comments must be submitted to the Agency **no later than 5:00 p.m. on October 22, 2021.**

Stay Involved

Subscribe to updates on TMDL projects at:
ohioepa.custhelp.com/app/utils/login_form/redirect/account%252Fprofile.

Contact Information

For more information, contact Melinda Harris at melinda.harris@epa.ohio.gov or Bill Zawiski at william.zawiski@epa.ohio.gov.

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Black River Watershed – Current Conditions

In 2012, Ohio EPA scientists collected comprehensive biological, chemical, and physical data throughout the watershed. The data convey the watershed's conditions; the data is compared with state's water quality standards to determine which streams are impaired and identifies goals to restore stream habitat and water quality to meet the standards.

The Black River and its tributaries are impaired for their designated Recreation Uses (RU) due to *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria and are impaired for their Aquatic Life Uses (ALU) by nutrients, sediment, total dissolved solids, and non-pollutants (i.e., direct habitat alteration, fish passage barrier, and other flow regime alterations). For additional information on the condition of the Black River, see the Biological and Water Quality Report from the 2012 study at: epa.ohio.gov/dsw/tmdl/BlackRockyRivers#116249106-supplemental-information.

New Draft TMDLs

This draft 2021 TMDL report replaces the existing 2008 TMDL report for the Black River watershed. In the draft report, Ohio EPA is proposing an *E. coli* bacteria TMDL to address recreation impairment at 18 sites in the project area that cover 15 impaired watershed assessment units (WAUs). Ohio EPA is proposing Total Phosphorus (TP) TMDLs at nine sites, Total Suspended Solids (TSS) TMDLs at eight sites and a Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) TMDL at one site in the project area to address a total of 12 impaired WAUs. Please see Figure 1 for a map of the TMDL locations.

Actions Needed to Improve Water Quality

Implementation of the TMDLs will be accomplished through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program for permitted point sources and through application of best management practices (BMPs) to address agricultural and urban runoff for nonpoint sources. New permit limits for point sources are recommended as are the implementation of long-term control plans (LTCPs) and the elimination of combined and sanitary sewer overflows. Agricultural BMPs will focus upon four management strategies for: uplands, livestock, drainage waterways, and riparian corridors. Urban BMPs will focus on storm water management (e.g., through low impact design and green infrastructure), education, and outreach. Urban communities that have a Municipal Separate Sewer System (MS4) permit will be encouraged to adopt and implement urban BMPs through their Storm Water Management Programs (SWMPs).

