Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Program Volunteer Stream Monitoring Plan

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Purpose

The purpose of the Firelands Coastal Tributaries Volunteer Stream Monitoring Plan is to enhance the stewardship of Firelands watersheds by increasing knowledge of local water quality. The primary goal of this plan is to provide credible water quality data to drive necessary stewardship changes that support watershed health. A secondary goal of this plan is to document water quality trends over time and use the data as an evaluation tool for improvement projects.

Program Objectives

- 1. Quantify watershed health for select watersheds in the Firelands area through annual monitoring and analysis.
- 2. Engage members of the Firelands community in annual water quality monitoring data collection.
- 3. Increase awareness of watershed condition and stewardship needs for stakeholders in monitored watersheds.

Organization

The Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Program was created in 2006 with the award of an ODNR Watershed Coordinator grant. This program, initiated by 14 original stakeholders, is currently operated through a partnership between the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve (OWC NERR) and the Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). The coordinator of the program has lead the community through watershed planning, stewardship education, grant funded watershed improvement projects, and the development of citizen-based stream monitoring.

The Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program began in 2008 with Old Woman and Pipe Creeks; Mills Creek was added in 2011. A Monitoring Committee made up of staff members from Erie SWCD and OWC NERR, along with interested volunteers, guided the development of this program. This committee met for the first several years to create the framework of the program. Since then, the Erie SWCD and OWC NERR have continued to develop the program formulating workgroups needed when significant shifts have occurred in the program. Additionally, a "monitoring group" composed of stakeholders of the program may also assist to evaluate the program, review new materials, and provide guidance on needed changes to ensure success.

1. Erie Soil and Water Conservation District

The Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) became the 84th District in Ohio in 1953, and was established for the purpose of protecting, preserving, and restoring the natural resources in our area. The District was organized under the State of Ohio, Revised Code 1515, and is governed by a board of five supervisors who are elected by the landowners of Erie

County. The SWCD employs the coordinator of the stream monitoring program and operates the program through funds provided by the Office of Coastal Management.

a. Roles of the Coordinator include program management, volunteer coordination, training, data uploads (Water Reporter), data analysis, development of watershed report cards, education/outreach for program and findings.

2. Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve

Designated in 1980, Old Woman Creek NERR is part of a national network of 30 State-Federal partnership coastal reserves that address state and regional coastal management needs through research, education, and stewardship. The Old Woman Creek NERR's program is administered by NOAA in collaboration with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Office of Coastal Management.

a. The Old Woman Creek NERR provides direct funding and support to the Erie Conservation District to implement the stream monitoring program. Provided support includes the analysis of water quality samples collected by volunteers, assistance with data management, quality assurance/control, data analysis, and participation with the Lake Erie Volunteer Science Network (LEVSN). The Reserve also maintains equipment at their site and serves as a kit pick-up location for volunteers.

3. Volunteers

Volunteers serve as the main data collectors of this program. They are trained citizens given specific protocols and site assignments to collect monthly samples as part of this program. Further description of volunteer requirements and responsibilities is listed below.

Study Area

The Firelands area consists of Erie and Huron Counties. In this area, there are seven small tributaries that flow directly into Lake Erie: Cold Creek, Mills Creek, Pipe Creek, Sawmill Creek, Old Woman Creek, Chappel Creek, and Cranberry Creek. Six of the seven listed creeks are on the USEPA Section 303d List of Impaired Waters. Sawmill Creek is the only small tributary in the Firelands that meets criteria for a healthy stream. Maps for the watersheds that are currently being monitored, including specific monitoring locations, can be found in Appendix A.

1. Mills Creek Watershed

Mills Creek is a 42.4 square mile watershed. Its headwaters begin in the community of Bellevue, and it empties into Sandusky Bay on the west end of the City of Sandusky. Most of the watershed is rural/agricultural land use (67%) with more than a quarter being urbanized development and less and 7% natural area. The watershed is located within the Karst geological region and there is high interaction between ground and surface water. The watershed has two large industrial discharges one being a limestone quarry and the other a wastewater treatment plant. Both discharges occur in the upper portion of the watershed.

2. Pipe Creek Watershed

Pipe Creek is a 48.5 square mile warm water habitat watershed that combines three separate direct tributaries: Pipe Creek, Hemminger Ditch, and Plum Brook. All three subbasins empty into East Sandusky Bay, which is located in the western basin of Lake Erie. The watershed is nearly equal in agriculture and urban land uses with less than 15% in natural areas. This watershed has the highest rate of urbanization within the Firelands, with the highest development located at the lower portion of the watershed. The watershed also has two limestone quarry discharges and is part of the karst geological region. Pipe Creek is on the USEPA's impaired waters list for not meeting aquatic life use due to excessive sediment, nutrients, and bacteria as well as habitat alterations.

3. Old Woman Creek Watershed

Old Woman Creek is a 27 square mile watershed with headwaters in Huron County that flow through Erie County and empty into the west end of the central Lake Erie basin. The watershed is broken into two branches that merge into a central channel upstream of a naturally functioning freshwater estuary. Land use in the watershed is mostly row crop agriculture (66%) followed by natural areas (20%) and rural development with a small village at the center of the watershed. The watershed geology consists of shale and sandstone with the Berea Escarpment separating the upper and lower watershed at the Village of Berlin Heights. Old Woman Creek is on the USEPA's impaired waters list for not meeting aquatic life use due to excessive sediment, nutrients, and bacteria as well as habitat alternations.

4. Chappel Creek Watershed

Chappel Creek is a 24 square mile watershed that begins in Huron County and empties into Lake Erie's Central Basin between the City of Huron and the City of Vermilion. The land use of this watershed consist of 58% agriculture, 9% urban, and 33% natural area. The natural areas are almost entirely forested land. The watershed is narrow along with a narrow floodplain due to Chappel Creek is on the USEPA's impaired waters list for not meeting aquatic life use due to excessive sediment, nutrients, and habitat alteration.

5. **Site Descriptions** – Sampling locations selected provide a representation of the respective watershed as a whole and provide comparable data sets both among and within each watershed. Factors included in site selection included, but were not limited to, surrounding land use, drainage area, accessibility, practicability of sampling for specific parameters, and previously recorded water quality data. Site list and year added can be found in Table 1, detailed information for each site is in Appendix B.

Table 1. Description of sites monitored as part of the Firelands Coastal Tributaries Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program.

