Water Quality Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, August 10, 2026

Submitted for approval November 9, 2026

Members and alternates present: Jerry Burhrow**,** Zuri Carter (virtual), Garrett Chamberlain (virtual)**,** Matt Choma, Jon Eckel**,** Josh Hollinger (virtual), Dennis Kennedy (virtual), Brittney Klockowski, Kevin Laughlin, Alex Lytten (virtual), Andy McClure, Ben Pushka, Bob Vasquez (virtual); **Partners and guests present:** Danya Abduhak, Office of U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur; Kris Barnswell, OEDA; Rowan Coburn-Griffis, ODNR; Kevin Czaikowski, University of Toledo (virtual); Mike Deal, OEPA; Boden Fisher, ODA; Randy Mahlman, Fulton County; Sally Gladwell, The Mannik & Smith Group (virtual); Rick Johnson, Applied Environmental Solutions (virtual); Jennifer Keffer, Verdantas; Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC (virtual); Mike Libben, Ottawa Soil and Water Conservation District; David Myerholz, Village of Holland (virtual); Autumn Moore, ODNR (virtual); Dave Myerholz, Village of Holland; Kristina Patterson, OLEC (virtual); Austin Serna, Office of U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur; Michael Somerville, City of Toledo (virtual); Laura Sullivan, OEPA (virtual); Mark Wolford, Village of Portage; **Lake Erie West staff present:** Kari Gerwin, Melissa Hopfer, Kingsley Kanjin, Alex Small, Jennifer Allen

Welcome and Call to Order – The Water Quality Council met on August 10, 2026, at 1 p.m. This hybrid meeting was held in the Lake Erie West Regional Council Boardroom and via Microsoft Teams. Chair Kevin Laughlin called the meeting to order, and introductions were made by meeting attendees.

Approval of Minutes – Approval of minutes from the May 11, 2026, meeting was tabled for the next meeting due to lack of quorum.

Member Discussion of Water Workforce Coalition Structure – Kari Gerwin reported on Water Workforce program activities since the USEPA grant has closed out. She also reported on the Water Workforce Coalition Ad Hoc Committee's recommendation for the Water Workforce Program moving forward. Their recommendations are as follows. Due to lack of quorum, the ad hoc committee did not vote on these recommendations.

- Formalizing and defining the role of the Coalition;
- A 3-year commitment from Lake Erie West to allocate funds for staff time;
- Phase 1 work for FY 2027 and Phase 2 for FY 2028 and moving forward;
- A member-based, decision-making body that would each sign MOUs and commit to guiding the program and collaborating to seek funding;
- Inviting non-members to participate in discussions; and
- Three strategic meetings held annually by the coalition

No action was sought from the Water Quality Council on the above recommendations. However, Ms. Gerwin sought feedback from WQC members. Comments included the following.

- Survey the public and private sector
- Invite Penta and other career tech schools to participate in a training program
- There is a need in the region for individuals with CDLs. Lake Erie West could make the public aware of the need for individuals with CDLs.
- Communicate water workforce career opportunities to adult education classes

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Lake Erie West Regional Policy Agenda – Marissa Bechstein, director of regional development, gave an update on the status of the Lake Erie West Regional Policy Agenda. The policy agenda will focus on five core areas: Infrastructure, Community Development, Economic Development & Workforce, Water Quality & Environment, and Schools/Education. The final document will be rolled out early next year. Lake Erie West will plan a visit to Columbus to present the policy agenda to state legislators in spring of 2027.

State Agency Update – Laura Sullivan, OEPA Division of Drinking and Ground Waters, reported on an incident involving the release of liquid fertilizer in Huston Creek (Henry County) on July 3rd. The incident resulted in a massive fish kill downstream in the Maumee River. The exact cause of the release is still under investigation, and clean-up efforts continue.

Kris Barnswell, OEPA, gave an update on the Data Center General Permit and Small MS4 General Renewal Permit. Mike Deal, OEPA, reported on OEPA's new website dashboard for current and future water and wastewater operators, as well as gave an update on proposed rules for PFAs, MCLs, and PFOs. Applications for Service Line Inventory Assistance are being accepted by OEPA through October 18th. Applications are also being accepted from public water system for emergency backup generators, Source Water Assessment and Protection planning, and water rate studies.

Environment Program and Committee Reports – Melissa Hopfer, environment program manager, and Alex Small, environmental outreach intern, gave an update on the 208 Plan public engagement process and shared preliminary results from the survey, which closed on August 7th. Mr. Small was thanked for his work this summer.

Other Business – Austin Serna, Office of Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, announced that under the Water Resources Development Act, Toledo and Oregon were awarded $34.5 million for the Army Corp of Engineers to upgrade their water, wastewater, and stormwater sewer systems. Congresswoman Kaptur will be hosting an event on August 12th. Mr. Serna will forward Kari Gerwin a link with more details about the event.

Sandra Kosek-Sills announced that an Ohio Domestic Action Plan workshop is scheduled to take place on September 3rd. A link to the event page was shared in the chat box.

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

Next Meeting/Adjournment – The next regularly scheduled meeting of the Water Quality Council will take place in person on Monday, November 9th at 1 p.m. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

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Kevin Laughlin, Chair, Water Quality Council Lake Erie West Regional Council	Kari Gerwin, Director, Environment Lake Erie West Regional Council