

**Meeting Summary of the Roundtable Issues Forum
Sheraton Columbus Hotel at Capitol Square
Columbus, Ohio
October 4, 2017**

Ohio River Basin Alliance (ORBA) and ORSANCO Collaboration

The Ohio River Basin Alliance (ORBA) is an outcome of the October 2009 Ohio River Basin summit that was co-sponsored by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO). ORBA is a relatively informal collaboration that has included representatives from over 80 state, local and federal agencies, industry, academia, and not-for-profit organizations. ORBA is guided by a 12 member Steering Committee. The purpose of this Roundtable Issues Forum was to provide an overview of ORBA including current and potential ORBA initiatives such as a proposed Ohio River Basin Restoration Initiative and a discussion to provide guidance on future collaboration between ORSANCO and ORBA.

Ohio River Basin Alliance Overview

Dr. Harry Stone, ORBA Chair, led off the discussion with an overview of the Ohio River Basin Alliance. The key goal of the Alliance is to provide broad collaboration and a unified voice for the Ohio River Basin (ORB). ORBA's roles include: 1) Encourage broad collaboration to identify high priority regional challenges and develop an ORB regional strategy reflective of consensus priorities and 2) Serve as a sponsor of regional projects when needed. The guiding principles for the Alliance are: include everyone, leverage resources and authorities, capitalize on existing collaborations, and do not impeded or infringe on the mission of any other organization.

Dr. Stone thanked the Commission for agreeing to become ORBA's fiscal sponsor. He noted the strategic agreement between ORBA, ORSANCO, the Foundation for Ohio River Education (FORE) and Thomas More College will provide leverage, influence, and funding opportunities for regional initiatives designed to address water resource issues throughout the Ohio River Basin. Working towards development of an ORB regional strategy, ORBA has set preliminary goals in eight areas including: 1) water supply, 2) flood control and risk reduction, 3) economy, 4) ecosystem, 5) recreation, 6) transportation, 7) research and education, and 8) change adaptation. This effort will involve leveraging regional entities to prioritize challenges and recommend strategies.

Lastly, Dr. Stone noted the need for an Ohio River Basin Restoration Initiative, much like that which exists for the Great Lakes. The ORB is a national treasure which lacks prominence and dedicated funding that exists for other regions in the US. Bringing the attention and funding that the ORB deserves will require investment in development and implementation of a consensus-based vision and strategy for the Basin.

Discussion on ORBA and Collaboration with ORSANCO

Colonel Secrist, Commander for the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Huntington District, commented there are many examples of organizations providing a unified voice for a specific watershed. This approach has been very successful in the Great Lakes and other watersheds. The Ohio River Basin lacks this coordination of messaging.

Richard Harrison, ORSANCO Executive Director, noted a benefit of the fiscal sponsorship arrangement is it allows ORSANCO and other Alliance partners to pursue grants relative to ORBA goals. This could open the door for the Commission to receive grants to continue its work in water resources that was suspended at the conclusion of the Water Resources Initiative. Peter Goodmann, Director of the Kentucky Department of Environmental Protection Division of Water, noted this coordination through ORBA may also put the USACE in position to receive funding through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

Commissioner Duritsa asked how summits hosted by ORBA were funded. Dr. Stone replied the meeting costs were covered by conference fees paid by the summit attendees.

Commissioner Flannery commented that recreation was a designated use explicitly included in the Compact for which the Commission is charged to protect. As such, ORSANCO has a role to play in matters pertaining to recreational use of the Ohio River.

Kristy Meyer, Vice President of Policy, Natural Resources at the Ohio Environmental Council, encouraged ORBA to consider other funding initiatives in addition to state and federal grants.

Commissioner Bruny asked how priority areas will be identified and subsequently prioritized through ORBA. Dr. Stone replied they are still in the brainstorming stage at this point and these processes will need to be established.

Mr. Goodmann suggested ORBA establish and share a timeline for future activities. He also recommended project ideas be developed in advance to be in position to act if funding opportunities arise. Colonel Secrist also noted the need to have some projects at the ready in the event funding becomes available.

Commissioner Fitzgerald commented on the need to do outreach to not just the Commission, but also the Commission's committees which have a diverse range of stakeholder perspectives and expertise.