					Year
Watershed	Site	Туре	Lat	Long	Added
Mills Creek	Goodrich Rd	Stream	41.284	-82.824	2015
Mills Creek	Strecker Rd E	Stream	41.326	-82.811	2014
Mills Creek	Strecker Rd W	Stream	41.326	-82.819	2012
Mills Creek	Miller Rd W	Stream	41.380	-82.775	2012
Mills Creek	Mason Rd**	Stream	41.362	-82.793	2024
Mills Creek	Strub Rd	Stream	41.410	-82.737	2012
Mills Creek	Perkins Ave	Stream	41.434	-82.732	2024
Mills Creek	Mills Creek Golf Course	Stream	41.44062	-82.73209	2013
Pipe Creek	Strecker Rd	Stream	41.324760	-82.767710	2008
Pipe Creek	Portland	Stream	41.338400	-82.748700	2016
Pipe Creek	Patten-tract Rd	Stream	41.365350	-82.727940	2008
Pipe Creek	Bogart Rd	Stream	41.396500	-82.708520	2008
Pipe Creek	Oakland Ave	Stream	41.429000	-82.685380	2011
Pipe Creek	Perkins Ave	Estuary	41.432560	-82.683650	2008
Old Woman Creek	Liles Rd	Stream	41.273479	-82.453316	2008
Old Woman Creek	Andress Rd	Stream	41.30204	-82.46514	2015
Old Woman Creek	Bellamy Rd	Stream	41.314902	-82.481357	2008
Old Woman Creek	Bellamy Rd 2	Stream	41.320662	-82.483260	2009
Old Woman Creek	Rt 61	Stream	41.318468	-82.492657	2008
Old Woman Creek	Mason Rd	Stream	41.330674	-82.481357	2008
Old Woman Creek	Tennant Rd W	Stream	41.298600	-82.509790	2008
Old Woman Creek	Hoffman Woods	Stream	41.319200	-82.527460	2008
Old Woman Creek	Chapin Rd	Stream	41.34325	-82.52091	2008
Old Woman Creek	Berlin Rd	Stream	41.348920	-82.512570	2008
Old Woman Creek	Darrow Rd	Estuary	41.364922	-82.504653	2008
Old Woman Creek	Estuary Overlook	Estuary	41.367390	-82.507170	2008
Old Woman Creek	Estuary Outlet	Estuary	41.382061	-82.514289	2008
Chappel Creek	Vine Rd	Stream	41.2106	-82.5400	2025*
Chappel Creek	Ogan Rd	Stream	41.26197	-82.43596	2022
Chappel Creek	Florence-Wakeman Rd	Stream	41.29786	-82.41310	2024**
Chappel Creek	Thrope Rd	Stream	41.33148	-82.45518	2022
Chappel Creek	Darrow Rd East	Stream	41.36446	-82.42531	2022
Chappel Creek	Poorman Rd	Stream	41.38082	-82.4307	2022

^{*} Chappel Creek replaced Townsend Angling Rd with Vine Rd in 2025

^{**}Chappel Creek replaced Harmon Rd with Florence-Wakeman Rd in 2024 due to construction

Sampling Parameters

Water quality monitoring described in this plan relate to chemical parameters of the surface water. Several parameters are sampled in the field by volunteer monitors, while others are performed in the laboratory at the Old Woman Creek NERR from a grab sample taken at the time of field sampling. Table 2 lists regularly sampled parameters; additional information about each parameter can be found in the Volunteer Stream Monitor Handbook.

Table 2. Parameters that are regularly sampled as part of the Firelands Coastal Tributaries Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program.

Parameter	Analysis	Equipment/Method	Accuracy	Range
рН	Field	YSI Pro Plus/Quattro Meter	±0.2 pH units	-14 pH units
Temperature	Field	YSI Pro Plus/Quattro Meter	±0.3° C of reading	0° to 50° C
Dissolved Oxygen	Field	YSI Pro Plus/Quattro Meter	For 0 to 20 mg/L:	0 to 50 mg/L
			Between ±0 mg/L	
			and ±0.2 mg/L	
Conductivity	Field	YSI Pro Plus/Quattro Meter	±1% of reading	0 to 3000
				mS/cm
Total Suspended Solids	Field	Ohio Sediment Stick	0.5 in	0-36 in
Turbidity	Lab	Hach 2100AN Turbidimeter	Between 0 to	0 – 10,000 FNU
		following USEPA Method 180.1	1000 NTU ±2%	
			plus 0.01 NTU;	
			Between 1000 to	
			4000 NTU ±5%;	
			Between 4000	
			and 10000 NTU	
			±10%	
Soluble Reactive	Lab	Seal AQ300 Discrete Analyzer	n/a	0.005 - 1.000
Phosphorus		following USEPA 365.1 Rev 2.0		mg P / L
		(1993) and Standard Methods		
		4500-PF (1999 forward)		
Nitrate	Lab	Measured as (NO2 + NO3) –	n/a	0.012-2.000 mg
		NO2 using a Seal AQ300		N/L
		Discrete Analyzer and following		
		USEPA-132-A Rev 1		
Nitrite	Lab	Seal AQ300 Discrete Analyzer	n/a	0.0009-0.2000
		following USEPA 354.1 Rev 2.0		mg N / L
		(1993) and Standards Methods		
		4500-NO2B (23 rd edition)		

Table 3. Description of back-up tests conducted in the field for parameters that fall outside of the "What's Normal" range.

Parameter	Analysis	Equipment/Method	Accuracy	Range
рН	Field	Aquacheck pH test strip	±1 pH units	4-9 units
Temperature	Field	Alcohol thermometer	±1° C of reading	0° to 50° C
Dissolved Oxygen	Field	Hach Kit Model OX-2P	1 mg/L	1-20 mg/L

Sampling Methods

1. **Monitoring schedule** –The sampling is conducted monthly from April to November. Sampling event time period is from dawn on the third Sunday of the month until noon the following Monday (Approximately 28-30 hours). All samples must arrive to the Laboratory at Old Woman Creek Reserve by 1:00pm for analysis.

2. In-field Data Collection

- a. Monitoring Protocol Volunteers collect observations for temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, total suspended solids, and several metadata parameters in the field. Volunteers also collect a grab sample for additional analysis to be completed by the Old Woman Creek NERR laboratory. In the monitoring kit toolbox, a clipboard contains a workflow that follows the protocol for monitoring (Appendix C). This process, created by the monitoring group, includes activities related to pre-monitoring, collecting observations, and collecting a grab sample.
- b. Back-up Testing As part of the monitoring protocol, volunteers are required to compare their observations to a "What's Normal" card inside their kit toolbox. This card presents typical ranges for observations related to temperature and DO. The card also provides a narrative rating for the TSS observed through the Ohio Sediment Stick. If the volunteer's observation does not follow the range on the "What's Normal" card they will need to perform an additional test for that parameter to "back up" the data.

