

MINUTES
240th Meeting of the Technical Committee
Embassy Suites RiverCenter
Covington, Kentucky
February 10-11, 2026
Chair Jeffrey Hurst, Presiding

Call to Order

The 240th meeting of the ORSANCO Technical Committee was called to order by Chair Jeffrey Hurst, at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2026. All eight states, four federal agencies, and six advisory committees were represented (Roster of Attendance see page 15).

Minutes of 239th Committee Meeting

ACTION: Motion passed to accept the minutes of the 239th Technical Committee meeting.

Executive Director's Report

Director Dinkins welcomed attendees back to Covington, Kentucky and the Greater Cincinnati region, and reported on the following:

1. Commissioner Changes

The Executive Director began by noting several recent Commissioner changes. He expressed sincere appreciation to two long-time Commissioners for their service to the Commission. Commissioner John Kupke had represented the State of Indiana since 2014. Commissioner Toby Frevert had represented Illinois on the Technical Committee from 2001 to 2009 and served as a Commissioner from 2009 through 2025. He thanked both individuals for their dedication and commitment to advancing the work of ORSANCO. Both were scheduled to be formally recognized during Thursday's Commission meeting. He also welcomed two new Commissioners — Dr. Emily Jenkins and Bradford Kasberg, both representing Illinois — as well as two new Commissioner proxies: Holly Tucker from Ohio and Sarah Marshall from Kentucky. He stated that the Commission looked forward to working with each of them.

2. Staff Reorganization

Sam noted that the meeting marked the first Technical Committee meeting in 37 years without Jason Heath on the ORSANCO staff. Following Mr. Heath's retirement, the Commission underwent a staff restructuring. The changes particularly affected the Commission's technical programs and, as such, impacted the work of the Technical Committee. With consideration given to the Commission's annual operating budget and the goal of strengthening long-term financial sustainability, the decision was made not to fill the Director of Technical Programs position at the management level. Instead, the responsibilities of that position were distributed among existing staff.

The majority of those responsibilities were assigned to the three technical program managers:

- Ryan Argo, Manager of Biological Programs (and new TEC liaison)
- Lila Ziolkowski, Manager of Source Water Protection & Emergency Response
- Greg Youngstrom, Manager of Water Quality Programs

3. Section 106 Funding

Sam reminded the Committee that, at the previous meeting, he had announced approval of the FY25 EPA Section 106 grant on September 25, 2025, just five days prior to the end of the federal fiscal year. This was an unusual situation, as the Commission had essentially completed all EPA 106-funded programs prior to formally receiving the award. Pertaining to the FY26 budget, it has been approved by Congress and the Commission anticipates receiving confirmation of its award within the next month. While the exact award amount has not yet been determined, the Section 106 portion of EPA's budget is anticipated to see a slight increase in FY26 compared to the prior year.

4. Ohio River Restoration Legislation

Sam provided an update on legislation to establish a federally funded Ohio River Basin Restoration Program, similar to initiatives previously established in other watersheds across the country. Ohio River Basin Caucus chairs Congressman McGarvey (KY-03) and Congresswoman Houchin (IN-09) first introduced legislation in December 2024, which has since been modified and reintroduced in November 2025. The revised bill included authorization for \$350 million per year and proposed creation of an advisory council to develop, implement, and update the Program. The council would include representatives from all states, tribes, and ORSANCO. He further noted that the revised language made interstate entities, such as ORSANCO, eligible for grant funding. The proposed legislation has strong bipartisan support in the House and efforts are underway to introduce a companion bill in the Senate.

5. Monitoring Strategy and FY27 Planning

The Commission's program and budget development process would begin in earnest following the week's meetings. Staff will work over the next several months to prepare a program plan and budget for FY27. The plan would be presented to the Program & Finance Committee in April and would conclude with formal adoption of the FY27 budget at the June Commission meeting.

The Technical Committee was reminded that it had important work to complete during the meeting. Members would hear presentations from staff regarding the Commission's various technical programs, and the meeting would conclude with a discussion of the monitoring strategy and priorities moving into FY27. The Technical Committee would be asked to help establish those priorities to inform staff efforts and the development of the FY27 program plan by the Program & Finance Committee. Members were encouraged to consider monitoring needs and priorities as they engaged in discussions throughout the meeting.

