PORTAGE WATER TRAIL PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Location: Elmore Community Center | 410 Clinton St., Elmore OH 43416
Date: Wednesday, May 15, 2019
Time: 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Discussion Topics

1. **Portage River Basin Council (PRBC) involvement in the Portage River Water Trail project** – Ottawa County Commissioner Mark Coppeler explained the activities of the council between early 2018 and the present related to the Portage Water Trail.

2. **ODNR Water Trail designation program** – Tom Arbour, ODNR, gave an overview of his role as the Trails Coordinator, and the assistance that ODNR can provide to communities seeking a Water Trail designation.

3. **Work completed towards a Portage Water Trail designation** – Sara Guiher, TMACOG, provided an update on the work completed by the PRBC and the timeline for the remaining requirements of a designation. The council has a goal of official designation during summer 2020.

4. **Attendee concerns** – Mr. Coppeler opened the floor for discussion of concerns about the potential Water Trail designation.
   
   a. Access sites – the group discussed this topic at length, with input from multiple partners that have been involved with the Portage Water Trail project.
      
      (i) Litter
      
      (ii) Traffic and increased parking
      
      (iii) Maintenance costs (monetary and labor)
      
      (iv) Conflicting activities at sites, such as weddings, shows, maintenance vehicles, etc.
   
   b. Water levels – From Pemberville (RM 36) to SR 590 (RM17), water levels are often low enough to necessitate extensive portaging. There are also times that the water levels are high and only experienced paddlers should attempt to navigate the river. Mr. Arbour stated that there are communities looking to provide a range of ideal water levels based on the available data from USGS. This would be an option for the Portage Water Trail as well. Speaking with paddlers who currently utilize the river would also help to better understand river conditions.
   
   c. Safety – There were several topics covered in regard to safety:
      
      (i) Making paddlers aware of the potential for downed trees/large branches (strainers)
(ii) Conflicts between power boats and paddlecraft
(iii) The above was a concern associated with the mouth of the river in Port Clinton, along with high and fast-moving waters in that area

5. **Benefits to Elmore** – There was open discussion among the group about some benefits to Elmore in the event that the Portage had a designated Water Trail.

   a. Additional local business
   b. Chance to feature local history/culture (particularly Native American history)
   c. Increased chances for healthy activities for residents
   d. Connectivity with bike trail
   e. Attract new residents
   f. Retain young families
   g. Opportunities for programs led by park districts and other organizations – the community could also be a place that safe boating training is offered
   h. New business opportunities – liveries or outdoor equipment

6. Commissioner Coppeler thanked attendees for coming, and the meeting was adjourned.