3. Laboratory Analysis

Within 24 hours of arrival at the Old Woman Creek Analytical Laboratory, whole water samples are measured for turbidity using a Hach 2100AN turbidimeter and filtered through 0.45 µm membrane filters. Filtrate is refrigerated (4 °C) until analysis, which occurs within five days for orthophosphate, nitrate, and nitrite. Each of these three parameters is measured colorimetrically using a Seal AQ 300 discrete analyzer. Orthophosphate is measured via molybdenum blue reaction following USEPA 365.1 Rev 2.0 (1993) and Standard Methods 4500-PF (1999 forward). Nitrite is measured by coupling diazotized sulfanilamide with N-(1-naphthyl)-ethylenediamine dihydrochloride (NEDD) following USEPA 354.1 Rev 2.0 (1993) and Standards Methods 4500-NO2B (23rd edition). Nitrate is measured via cadmium reduction, which reduces the nitrate in a water sample to nitrite. Therefore, it is nitrite + nitrate that is measured directly, so nitrate is reported using the formula: nitrate = (nitrite + nitrate) - nitrite. After reduction, the method for nitrate follows a similar chemical reaction as nitrite, where diazotized sulfanilamide is coupled with NEDD following USEPA-132-A Rev 1. All samples measured from Pipe and Mills Creeks receive a ×5 pre-dilution for nitrate analysis due to the elevated concentrations of this nutrient commonly found in these streams.

The OWC Analytical Lab includes several quality assurance quality control (QA/QC) checks during nutrient analysis, including analyzing a high standard at the end of each run, analyzing a check standard every ten samples, and analyzing a deionized water blank every ten samples. If the high standard, any of the check standards, or any of the blanks are >15% off from expected values, samples between offending checks are re-analyzed. An additional QAQC procedure for nitrate is performed by including a nitrite standard in each nitrate run. If the nitrate standard recovery is less than 85% of the nitrite standard, samples for the entire run are re-analyzed.

Equipment and Maintenance

1. Monitoring Kit

a. When a volunteer comes to pick a FCT Stream monitoring kit, they receive a toolbox kit full of water quality monitoring supplies and safety materials, two 2-gallon buckets, a rope with attached carabineer, Ohio Sediment Stick, and 500ml sample bottles. A copy of the Monitoring Kit Inventory, which includes a specific list of monitoring supplies in the toolbox, is in Appendix D.

2. YSI Maintenance

- a. To maintain working order of the YSI Pro Plus/Quattro, each unit should be inspected monthly before the sampling event.
 - 1. Battery check/replacement batteries in the YSI Pro Plus/Quattro are checked for power level. If battery life is less than 50 %, the batteries are replaced. Kits also contain a spare set of batteries.
 - Sensor fouling/cleaning –sensors are checked for build-up that may cause inaccurate readings. If found, the manufactures cleaning instructions are followed.
 - 3. Broken/missing equipment probes, glassware and other items are checked to ensure proper function and safety. Any items found missing or broken are replaced before the next sampling event.

Probe Cleaning Reference Table

Probe	Cleaning/Reconditioning Action
рН	1. Thoroughly rinse with tap water
	2. Soak in acidic solution (pH 4) for 30-60 minutes.
	3. Rinse thoroughly with tap water (you may soak for 30
	minutes to ensure removal of all acid)
Dissolved oxygen	Remove membrane
,,	Recondition anode/cathode with 400 grit sand paper disc (5 twists)
	3. Rinse with distilled or DI water
	4. Replace membrane and solution
Conductivity/temperature	1. Dip brush in tap water and insert into each hole 10 times
	2. Rinse thoroughly with tap water

b. Periodic Maintenance

1. Every 2-3 months the DO membrane should be replaced and along with reconditioning the anode following the manufacturer's directions.

3. Calibration & Maintenance Process

Calibration is the process of assessing and adjusting the accuracy of the monitoring instrument to a known standard or reference for a given parameter. For LEBAF stream monitoring program, calibration frequency was guided by the manufacturer's recommendation, equipment use, age of equipment, and environmental influences.

Record Keeping

Calibration records for each unit should be retained until the unit is replaced. Sample Calibration sheet can be found in Appendix E.

- a. Unit, technician, and date Each unit should have its own calibration sheet for the monitoring year with a series of columns to identify the specific date of service. Each sheet requires information to identify the date, technician performing maintenance/calibration, specific unit and cable, as well as age of the pH and DO sensor. YSI uses an alpha- numeric code to identify the year and month the sensor was created. Example: 22C = March, 2022. The code can be found etched into the side of the sensor. The DO sensor typically has a much longer code, but the first three characters will refer to the year and month the sensor was manufactured.
- b. Maintenance Before calibration, check the unit for battery life and damage. Pay close attention to the pH probe and DO membrane. Complete and record any cleaning and maintenance performed on the record sheet.
- c. Water bath readings Use a clean plastic bucket for a water bath of tap water that has sat overnight to acclimate to room temperature. The addition of an aerator is recommended to provide water movement and oxygenation. Allow all units to sit in the water bath for several minutes, then record readings for temp, pH, DO, and conductivity. The units should have similar measurements.
- d. **Perform needed calibrations** -Below is a description of the calibration methods and frequency to be performed using the YSI Pro Plus/Quattro: pH, DO, conductivity.

Conductivity – Since conductivity is considered the most stable of the three parameters needing calibration, this will only need to be completed at the beginning of the sampling season, then once midseason (July) for all units, unless the water bath reading suggests a meter is providing inaccurate values. Note- conductivity calibration should be done before **pH.** Calibrate for specific conductance following the manufacturer's instructions. If the unit reads +/- $50 \,\mu$ s/cm departure from the standard (1413 μ s/cm), calibrate the sensor following the manufacturer's directions. Pre and post calibration readings should be noted on the calibration sheet. If desired, spot checks can be done between calibration months.

pH – pH should be calibrated at the beginning of the season, when there is a battery change, and if the pH is not reading within acceptable ranges.

Before calibration, reset to default values for pH. Then, use a 2-point calibration (pH 7 & pH 10) following the manufacturer's instructions. Both the pH and the mV value should be recorded for each standard and compared to the previous months records. Check the values for acceptable ranges listed below. If the unit measurements appear out of range, clean the probe and recalibrate. If the unit is still out of range, replace the sensor.

- i. mV readings in 7 buffer = -35 to 35
- ii. mV readings in 10 buffer = -140 to -220
- iii. absolute distance between mV (7-10 buffers) = 165 to 185
- iv. slope value is +12mV departure from the previous month

Dissolved Oxygen – Every month before sampling, all units should be reset to default settings and calibrated for dissolved oxygen using the manufacturer's directions for a % saturation calibration. The sensor should remain in the sleeve with a saturated 1" sponge for 5-10 minutes before the calibration check/test is performed. Pre and post calibration readings should be noted on the calibration sheet. Note – DO% can have a slight departure from 100% due to variance in barometric pressure.

Calibration Reference Table

Parameter	Calibration Type	Calibration	Tolerances
		Frequency	
pН	2-point (7 & 10)	Check monthly and calibrate as needed (during sampling season)	mV (7 buffer) = -35 to 35 mV (10 buffer) = -140 to -220 mV distance (7-10) = 165 to 185 slope value is±12mV departure from the previous month
Dissolved Oxygen	% Saturation	Monthly (during sampling season)	+/- 5% Do Saturation
Conductivity	Specific conductance	April & July	+/- 50 μs/cm

^{*}additional calibration may be warranted if water bath readings seem inaccurate

4. Probe Replacement

YSI Pro Series and quattro sensors have a limited lifespan and will need to be regularly changed.

i. pH Sensor Replacement - The pH probe lifespan is estimated at 12 months but typically can last 18 months. As long as calibration checks determine the sensor is operating properly and within the above listed thresholds the sensor can be used in the program for up to 2 years. At two years age it is mandatory to replace the sensor.