Meeting Presentations

Aquatic Exposure Effects of PFAS substances in Pennsylvania Streams

Sara Breitmeyer with the USGS detailed the adverse health effects that PFAS compounds can have on aquatic organisms, including reproductive toxicity and developmental abnormalities. They assessed the ecological health risk of PFAS in Pennsylvania stream using measured and estimated variables along with a tailored convolutional neural network, or CNN, which is a type of deep learning algorithm. The CNN was used in lieu of traditional logistic regressions to identify the variables that most contribute to the health risk associated with PFAS compounds. Industrial and urban land cover, rainfall intensity, underlying geology, agricultural factors, and their interactions emerged as key determinants. The hope is that by highlighting these most influential anthropogenic and environmental factors contributing to PFAS contamination in surface waters, these findings may help to inform biotic sampling strategies, water quality monitoring efforts, and policy decisions aimed to mitigate the ecological impact of PFAS compounds.

Update on Ohio River HABs Research and Monitoring

Dr. Chris Nietch of the USEPA provided an update on partnership facilitated research activities since the Ohio River HABs risk characterization tool was brought online during the 2022 bloom season. Enhancements to the tool completed since then have included a 14-day ahead HABs occurrence forecast, an update of the original scripts used to produce the web application, and an exploratory analysis to bring remotely sensed data related to HABs into the risk characterization. Dr. Nietch also detailed sampling campaigns (which included recent events in Markland and Meldahl pools) designed to help evaluate the hypothesis of the original HABs risk model, assess newer analytical methods, and to survey the extent to which benthic cyanobacteria may pose risk to river water quality and safety.

Update on Real-time Bacteria Monitoring Technologies

ORSANCO Senior Lead Environmental Scientist, Stacey Cochran, presented an update of ORSANCO's evaluation of the Fluidion instrument and how it compares to the current Colilert method employed by ORSANCO. Paired data showed that the whole dataset and low concentrations were statistically significant whereas high concentrations were not statistically significant. She also provided a status update on the evaluation of the real-time bacteria monitoring Proteus instrument and the challenges associated with it.

Analysis of Long-term Temporal Water Quality Trends of the Ohio River and Major Tributaries

ORSANCO Environmental Scientist, Riley Lanfear, presented the results of a temporal trends analysis of ORSANCO's Bimonthly and Clean Metals datasets from a 15 year period between 2009 and 2014. This work repeated the analytical techniques employed by previous trends work completed by ORSANCO in the past. She detailed how suitable data were determined using sensitivity tests on non-detect substitution methods and flow normalization, prior to using the Seasonal Kendall test to trend strength and directionality. Most water chemistry and clean metals parameters were found to be decreasing basin-wide where significant trends could be assessed. Different from prior iterations, Riley will also employ a more modern trend technique called the Watershed Regressions on Time, Discharge, and Season (WRTDS). This method allows for more accurate estimates of concentrations for parameters with sparse, discrete data by simultaneously evaluating the effects of those predictor variables. A final report of this work will be drafted and made available for TEC to review at a later date.

2025 Ohio River Water Quality Conditions

ORSANCO staff Stacey Cochran and Alexis Brandenburg provided information regarding monitoring activities and water quality conditions observed on the Ohio River over the past year. With the exception of a wet winter and spring for Kentucky and West Virginia, the remaining parts of the year were well below expected rainfall. As a result, flows were half normal levels in the later parts of the year. This likely contributed to the sporadic HAB events and DO and temperature exceedances observed along the main stem at that time. These updates, along with brief descriptions of other program findings, served as a primer for content presented in more detail later in the meeting.

Water Quality Monitoring Programs Update

ORSANCO Manager, Greg Youngstrom, presented an update on the status of Monitoring and Assessment programs. A new emergency response and water quality boat was purchased which replaces a boat that was no longer operational. ORSANCO staff attended the Hypoxia Task Force meeting February 4-5, which focused on messaging around the 2025 interim goal of reducing nitrogen and phosphorus by 20%. Staff also presented a proposed project to update 20 year old bacteria monitoring data that is still used to assess the river for 305(B) reporting.