Ohio's New TMDL Process

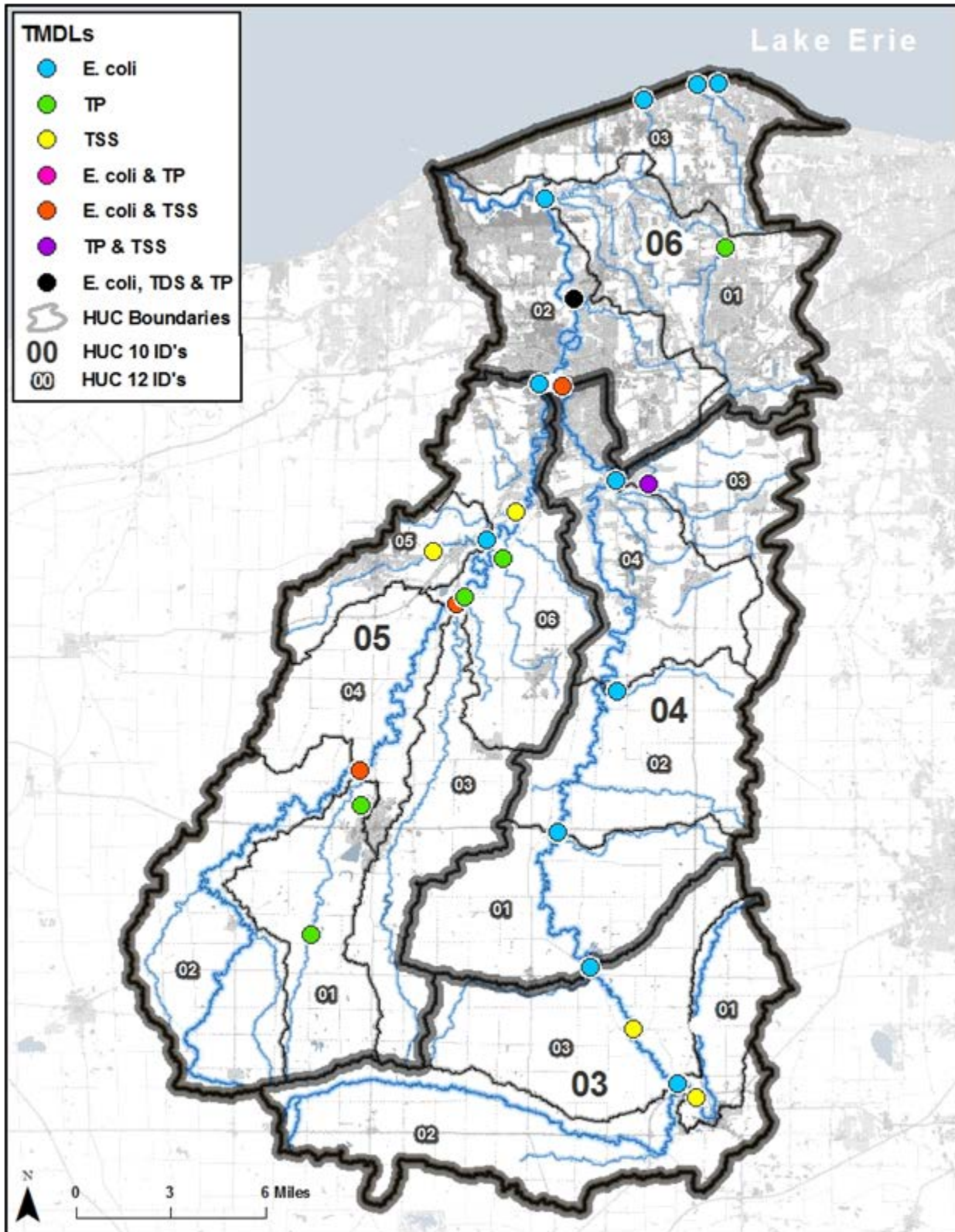
The preliminary Black River Watershed TMDL report is the first TMDL report made available to stakeholders since Ohio EPA's statute and rules were revised in 2017 and 2019, respectively. The new requirements resulting from the statute and rule revisions are detailed and addressed in Appendix K of the report. Ohio EPA is requesting feedback on this approach – maintaining state specific requirements in a separate appendix – and will take input into account in this and future TMDL reports.

Where can I learn more?

- The study plan and biological and water quality report for the 2012 survey is available at epa.ohio.gov/dsw/tmdl/BlackRockyRivers#116249106-supplemental-information
- The 2008 Black River TMDL report and appendices are available at epa.ohio.gov/dsw/tmdl/BlackRockyRivers#116249105-tmdl-report
- For more information about biological, chemical and physical monitoring, please see the Water Quality Monitoring webpage at epa.ohio.gov/dsw/bioassess/ohstrat.aspx.
- For more information about TMDLs, please see the Guide to Total Maximum Daily Loads in Ohio at epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/tmdl/TMDL_Fact_Sheet_Feb_2020.pdf?ver=2020-02-03-142916-353

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Figure 1. TMDLs in the Black River project area (part of the 04110001 HUC-8) (taken from Executive Summary of the Preliminary Draft Black River TMDL Report).



Notes
 TMDL = total maximum daily load; TP = total phosphorus; TSS = total suspended solids; TDS = total dissolved solids; HUC = hydrologic unit code.