- ii. The DO probe lifespan is estimated at 4 years. Age and uA value can be used in determining when replacement is necessary. The AU value can be found in the GLP file on the unit. Use sensor values below to determine if the current sensor in out of acceptable range.
 - i. 1.25Mil PE membrane (yellow): Avg 6.15 uA (range 4.31 to 8.00 uA)
- 5. Troubleshooting Process At times calibration and maintenance may not go smoothly. When you are experiencing issues follow the below steps to help determine the issue and find appropriate resolution.
 - a. Replace standards/buffers
 - b. Inspect and clean sensors
 - c. Power unit off and on.
 - d. Make sure batteries are good and properly installed.
 - e. Switch cables between questionable unit and one that is working to determine if it is the handheld unit or the cable/sensor.
 - f. Change questionable sensor
 - g. Call Fondriest Tech Support 888-426-2151
 - h. Send unit in for servicing: https://www.fondriest.com/service-repair (service request form)
 - i. Reagents & Buffers
 - Expiration dates of all reagents and buffers/standards are checked one month before the sampling season begins (March). Any items that are due to expire are replaced. When using standards for calibration they must be fresh.
 - ii. The pH 10 buffer is highly susceptible to CO2 absorption, which can result in changes in the pH value over a short period of time. As such, any pH 10 buffer remaining at the end of the sampling year is disposed of and not held to the following year.
 - iii. All reagents and standards should be kept according to manufacturer's instructions.
 - Storage There are two storage types needed to properly maintain the YSI Pro Plus/Quattro based on the time between uses.
 - i. Short-term Short term storage is defined at periods of inactivity less than 30 days (during the active sampling season). When a kit is returned from a monitoring event, the cable is to be disconnected from the handheld unit and the guard is to be replaced with a storage container containing a small amount of tap water. The water should not submerge the sensors and is strictly to create a 100% saturated air environment.
 - ii. Long-term Temperature and conductivity storage procedures are the same for both long and short-term; however, pH and Do sensors require additional steps which include removing from the cable. Once removed, the pH sensor should

be stored in a pH 4 solution using the provided storage cups. The DO sensor should be stored dry. Ports should be covered with provided plugs to prevent water entering the port.

Volunteers

Volunteers are vital in achieving the goals of this monitoring plan. While program coordination and data analysis is performed by the two partnering agencies, the volunteers perform the actual data collection in the field. To maintain a high level of confidence in the collected data, volunteers are required to attend trainings and demonstrate the ability to follow monitoring protocols established in this plan. Additional requirements of volunteers is the physical ability to perform fieldwork and provide transportation to and from assigned sites.

1. Responsibilities

- a. Perform stream monitoring activities when scheduled
 - i. Follow written protocol for collecting data
 - ii. Ensure proper use of equipment
 - iii. Follow safety guidelines
 - iv. Fully complete data sheet
 - v. Return data sheet and grab sample within the established timeframe of monitoring event.
 - vi. Provide timely response to coordinator regarding kit pick up/drop off before monitoring events
 - vii. Inform coordinator of scheduling conflicts in timely manner
 - viii. Report low supplies and missing or damaged equipment to coordinator
 - ix. Attend required training sessions
 - x. Provide own transportation

2. Recruitment

- a. Pre-Season Recruitment Volunteer recruitment is conducted 2-3 months before the sampling season and is coordinated by the Erie SWCD. Recruitment begins with surveying previous volunteers for their desire to return for another season. Additional recruitment seeking new volunteers follows for any remaining or new sites available. Potential volunteers are sought through outreach on social media, local newspaper, and direct contact. In the event that a site(s) is left with no volunteer commitment, the Erie SWCD and Old Woman Creek will make the decision to cover the sampling until a volunteer can be found or forgo the site for that sampling year.
- b. In-Season Recruitment When potential volunteers approach the monitoring program mid-season, they may fill any un-monitored sites following one-on-one training or chose to shadow an existing volunteer. In the event there are no open sites, the volunteer is offered the chance to shadow an existing volunteer and be added to the pre-season recruitment list.

3. **Training** – Annual training is required for every volunteer participating in the stream monitoring program. Training will include the use of a volunteer monitoring handbook and an annual inperson event.

- a. New Volunteers are required to attend a full day training provided by the coordinator before the monitoring season commences. This training will include a lecture and hands-on learning format. The lecture portion will cover the importance of stream monitoring and provide a primer on the parameters monitored as part of this program. The hands-on portion of the workshop will focus on skill building for the volunteers. Each volunteer will have the opportunity to explore the kit, learn the protocol, and use the equipment. The coordinator and assisting partners will closely observe each volunteer's ability to ensure accurate execution of the monitoring protocol. Additional training may be required if a volunteer's ability is not acceptable by the end of the training day.
- b. Returning Volunteers All volunteers are required to receive annual training as part of this program. However, returning volunteers may be excused from a portion of the training at the coordinator's discretion.
- c. Personal Training In the event a volunteer(s) cannot attend the full day training, the coordinator may choose to provide a one-on-one training session to that volunteer(s). This session may be shortened in length but will still cover all material of the full training.

Data Entry & Analysis

 Field Datasheet – Volunteers are required to collect their sampling information on a field datasheet created by the program coordinator and reviewed by the monitoring group. Information collected include meta and sampling data (Appendix F).

Table 4. Description of data and metadata collected as part of the Firelands Coastal Tributaries Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program.

Data	Data Type	Description
Watershed name	Meta	Creek Name
Site name	Meta	Road/park location
Date	Meta	Date of sampling event
Time	Meta	Time of sampling event
Monitor name(s)	Meta	Name of person(s) collecting the data
Weather	Meta	Narrative for current/previous 24 hours
pH buffer reading	Meta	Reading taken of pH 7 & 10 buffer standards
		from YSI Pro Plus/Quattro measured in units
Temperature	Observation	Reading taken from YSI Pro Plus/Quattro,
		measured in °C

Dissolved Oxygen	Observation	Reading taken from YSI Pro Plus/Quattro, measured in mg/L
Conductivity	Observation	Reading taken from YSI Pro Plus/Quattro, measured in SPC μs/cm
рН	Observation	Reading taken from YSI Pro Plus/Quattro, measured in units
Total Suspended Solid	Observation	Reading taken from Ohio Sediment Stick in inches then converted to mg/L following table listed on datasheet
Comments	Meta	Narrative of additional observations made by the monitor such as water color, smell, algae presence, activities occurring near site, wildlife, etc.

