



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Buffalo District



FACT SHEET

March 2012

Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB), OH, IN, MI Section 441 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 General Investigations

Location

- The WLEB includes the watersheds of the Maumee, Portage, and Ottawa Rivers, in Northwest OH, Eastern IN, and Southeast MI that are major tributaries to the WLEB.

Project Description

- Comprehensive investigation of measures to improve fish and wildlife habitat, navigation, flood damage reduction, recreation, and water quality in the WLEB, including the Maumee, Ottawa and Portage River watersheds.
- The combined watersheds have a drainage area of approximately 7,200 square miles, with the Maumee River contributing about 24 percent of the surface water flow into Lake Erie.
- A primary issue is flood damage reduction and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat. The Blanchard River has experienced severe flooding each year since 2007 causing tens of millions of dollars in damages to communities within the watershed, especially Findlay and Ottawa.
- Equally important is pollution from non-point source discharges, particularly agricultural runoff. Non-point source pollutants and suspended sediments degrade water quality and contribute to the approximately 1,000,000 cubic yards (CY) of sediment dredged annually from the Maumee River navigation channel.
- Feasibility phase is cost-shared 50% Federal and 50% non-Federal for Section 441 of WRDA 1999

Importance

- 4 of the 6 highest floods on the Blanchard River have occurred since 2007 causing tens of millions of dollars in damages. Flooding in 2007 resulted in a Federal Disaster Declaration. In addition, frequent flooding has impacted the quality of life in the watershed and hindered economic development efforts. Active USACE leadership and participation is critical in solving and implementing flood risk management measures.
- The watershed management plan will provide a framework for sustainable development in the watershed by examining comprehensive ecosystem restoration opportunities including habitat and wetland restoration, prevention of future environmental losses, elimination of bacterial loadings and pollutants of concern, improvements to navigation channels, and analysis of flood control operations to ensure that they are meeting evolving conditions.

Consequences

- Without additional FY12 or FY13 funding, the feasibility study for the flood risk management efforts on the Blanchard will not be developed. Due to the frequency in flooding, delay in implementing flood risk management measures could result in additional damages from future flooding.
- In addition, the Western Lake Erie Basin watershed stakeholders will continue to work in the watershed on a project by project basis and will not have the benefit of a watershed plan that can be relied upon for comprehensive and multipurpose solutions to their complex water resource problems

Project Phase	Est. Fed. Cost of Phase	Federal Funding Thru FY11	FY12 Requirement	FY12 Budget	FY13 Requirement	FY13 Budget
Feasibility	\$15,000k	\$4,791k	\$2,000k	\$0k	\$2,000k	\$0k

*Funding thru FY10 includes Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funding

Project Sponsor/Customer

- Customers include numerous state agencies, non-governmental organizations and local municipalities in the states of OH, IN and MI. Federal partners include: NRCS, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
- Hancock County signed a Feasibility Study Cost Share Agreement on 30 Sep 2008 for a WLEB Blanchard Watershed Interim Feasibility Study for Ecosystem Restoration and Flood Risk Management. In May of 2009, Putnam County signed a Feasibility Study Cost Share Agreement for an interim Feasibility Study that will expand the WLEB Watershed Management Plan and help prioritize projects in the watershed using GIS tools and other modeling techniques.
- The City of Toledo signed a Feasibility Cost Share Agreement in July 2011 for developing Habitat Restoration Units using dredged material in Maumee Bay.
- Lucas County and the City of Toledo are expected to sign a Watershed Assessment Cost Share Agreement for the Lower Maumee Watershed Assessment in Winter 2011.

Congressional Interests

- Representative Marcy Kaptur D-OH-09
- Representative Robert Latta R-OH-05
- Representative Jim Jordan R-OH-04
- Representative John Boehner R-OH-08
- Senator Robert Portman R-OH
- Senator Sherrod Brown, D-OH
- Representative Marlin Stutzman R-IN-3
- Representative Mike Pence R-IN-6
- Senator Richard Lugar R-IN
- Senator Dan Coats D-IN
- Representative John Dingell D-MI-15
- Representative Timothy Walberg R-MI-7
- Senator Carl Levin D-MI
- Senator Debbie Stabenow D-MI

Current Status

- Existing watershed conditions and preliminary alternatives were developed under a contract with ARRA funding.
- The Blanchard River phase of the study has been revised to include flood risk management projects. Work required for Feasibility Scoping Meeting in February 2012 has been completed and is currently under review. Work to develop flood risk management alternatives toward Alternative Formulation Briefing has been contracted with A-E Firm using \$1.4 Million in Federal funds.
- \$400,000 in Federal funds have been allocated in FY11 toward the Feasibility Study for developing Habitat Restoration Units to improve terrestrial and aquatic habitat in Maumee Bay through the beneficial use of dredged material.
- FY10 GLRI funding has been used to develop a priority list of wetland and aquatic restoration projects, and to develop an alternative recommendation report for ecosystem restoration projects in the Blanchard River Watershed. The study also included implementation of innovative technologies to quantify and assess sediment and nutrient concentrations associated with Blanchard River flood events in waters discharging through the Maumee River to Lake Erie. A portion of future funds could be used to commence a Section 729 Watershed Assessment of the Lower Maumee Watershed.

Issues

- Without FY12 or FY13 Federal funding, the Corps will not be able to continue the Blanchard River flood risk management portion of study resulting in additional risk of damages caused by future flooding.
- In addition, lack of funding will result in inability of conducting comprehensive Feasibility Studies to address flooding and ecosystem restoration in the Blanchard Watershed, nor continue planning for a Maumee Bay Habitat Restoration Project.

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