



NORTHWEST OHIO

# Flood Mitigation Partnership, INC.

## 2008 Year-end Report

As the Partnership enters its second year, I would like to reflect on all that has been accomplished at what was a fast and furious pace.

First of all, the Partnership would like to thank Senators Voinovich and Brown and Members of Congress Jordan, Latta and Kaptur for their tremendous support for our project. At the state level, Senator Buehrer and Representatives Hite and Wachtmann have been instrumental in securing funds and keeping attention focused on our progress. Locally, we have support from the commissioners from all six counties in the watershed, as well as the City of Findlay and the Village of Ottawa and other local officials. Without this support, we would still be feeling our way through this complicated process.

We must also publicly acknowledge the cooperation of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Buffalo District. They have made themselves accessible and flexible in order to help us achieve our goals.

### Reflection

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During January, the Partnership was formed; the Board of Directors was appointed; and we began the planning process. Our first meeting with the USACE was scheduled for February 7. Unfortunately, on February 6 and 7, Findlay and Ottawa experienced yet another flood—this time equaling the river crest of 1959. The purpose of the meeting was to receive the Scope of Work document from the USACE. This document set forth the scope of the feasibility study and the timeframe for completion. Our first milestone showed that the Feasibility Cost Share Agreements, for both Findlay and Ottawa, needed to be signed by June 30. We are happy to report that Findlay signed their agreement on April 4th with Mayor Sehnert presenting a \$50,000 check to the USACE for a portion of the non-federal cost share. Ottawa signed their agreement on April 28, expediting the process by a full two months.

### Public Forums

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On April 3 in Findlay and April 4 in Ottawa, the Partnership held the first in a series of public forums. We stressed the importance of cooperation between all responsible entities including the private sector. Two important items came out of the forums. One was that the public response was encouraging. The tenor was one of support, even though many were skeptical of the future outcome. The other item was that the passion of the private sector resonated with many in attendance. In fact, our State Representatives Hite and Wachtmann, and State Senator Buehrer went to bat for state funds to help with this effort. As the result of their efforts, we were awarded \$3 million to help offset the non-federal cost share.

An Environmental Scoping meeting was held June 25, 2008, at the Putnam County Educational Service Center in Ottawa. The purpose of that meeting was to solicit responses on environmental conditions from any agency having jurisdiction within the watershed. All entities were notified in advance and sent packets of information regarding this meeting. Approximately 60 people were in attendance. All responses were sent directly to the USACE Buffalo office.

On August 20, 2008, a forum was held at Owens Community College. A brief update of the Partnership's progress also was given to the audience of approximately 100. The forum also provided an opportunity to publicly thank our federal and state legislators for their help to date. The keynote speaker for the event was Marathon Petroleum President Gary Heminger. Legislators in attendance included Congressmen Latta and Jordan, State Representative Cliff Hite and representatives of Senators Voinovich and Brown.

The final forum for the year was held November 13, 2008. This event took place at the Putnam County Educational Service Center in Ottawa. The purpose of this forum was to present selected community leaders and the media with real stories and projects from other communities. The panel included Dr. and Mrs. Baker, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Snead, Commander U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Buffalo District, and Mayor Jill Techel of Napa, California. Dr. Baker was president of the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks at the time of its major flood. LTC Snead spoke of the great working relationship between the USACE and the Partnership. Finally, Mayor Jill Techel presented the Napa project and their accomplishments. She explained how their project is similar to what our project will be when completed. She discussed how they engaged the community and offered pitfalls to avoid. This event was well attended. At the conclusion of the meeting, Ottawa Mayor Ken Maag presented LTC Snead with a check for \$50,000 for a portion of the non-federal cost share.

We would like to thank the Partnership's Public Affairs committee for their work with these public forums.



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## ***Operations Committee***

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The Operations Committee has been extremely busy in 2008. April 30 and May 1 was the official kickoff of the Detailed Project Report. The kickoff was accelerated by two months due to the early signing of the cost share agreements. The Detailed Project Report is the product of conducting the feasibility study. The first step in the process is to determine the "existing conditions" in the watershed. This includes areas such as endangered species, socio/economics, cultural resource, and environmental. A draft of the "existing conditions" section was presented to the USACE on November 13. The Operations Committee currently is analyzing the recommendations from the 1962 (Findlay) and 1964 (Ottawa) reports to determine applicability today. In a parallel track, the USACE Hydraulics and Hydrology engineers continue to gather data to create the model necessary to arrive at recommendations for the Detailed Project Report. We expect some preliminary recommendations between April and August 2009.

## ***Public Affairs Committee***

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The Public Affairs committee was hard at work in 2008. In addition to coordinating the above mentioned public forums, the committee created a video that the Partnership uses for presentations. The video explains the history of flooding in the watershed, how the Flood Mitigation Partnership was created, and sound bites from key supporters, including federal and state legislators. This video was given to the USACE for distribution among their hierarchy. Copies of the video were also distributed to the local governments within the watershed.

Another key component of the committee was the creation of a timeline and critical displays for use at events. In addition to the five public forums, the Partnership also participated in 13 events or presentations, including the Hancock and Putnam County Fairs. The presentations included Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and other interested associations.

## ***Finance Committee***

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At the end of 2008, a finance committee was formed to determine how the non-federal share of flood control projects will be apportioned among the six counties within the watershed. Given that the expensive structural items would be primarily constructed in Hancock and Putnam counties, we need to arrive at a defensible methodology of apportionment. By doing so, a local government can determine the method it chooses to pay its share. This committee is in the beginning stage and will be active in 2009.

## ***Agricultural Best Management Practices Committee***

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This committee also was formed in the fourth quarter of 2008. Since the watershed is 80 percent agricultural land, a much longer range solution needs to be addressed with Best Management Practices. These practices include the use of cover crops, no-till farming, grass filter strips for water clarification, and others as prescribed by agricultural organizations. This approach will accomplish three main outcomes. One will be to allow more water to be stored in the ground thereby slowing down the water run-off. A second outcome will help improve water quality. Many nutrients go directly downstream through the ditches which affects water quality. The third is that these Best Management Practices will increase productivity for our farms in the long run. These practices are part of readily available Natural Resource Conservation Service programs. By creating a few demonstration projects within the watershed, we can quantify the outcomes to persuade other producers to participate. Currently, not many producers take advantage of the programs because there is a short-term loss in yield and an increase in cost to change to these practices. Our role may be to cover the short-term loss in yield to achieve the long-term benefits for flood mitigation. This will be more closely explored in 2009.

### ***Northwest Ohio Flood Mitigation Partnership***

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