2. Data Entry

- **a.** Water Reporter Water Reporter is an online data management and communication tool utilized by the LEVSN. The Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Program has a designated account managed by the program coordinator. Each month, data collected will be entered into the Water Reporter spreadsheet template (Appendix G) by OWC NERR staff. One completed file will be submitted to the program coordinator for review and upload to the WaterReporter.org virtual database.
- **b.** Report Card Data taken from the Water Reporter spreadsheet template will be transferred into the scoring workbook created by the monitoring group to convert the observations to scores based on water quality thresholds.

3. Annual Analysis

- a. Report Card Annual reports for data collected in a given sampling year are presented through watershed report cards. Watershed report cards are a type of community based social marketing tool that helps summarize water quality data for a monitored stream. The report card process scores individual observations to a water quality threshold to build a site and watershed rating. This process is led by the program coordinator with the assistance of OWC NERR staff. Details of this process can be found in the Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Report Card Methodology Paper.
- b. LEBAF/Water Reporter As part of the LESVN partnership, Water Reporter contains prewritten scripts for providing an analysis on Lake Erie Baseline Assessment Framework (LEBAF) parameters on a regional scale. LEBAF is a process for standardizing data collection, analysis and communication that empowers local groups to elevate the credibility of their data and tell a regional story about the health of Lake Erie watersheds. Details for this analysis are found in the LESVN standard operating procedures.

4. **Trends Analysis** – A minimum of ten years of data is required to complete a trends analysis for the watershed. The most recent trends analysis was completed in 2022 and is available through the program coordinator. The next trends analysis process is not expected to occur until 2031.

Communication

- 1. Water Reporter Data collected through this program will be uploaded periodically to the WaterReporter.org virtual database. This database automatically updates graphical maps to display current and historic data for each site sampled. Station Cards and watershed maps are embedded on the ErieConserves.org website on the stream monitoring page and will be used periodically through social media.
- 2. Distribution of Report Cards
 - a. Direct Mailings Over 1500 copies of the watershed report cards are directly mailed to residents within their respective watersheds. Funding allows all addresses in the Old Woman Creek watershed to receive a mailed copy, while Pipe Creek and Mills Creek are restricted to stream-adjacent landowners greater than 5 acres. Local, State, and Federal officials, and volunteers, receive each watershed report card.
 - b. Hard copies As funding allows, additional hard copies are printed and made accessible to the public at the Old Woman Creek NERR and Erie SWCD, and for use in programing by the partnering organizations.
- 3. Virtual media platforms Current report cards along with the previous 2 years will be available online at ErieConserves.org and will be shared on various social media platforms on World Water Day. Additionally, the Erie SWCD and Old Woman Creek NERR will share digital copies of the Report Cards to their respective stakeholder email lists.
- 4. Presentations Each year the report cards will be presented at the Volunteer Stream Monitor Chili Dinner before their official release to the public. Additional presentations are done by request.

Program Evaluation

In addition to evaluating each sample event for accuracy, precision, reproducibility, and consistency, the Erie SWCD and OWC NERR will evaluate the program's overall results of that sampling season and program implementation. Each year the group will identify successes and challenges for seven critical areas of the monitoring program. This may also include gathering feedback from the volunteer monitors. The monitoring group will create action items for any identified challenges to be implemented over the following year.

- 1. Volunteer recruitment and coordination
- 2. Parameters sampled
- 3. Monitoring protocol
- 4. Equipment and maintenance
- 5. Data Management
- 6. Data Analysis
- 7. Public Communication

The evaluation meeting will be recorded as a summary of the discussion point(s) for each category listed above and specifically list any action items expected to be implemented in the following sampling year. A summary will be shared with the stream monitoring group and kept as record by the program coordinator.

Appendices List

- A. Watershed Maps
- B. Detailed Site Description Table
- C. Monitoring Protocols
- D. Monitoring Kit Inventory Check List
- E. Calibration Record Sheet
- F. Field Data Sheet
- G. Water Reporter Data Template

Resources

This list provides information on how to receive a copy of documents and information related to the tools and procedures of the FCT Volunteer Stream Monitoring Program.

Old Woman Creek Laboratory Standard Operating Procedures and Methods

Contact

- Steve McMurray, Research Coordinator, Old Woman Creek NERR Steven.Mcmurray@dnr.ohio.gov
- Jacob Cianci-Gaskill, SWMP Coordinator, Old Woman Creek NERR Jacob.Cianci-Gaskill@dnr.ohio.gov

Lake Erie Baseline Assessment Framework Standard Operating Procedure (Version 7.30, July 2022) https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xmULA4gzUmiik19 -c1omu48sugL Jk-/view

Contact

- Cleveland Water Alliance (Coordinator Lake Erie Volunteer Science Network)
 https://clevelandwateralliance.org/levsn
- Erie Soil and Water Conservation District (LEVSN Erie County HUB site)

Lake Erie Volunteer Science Network https://clevelandwateralliance.org/levsn

The Development Process for Old Woman Creek and Pipe Creek Report Cards (updated to include Mills Creek, March 2014)

Contact

- Cody Benesh, Stormwater Technician, Erie Soil and Water Conservation District cbenesh@eriecounty.oh.gov
- https://erieconserves.org

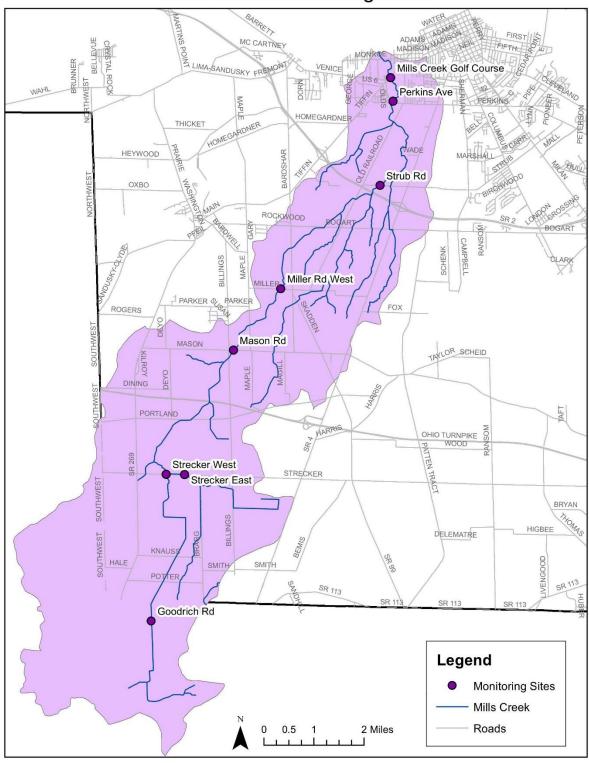
Firelands Coastal Tributaries Volunteer Stream Monitoring Handbook

