

**Roundtable Issues Forum  
The Brown Hotel  
Louisville, Kentucky  
Wednesday, October 10, 2012**

Chairman Komoroski called the Roundtable of Commissioners meeting together at 1:30 pm. The Chairman explained that while ORSANCO has a great reputation both in and outside of the basin, organizationally, we can all do better promoting the Commission, identifying and relating the value of ORSANCO to the states and revisiting our operations particularly when it comes to promoting it's many successes. He turned the agenda over the Executive Director Peter Tennant for an overview presentation of the Commission (attached).

Mr. Tennant's presentation outlined the Commission's mission, priorities and value, and then closed with the question, "What We Can Do Better?" One of the key slides on the presentation identified the general value of ORSANCO in four bullets:

- Avoid duplication of effort
- Ability to pool resources
- Accountability forum
- Collective voice of the states

The ensuing roundtable discussions centered principally on two key concepts; value and communication. The discussion on value had two tracks, the first centered on the question, how do you quantify the value of ORSANCO to the member states; and the second, how do you value the Ohio River?

### **Valuation of ORSANCO**

The discussion on quantifying the value of ORSANCO to its member states identified two distinct approaches. The first and most simplistic approach to quantifying the value is based on the direct financial return on investment: how much money does each state allocate to ORSANCO, and what are the direct financial returns on that money? Commissioners from mainstem states all agreed that individually, they could not do the programs ORSANCO does on the Ohio River for the funding they provide. As such, ORSANCO is a good financial investment for the mainstem states with respect to water quality monitoring and assessment. This was further borne out by the sunset review conducted by West Virginia in 1999, wherein a 3:1 return on investment ratio was assigned to their participation in ORSANCO. However, this same valuation procedure does not hold true for the non-mainstem states.

The second, less quantifiable but equally as important valuation approach, characterized as "soft" value, addresses the value associated with the opportunity provided for professional interaction and collaboration, or, intellectual infrastructure. ORSANCO's infrastructure provides state and federal agency heads, industry representatives and the public the opportunity to communicate both within and outside their own professional ranks in a collegial, professional and non-confrontational environment. The value added, represented by this opportunity for interaction on and across all personal and professional levels, cannot be overstated. It is this value the non-mainstem state participants find most beneficial in participating with ORSANCO.

### **Valuation of the Ohio River**

The discussion on how to value the river was a bit more amorphous; there are as many ways to value this resource as there are ways to use it. Each use, each special interest, be it a drinking water utility, bass fishing organization or waterfront developer has its own perspective on the value of the resource. However, two threads are common to all: water quality and water quantity.

Over the past 64 years, the programs developed by ORSANCO, its member states, and with participation from Ohio River industries and municipalities, have been designed specifically to assess or improve the water quality of the Ohio River. And improve, it has. But how does one assign a monetary value to 64 years of water quality improvement? Yet, this was one of the needs identified and tasks discussed. It was suggested that this task be an undertaking and agenda item for the annual meeting of the Program and Finance Committee, such that quantifiable benefits, supporting the states' continued participation in ORSANCO, are compiled and presented with the Commission's annual invoice transmitted to the governors. Doing so would not only document Commission successes but track the progress and changes in programs over time, demonstrating the unique flexibility inherent to ORSANCO.

### **Communication**

Like value, the discussion on communication had many components, but two underlying themes did surface: how do you communicate the value of ORSANCO to the states, and how do you communicate the quality of the river to the public.

On communicating the value of ORSANCO to the states, the options discussed ranged from the aforementioned material to be compiled by the Program and Finance Committee for communication to the governors with their invoice, to the continuation of ORSANCO/State visits and the development of "one pager" program-specific outlines summarizing Commission programs, which can be distributed during ORSANCO/State meetings and provided to agency directors and cabinet secretaries as easy reads. In addition, a list presenting both quantifiable "hard dollar" returns on States' investments in ORSANCO as well as "soft dollar" benefits could be incorporated in the Commission's Annual Report.

On communicating the value of ORSANCO to the public, the options discussed were as open as one's creativity would allow. Suggestions ranged from the incorporation of public communication outputs across all Commission programs to the use of media such as NPR, National Public Radio, to communicate program activity and success.

Communicating the value of the river to the public is a more difficult task. Multiple measures are needed to communicate to the multiple users of the resource, and to those that rely on the quality of the resource without actually using the resource, i.e., riverfront developments/developers. The concept of developing a "State of the River" report was discussed as a mechanism to communicate to the masses. Such a publication could incorporate a broader informational base and be written to communicate to a wider audience than the biennial 305(b) report, which is the only river assessment report currently published by the Commission.

Programs such as the Ohio River Sweep and the Ohio River Users Programs were also discussed and held up as examples of positive information sources and outlets. Ultimately, if efforts are going to be undertaken to enhance the level of effort given to public communication, then consideration must be given to the impacts to other program areas. In addition, the audience for each piece would need to be carefully considered for it to be successful.

Chairman Komoroski closed the discussion stating that there is an apparent need to develop and distribute more information about the Ohio River. That this is not a once and done effort, but an ongoing commitment, promoting it when conditions are good, and acknowledging when conditions are not so good as well as what it would take, i.e., infrastructure costs, to correct a problem. Due to the size of the resource, we should not be afraid to support or conduct a cost analysis that identifies problems as well as the steps, and costs, to cure them.