



Water Quality Council

Meeting Notes

Monday, August 11, 2025

Members and alternates present: Garrett Chamberlain, Jon Eckel, Josh Hollinger, Ben Pushka, Kevin Laughlin, Brittney Klockowski; **Partners and guests present:** Kris Barnswell, Gerald Bingham, Richard Bingham (virtually), Deanna Bobak, Matt Dennis, Kris Barnswell, Edith Kippenhan, Will Kort (virtual), Willie Pevec (virtual); **TMACOG staff present:** Kari Gerwin, Melissa Hopfer, Tiara Davis, Annsley Mann (virtual), Jennifer Allen

Welcome and Call to Order – The Water Quality Council met on Monday, August 11, 2025, at 1 p.m. in the TMACOG Boardroom. Several individuals joined the meeting via Microsoft Teams as noted above. Chair Kevin Laughlin welcomed everyone to the meeting. Ms. Gerwin announced that Ann Nair had left TMACOG for a position with the State of Ohio. Jennifer Allen, TMACOG executive assistant, provided support for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes – Due to lack of quorum, minutes from the May 12, 2025, meeting were tabled for the next meeting.

Guest Presentation: The Delta Institute: Technical and Funding Assistance for Water Infrastructure – Kevin Laughlin introduced guest speakers Willy Pevec and Will Kort from the Delta Institute, who joined the meeting virtually. Delta Institute is EPA Region V's Environmental Finance Center (EFC). The EPA has 29 EFCs across the country that provide technical assistance to communities and help them access federal funding for water infrastructure improvements. The Delta Institute collaborates with Midwest communities and focuses on drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure.

Mr. Pevec gave an overview of the EFCs Water Infrastructure Technical Assistance Services and the EFC process. He also gave an overview of the State Revolving Fund (SRF) funding allocation process and information about other federal assistance initiatives. Examples of the past or present projects that Delta Institute has or is currently assisting communities in the Midwest were highlighted.

Will Kort gave an overview of Great Lakes Protection Fund GI Platform and other programs and services, all of which are offered at no cost to communities in the Great Lakes region. The type of projects supported are those that reduce flooding and address stormwater issues. Mr. Kort highlighted examples of projects and the services offered as well as potential funding and financing resources. Whitehouse Village Mayor Richard Bingham gave background information about flooding in the Swan Creek Watershed and its financial impact in Whitehouse. Mr. Kort offered to meet with Mayor Bingham and other stakeholders in the watershed to determine the type of support that is available through the EFC, if any, to address this issue. He will coordinate a meeting with Mr. Pevec and Mr. Kort to discuss this issue further.

Following the presentation, Mr. Pevec and Mr. Kort received questions. Additional questions can be directed to wkort@delta-institute.org or wpevec@delta-institute.org.

Water Workforce Coalition Update – Kari Gerwin, TMACOG's director of Water Quality Planning, gave an update on the Water Workforce Coalition and training program. One of the questions that arose from the update is how to move forward with the program after the grant closes out in February 2026. An ad hoc committee was convened and identified next steps.

The TMACOG staff recommended that a Water Workforce Coalition be formally organized to ensure that utilities in the region have access to well-trained entry level workforce, resources to advance operators, and plans for succession. For more information about the program, visit: www.waterworksforyou.org.

Staff and Advisory Group Reports

WLEB Advisory Group: Melissa Hopfer, Water Quality program manager, reported that the group had met in July for a working session on the Non-Point Source update in the 208 Plan. The next meeting will take place on September 23rd from 10 a.m. to noon at Magee Marsh Visitor Center in Oak Harbor and will consist of two site tours.

Community Water Resources Advisory Group: Ms. Hopfer reported that the group had met in July. They heard a presentation about SmartCap advanced water leak technology and learned about several studies that the University of Toledo has collaborated on with area Water and Wastewater facilities to find better ways to treat water and work on removing contaminants. Finally, the Drinking Water chapter of the 208 Plan has been completed and will be reviewed with the Wastewater chapter at the next Water Quality Council meeting.

Stormwater Coalition and Stormwater Action Group – Tiara Davis announced that TMACOG is planning a BMPs training session for municipal inspectors and local contractors. This session would take place in mid-March 2026 and is intended to help municipal inspectors and local contractors understand regional expectations regarding OEPA stormwater regulations and requirement. SWAG also discussed stakeholder comments for MS4 permit recommendations.

Roundtable – Current and emerging issues that should be addressed by Water Quality Council and Advisory Groups – Ms. Gerwin entertained comments from those present regarding what's going on in their respective communities and current and emerging issues. There were no comments.

With regards to what's next after funding for the water workforce program has ended, the future roles of the WQC and TMACOG's are uncertain. However, the goal is to keep the program going and to formerly organize a Water Workforce Coalition. Jon Eckel volunteered to be a part of the Coalition, and he offered to accompany staff on visits to promote the program. Penta and other career tech programs will be invited to participate in the program.

Public Comments – There were no members of the public present for comments.

Next Meeting/Adjourn – The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Water Quality Council will take place at TMACOG on Monday, November 10th at 1 p.m. Kevin Laughlin adjourned the meeting at 2:35 p.m.

Kevin Laughlin, Chair, Water Quality Council
Toledo Metropolitan Area
Council of Governments (TMACOG)

Kari Gerwin, Director Water Quality Planning
Toledo Metropolitan Area
Council of Governments (TMACOG)