

SOURCE WATER PROTECTION IN THE OHIO RIVER

Scope: Regional/Watershed

Location: Ohio

SCOPE:

- » Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) initiated a statewide alliance between representatives from state and federal drinking water agencies.
- » A joint source water protection plan for the upper Ohio River was signed by three public water systems (PWSs), the purpose of which is to encourage public water systems along the 30-mile upper Ohio River area, from East Liverpool, Ohio, to Follansbee, West Virginia, to collaborate with each other, as well as industrial representatives, to ensure the health of the river, which serves as a water supply for tens of thousands of people.

COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- » The Ohio River Drinking Water Source Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) initiated a Work Group in 1997 to discuss interstate aspects of Source Water Protection Program activities for the Ohio River. The work group is comprised of representatives of state and federal drinking water agencies (see list of members below).
- » In 2012, several of the communities between Follansbee and East Liverpool—a distance of about 30 river miles—developed a joint source water protection plan, entitled “Source Water Protection Plan for the Upper Ohio River Public Water Systems.”
- » The plan was ultimately signed by three communities: the City of Toronto, the City of Steubenville, and Buckeye Water District, which serves the Village of Wellsville. The collaborative hopes to expand to more cities in the future.

MEMBERS:

- » Ohio River Drinking Water Source Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO)
- » City of Toronto, City of Steubenville, and Buckeye Water District (which serves the Village of Wellsville)
- » Indiana Department of Environmental Management
- » Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- » Kentucky Department of Water
- » Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
- » Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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- » West Virginia Bureau of Public Health
- » U.S. EPA Regions 3, 4, & 5
- » ORSANCO's Water Users Advisory Committee

WATER CONCERNS:

The contaminant concerns directly relate to population growth and include pollution from: river traffic, steel mills, power plants, chemical manufacturers and petroleum tank farms within the area. The land use bordering the 30-mile stretch of the Ohio River between Follansbee, West Virginia, and East Liverpool, Ohio, is highly industrial. In terms of the volume of chemicals that could be involved in a spill or release, the greatest concerns are:

- » Spills from commercial shipping on the river
- » Ruptures of petroleum pipelines
- » Railway accidents
- » Releases from power plants
- » Collapse of bermed retention ponds

STRATEGIES:

- » Reinforce current efforts (Spill Prevention, Control and Counter-measures Plan, Facility Operations Plan, and compliance with environmental regulatory requirements).
- » Annual outreach meeting in Steubenville, inviting all major industries in the tri-city area. In 2013, six local industries and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers attended. Other attendees included staff from Ohio EPA, ORSANCO, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- » Encouraging other PWSs within a 30-mile area to formally implement a joint source water protection plan.
- » Pending funding, the group hopes to
 - Print brochures describing the joint SWAP plan.
 - Create signs to post at Ohio River marinas urging citizens to report chemical spills.
 - Create a website for joint SWAP efforts.
 - Contract with ORSANCO to use a "mobile aquarium" for educational outreach.
 - Organize a "Watershed Festival" for the Upper Ohio River region.

RESULTS

- » Creating response plans that coordinate emergency response strategies by industry contractors and county Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs), as well as the Coast Guard. PWSs also will improve communications with the county EMA.
- » Increasing public information. By working together, the public water suppliers can pursue similar goals without overlap and can share the effort involved.