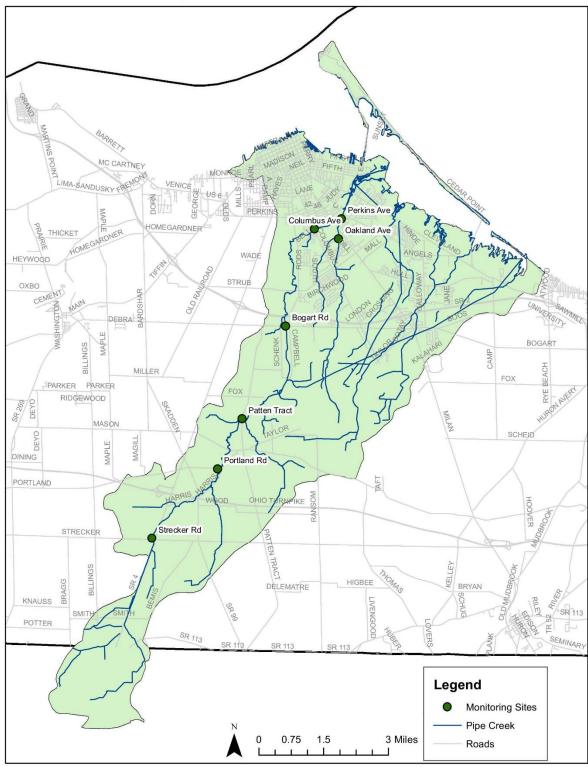
Contact

- Cody Benesh, Stormwater Technician, Erie Soil and Water Conservation District cbenesh@eriecounty.oh.gov
- https://erieconserves.org

Appendix A Watershed Maps

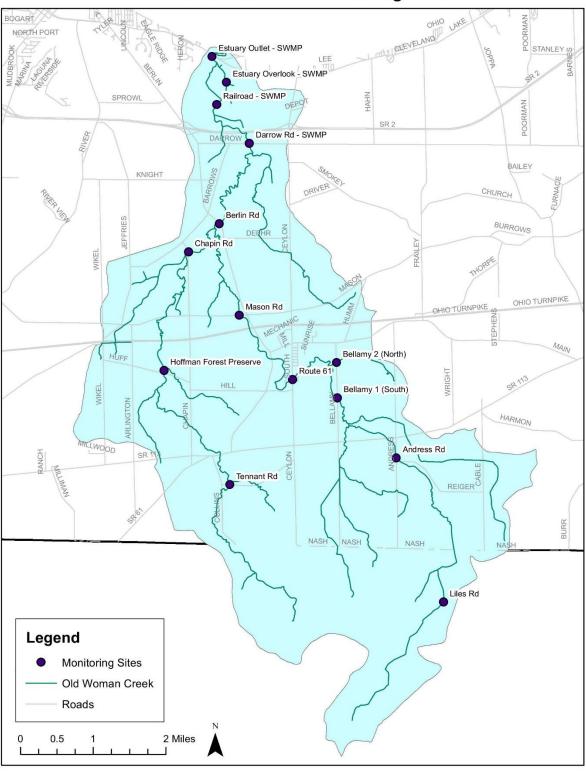
Mills Creek Monitoring Sites



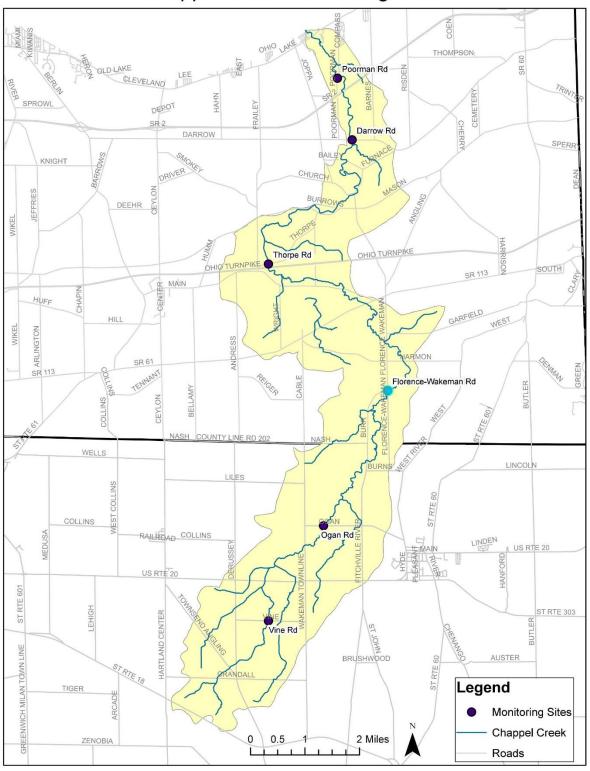


Pipe Creek Monitoring Sites

Old Woman Creek Monitoring Sites



Chappel Creek Monitoring Sites



Appendix B Detailed Site Description Table

FCT Volunteer Stream Monitoring Sites

								0/1			
Watershed	Site	Туре	Lat	Long	Drainage	% Forest	%Urban	%impervious	%water/ Wetland	Var Index Added	Added
Mills Creek	Goodrich Rd	Stream	41.32574	-82.81145	0.08	0.45	49.40	35.50	0.45	0.61	2015
Mills Creek	Strecker Rd E	Stream	41.32574	-82.81145	4.08	1.48	6.82	2.93	2.66	0.61	2014
Mills Creek	Strecker Rd W	Stream	41.32574	-82.81145	1.17			0.39	0.15	0.61	2012
Mills Creek	Miller Rd W	Stream	41.37573	-82.77488	27.00	4.21		6.55		0.61	2012
Mills Creek	Mason Rd	Stream	41.36190	-82.79273	26.30	4.14		6.70		0.61	2024
Mills Creek	Strub Rd	Stream	41.40961	-82.73696	33.60	5.07				0.62	2012
Mills Creek	Perkins Ave	Stream	41.43354	-82.73203	39.70			5.87	1.54	0.62	2024
Mills Creek	Mills Creek Golf Course	Stream	41.44062	-82.73209	41.30			7.26		0.62	2013
Pipe Creek	Strecker Rd	Stream	41.324760	41.324760 -82.767710	6.70	3.57		7.17	1.60	0.60	2008
Pipe Creek	Portland	Stream	41.338400	41.338400 -82.748700	12.80	4.38	14.90	5.28	2.05	0.60	2016
Pipe Creek	Patten-tract Rd	Stream	41.365350	41.365350 -82.727940	14.70	4.92	15.30	4.87	1.86	0.61	2008
Pipe Creek	Bogart Rd	Stream	41.396500	41.396500 -82.708520	19.00	9.31	14.60	4.18	1.97	0.61	2008
Pipe Creek	Columbus Ave	Stream	41.429730	41.429730 -82.692760	22.70	9.10	16.10	4.66	1.86	0.62	2008
Pipe Creek	Oakland Ave	Stream	41.429000	41.429000 -82.685380	3.01	26.10	45.50	8.24	3.78	0.62	2011
Pipe Creek	Perkins Ave	Estuary	41.432560	-82.683650	27.90	11.00	22.50	6.29	2.08	0.63	2008
Old Woman Creek	Liles Rd	Stream	41.27347g	-82.453316	1.64	13.10	5.47	0.74	0.30	0.64	2008
Old Woman Creek	Andress Rd	Stream	41.30204	-82.46514	3.03	13.70	4.53	0.59	0.66	0.64	2015
Old Woman Creek	BellamyRd	Steam	41.314902	-82.481357	8.45	14.10	4.62	0.64	089	0.63	2008
Old Woman Creek	BellamyRd2	Stream	41.320662	-82.483260	0.67	19.40	8.24	1.79	1.70	0.63	2009
Old Woman Creek	Rt61	Stream	41.31847	-82.492657	9.71	14.90	5.46	0.84	0.93	0.62	2008
Old Woman Creek	MasonRd	Stream	41.330674	-82.481357	10.70	17.10	6.90	1.33	1.07	0.62	2008
Old Woman Creek	TennantRdW	Stream	41.298600	-82.509790	2.16	12.40	5.08	0.91	0.29	0.61	2008
Old Woman Creek	HoffmanWoods	Stream	41.319200	-82.52746	4.95	19.10	6.19	0.98	1.46	0.60	2008
Old Woman Creek	ChapinRd	Stream	41.34325	-82.52091	9.52	21.00	7.65	1.33	1.45	0.62	2008
Old Woman Creek	BerlinRd	Stream	41.348920	-82.512570	21.80	19.50	7.44	1.39	1.56	0.63	2008
Old Woman Creek	DarrowRd	Estuary	41.364922	-82.504653	24.60	21.10	7.81	1.49	2.17	0.63	2008
Old Woman Creek	Estuaryoverlook	Estuary	41.367390	-82.507170	26.10	21.80	8.26	1.59	2.62	0.64	2008
Old Woman Creek	Estuaryoutlet	Estuary	41.382061	-82.514289	26.40		8.31	1.59	2.95	0.64	2008
Chappel Creek	Vine Rd	Stream	41.21060	41.21060 -82.54000	1.69	22.7	5.15	0.68	0.96	0.63	2025
Chappel Creek	OganRd	Stream	41.26197	-82.43596	5.7	19.6	6.25	1.08	0.5	0.65	2022
Chappel Creek	Florence-Wakeman Rd	Stream	41.29786	-82.41310	12.1	22.4		0.8	0.93	0.69	2024
Chappel Creek	ThorpeRd	Stream	41.33148	-82.45518	18.3	24.1		0.98	1.49	0.66	2022
Chappel Creek	DarrowRdEast	Stream	41.36446	-82.42531	22.1	25.6		1.01	1.7	0.71	2022
Chappel Creek	PoormanRd	Stream	41.3808Z	-82.4307	23.1	27.2	6.33	1.03	1.82	0.71	2022

Appendix C Monitoring Protocols

PRE-SAMPLING

- 1. Turn unit on <u>5 minutes</u> before sampling.
- 2. Begin filling out datasheet (site, date, weather, ect)
- 3. Check pH buffers for accuracy: pH 10.1 (blue) & pH 7.0 (yellow). If greater than 0.5 difference then calibrate.

COLLECTING SAMPLE

- 1. Put on safety vest and watch traffic when approaching the bridge
- 2. Retrieve sample from upstream side of bridge.
 - Hold bucket face down with ample rope hanging over bridge. Secure rope by stepping on one end. Drop bucket do not throw. (Repeat with second bucket)
- 3. Bring samples back to vehicle, do not perform tests on bridge.

USING THE YSI METER

- 1. Take sleeve off YSI probe and place in water, gently shake probe to make sure no bubbles are trapped in the guard.
- 2. Gently move the probe in a circular motion simulate flowing water, but <u>do not create bubbles</u>.

 Note: DO readings should be climbing or stable (if dropping the motion is too slow). As numbers begin to stabilize (unit will beep and "AS" will stop flashing the screen will freeze)
- 3. Write readings on datasheet
- 4. Repeat with bucket 2
- 5. Compare readings from datasheet to the "What's normal" card on the monitoring kit lid -If readings are not normal perform back-up test and make note in comments section on datasheet.
 - If DO is "normal" you can calibrate the unit following the guide and sample the water again. If it is still not normal then run the back-up test.

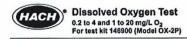
COLLECTING A GRAB SAMPLE

- 1. Check to make sure the grab sample bottle states the correct site
- 2. Collect water sample from bucket one filling entire bottle.

USING THE OHIO SEDIMENT STICK (Turbidity Tube)

- 1. Stand with tube in your shadow
- 2. Pour water into tube in small increments, checking to see when the small black dot at the bottom of the tube disappears
- 3. Read the height of water in tube and write on datasheet
- 4. Use table on datasheet to convert inch measurement to mg/I TSS

Remember to include additional information about the site in the comments sections such as water color, smell, trash, wildlife, surrounding activities.



DOC326.98.00014



1) Fill the BOD bottle (round bottle with glass stopper) with sample water by allowing the sample water to overflow the bottle for 2-3 minutes. Avoid turbulence and bubbles in the sample while filling.



2) Incline the bottle lightly and stopper the bottle carefully to avoid trapping air bubbles. If bubbles become trapped, discard the sample and repeat the test.



3) Remove the stopper and one Dissolved Oxygen 1 Reagent Powder Pillow and one Dissolved Oxygen 2 Reagent Powder Pillow. Stopper the bottles carefully to avoid trapping air bubbles.



4) Invert the bottle and shake several times until the powders are dissolved. Flocculent (floc) precipitate will form. Brownish-orange precipitate indicates oxygen is present.



5) Wait for floc to settle to approximately half the bottle volume. Floc will slowly settle if high concentrations of chloride are present. In this case. Wait 4-5 minutes before proceeding.



6) Invert and shake the bottle again to mix.



7) Wait for floc to settle to approximately half the bottle volume. Floc will slowly settle if high concentrations of chloride are present. In this case wait 4-5 minutes before proceeding.



8) Remove the stopper and one Dissolved Oxygen 3 Reagent Powder Pillow. Stopper the bottle.



9) Invert and shake the bottle several times. Floc will turn yellow if oxygen is present.



10) Add one full measuring tube of sample to the bottle.



11) Add Sodium Thiosulfate Solution by drops (KEEP DROPPER VERTICLE THE ENTIRE TIME). Count the drops until the color changes from yellow to colorless. Swirl to mix after each drop. The number of drops is equal to the test result in mg/L.

Appendix D Monitoring Kit Inventory Check List

FCT Monitoring Kit Inventory Check List

LCI Mountains wir maental à check rist	y Clieck	LIST						
Kit Number	PC-1	PC-2	PC-3	PC-4	PC-5	OWC-5		
pH Test Strips								
Writing Utensils								
Scissors								
Batteries								
Screw Driver								
Clipboard w/Following Sheets:								
- 4 Blank Data Sheets	· ·							
-Hach Kit Sheet								
-Safety Sheet								
-FCT protocal								
Thermometer								
Hach DO Kit								
Blue Block/White Card							ı	
Towel								
Safety Vest-2								
Small Pouring Bottle								
Squirt Bottle								
pH Rinse Water								
First Aid Kit								
Empty Waste Bottle								
Gloves								
Trash Bag								
Paper Towels		(4)						

Comments:

Appendix E Calibration Record Sheet

Meter# Cable # pH sensor date DO sensor date April May June July Aug Sept Oct Nov Technician (initials) Maintenance Date Note: In April, July, and October, calibrate Battery life condictivity, recondition the pH sensor check DO sensor, and replace the DO membrane check DO membrane. Water Bath Readings (tap water) Temp рΗ DO Conductivity **CALIBRATIONS - RESET DEFAULT BEFORE CALIBRATION BEGINS** Conductivity (1413 µs/cm standard) Acceptable reading = \pm /- 50 μ s/cm Pre-cal Post-cal Calibrate on highlighted boxes unless water bath results are questionable. DO Calibration % Saturation **Wet sponge/sleeve on 10 min. Average barometer = 745 Hgmm Pre-cal Post-cal Barometer Reading pH (2-point 7 & 10 buffers) Pre-cal Actual Reading (7) Acceptable mV Ranges mV Value (7) pH 7 mV value = -35 to 35 mV Pre-cal Actual Reading (10) pH 10 mV value = -140 to -220 mV Value (10) mV Total Distance *If out of acceptable mV range Post-cal Actual Reading (7) after calibration, clean first or mV Value (7) replace if no change Post-cal Actual Reading (10) mV Value (10) mV Total Distance Replacements Battery pH probe DO membrane

Please write any notes with corresponding date on reverse side.

YSI Quattro/Pro Series Maintenance/Calibration Record

Appendix F Field Data Sheet

WATER QUALITY MONTORING DATA SHEET

Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Program Updated 2025

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TSS (turbidity)		PH		Collanctivity	Conditionity	(DO		Temperature		Parameter	TSS (turbidity)	pН	Conductivity	DO	Temperature	Parameter			•		Monitor(s):		Site Name:	Watershed Name:			
5∵											Reading	⋽'					Reading		NI #	₹ ‡	Time:							
ma/l				OF C ha/CIII	SDC mg/cm	ı	ma/l		O°C	- 10	Unit	mg/l		SPC µs/cm	mg/L	°C	Unit				AM/PM							
	5.0	4.5	4.0	3.5	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.5	1.0	0.5	Inch											1			ļ			
	84.1	96.7		134.6	165.0	209.8			702.1		h mg/l					Collillellis.	onts:	Other (Dry ground	Muddy/	Snow/fr	Very Fast Flow	Faster Flow	Normal Flow	No/little Flow	Site C		
If read	15.0	14.0	13.0	12.0	11.0	10.0	9.0	8.0	7.0	6.0	Inch	Sedime						Other (comments)	und	Muddy/wet ground	Snow/frozen ground	ast Flow	Flow	Flow	Flow	Site Conditions		
If reading is ≥ 36 inches	19.7	21.6	23.8	26.5	29.7	33.7	38.7	45.3	54.0	66.1	mg/l	nt Stick)		۵	nd						(Check	
36 inches	25.0	24.0	23.0	22.0	21.0	20.0	19.0	18.0	17.0	16.0	Inch	Conversi						Cle	Sc	Bro	Q	Lig	Mc	He	Mi	Domi	(Check all that apply)	
= < 6.2	10.0	10.6	11.2	11.9	12.6	13.5	14.4	15.5	16.7	18.1	mg/l	Sediment Stick Conversion Table						Clear Skies	attered CI	oken Clou	ercast (90	Light Precipitation	derate Pr	Heavy Precipitation	Mist/fog	inant We	ply)	
	35.0	34.0	33.0	32.0	31.0	30.0	29.0	28.0	27.0	26.0	Inch								ouds (10-	ken Clouds (90-100% cover)	Overcast (90-100% cover)	tation	Moderate Precipitation	pitation		nant Weather in last 24 hrs		Updated 2025
	6.4	6.7	6.9	7.2	7.6	7.9	8.2	8.6	9.1	9.5	mg/l								Scattered Clouds (10-50% cover)	0% cover)	ver)					st 24 hrs		2025
					_						—						- 1											

WATER QUALITY MONTORING DATA SHEET

Firelands Coastal Tributaries Watershed Program
Updated 2025

Interpret Readings of Ohio Sediment Stick

>133	29-133	10-28	<10	TSS Reading (mg/l)
Severely impacted	Impaired	Normal	Excellent	Water Quality

Locations and Times Sample Drop-off

Samples must be in before noon on Monday of our sampling week.

Erie Soil and Water Conservation District 2900 Columbus Ave, Rm 131 Sandusky, OH 44870 M-F 8am-4:30pm

Old Woman Creek Reserve 2514 East Cleveland Rd.

8am-5pm (M-F), Saturday 1pm-5pm* Huron, OH 44839

Contacts:

Erie Conservation District

Cody Benesh 419-626-5211 or 419-706-9551(cell)

Emma Farahy 419-626-5211 or

Old Woman Creek Reserve 614-595-6589(cell)

419-871-1379(cell) 567-623-4874 or Holly Wenzinger

419-677-3909 (cell) 567-623-4878 or Veronica Hardy

Appendix G Water Reporter Data Template

CC Vine	CC Ogan	CC Florence	CC Thorpe	CC Darrow	CC Poorman	PC 9	PC 8	PC 6	PC 1	PC 3	PC 5	PC 7	MC_2	MC 6	MC 7	MC 3	MC 4	MC 8	MC 1	MC 5	OWC 10	OWC 8	OWC 7	OWC 9	OWC 6	OWC 14	OWC 15	OWC 3	OWC 5	OWC 12	OWC 1	OWC 11	OWC 2	OWC 19	station_id
Vine Rd	Ogan	Florence-Wakeman Rd	Thorpe	Darrow East	Poorman	P7 Strecker	P6 Portland	P5 Patten Trac	P4 Bogart	P3 Columbus	P2 Oakland	P1 Perkins	M7 Goodrich	M6 Strecker East	M5 Strecker West	M4 Mason Rd	M3 Miller West	M2 Mills Strub	Perkins Ave	M1 Golf Course	Estuary Oulet SWMP	Estuary Overlook SWMP	Railroad SWMP	OWC-VC-Darrow Rd	91 Berlin		8 Route 61	7 Bellamy 1	6 Bellamy 2	5 Liles Rd	4 Chapin Rd	3 Hoffman	2 Andress	1 Tenant West	FCT
																																			collection_date
																																			ammonia
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