Source Water Protection and Emergency Response Programs Update

ORSANCO Environmental Scientist, Jamie Tsiominas, gave an overview of the status of the CDS grant, which has been extended to June 30, 2026 to allow contractors to finish development of a spills/notification database and complete improvements to ORSANCO's flows database. With remaining CDS funds, staff is purchasing a purge and trap components to be used as our spare for R&M purposes. Staff has purchased a new boat to support rapid response activities and other water quality monitoring initiatives.

Staff is preparing to host geographically based Response meetings which have not been held in person since Covid. These meetings are important to establish and maintain current contacts and relationships in the event that actionable response activities are requested of ORSANCO during a significant pollution event.

Biological Programs Update

ORSANCO Aquatic Biologists, Rob Tewes, Erin Linko, and Seasonal Biologist Taylor Parker, reviewed the results of the 2025 biological field season including surveys of Willow Island, Racine, and Cannelton pools, as well as their participation in a Mayfly collection project led by USEPA Region 5 looking at linkages with ambient neonicotinoid concentrations. Staff also discussed recommendations from the Biological Water Quality Subcommittee, which convened on January 21 and 22.

Relative to the Monitoring Strategy review, the subcommittee recommends maintaining the current level of biological surveys and fish tissue collections, and supports removal of pesticides from the list of tested fish tissue contaminants. As for the 2026 field season the subcommittee prioritized surveys from three navigational pools and the network of biological fixed stations. As resources allow, the subcommittee directed staff to participate in targeted collections as identified by state partners.

Status of the 2026 Biennial Assessment of Ohio River Water Quality Conditions

ORSANCO Manager, Ryan Argo, presented the draft 2026 assessment of defined uses on the Ohio River. These draft assessments cover the period from 2020-2024 and displayed similar results to the previous assessment completed in 2024. The entire river is listed in full support of the Aquatic Life and Public Water Supply uses. Approximately 2/3 of the Ohio River is classified as impaired for Contact Recreation Use, down 3.2 miles from the prior assessment. And the entire river remains impaired for Fish Consumption Use due to historic water quality concentrations of PCBs and Dioxin.

These preliminary assessments are under review by the 305b Workgroup. Their comments will be incorporated prior to drafting of a final report that will be submitted for approval by TEC at the June meeting.

Monitoring Strategy and Program Prioritization

ORSANCO Managers Ryan Argo and Greg Youngstrom presented final summaries of Monitoring Strategy Committee comments regarding options for future program efficiencies. TEC members were asked to discuss and take action on staff recommendations derived from the Monitoring Strategy Committee's comments. The resulting discussion and actions fulfilled a request of the Technical Committee, by Commissioner Conroe during the October meeting, for Tech to provide a list of recommended program activities for the Program and Finance Committee and staff to consider when drafting FY27 monitoring plans and budgets.

The recommended changes included the addition of Anatoxin and Saxitoxin data collection to the HAB program and removing pesticides from the fish tissue contaminants suite of analytes.

There was support for discontinuing dissolved metals collections, potentially repurposing those resources for the addition of some degree of PFAS collections. However, the committee would like more time to consider the relative value of the dissolved metals data and to better understand what PFAS data are currently available for the main stem Ohio River.

The most significant portion of discussion pertained to updating the 20+ year old bacteria data currently used to assess the Contact Recreation Use on the Ohio River. The TEC committee agreed that this was the most pressing monitoring need for the commission and supported the formation of a workgroup to define state-specific data needs and develop a sampling methodology. Staff will be reaching out to TEC members to facilitate these initial discussions and solicit members for a Contact Recreation workgroup.

Member Updates and Interstate Water Quality Issues

- Illinois -

Yetunde Agbesola reported the following:

Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan (NARP)

A Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plan (NARP) is a watershed-based approach to reducing phosphorus and other nutrient discharges that can cause water quality impairment. Illinois EPA requires major publicly owned treatment works (or POTWs) to develop a NARP when there is evidence of impairment or a risk of eutrophication in receiving waters.

Currently, Illinois has 214 major POTWs. Of these, 56 facilities have been classified as non-NARP because they show no impairment or risk of eutrophication. To date, approximately 55 NARPs have been submitted, while about 15 remain outstanding. Additionally, 86 facilities are members of a watershed group in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. Future NARP requirements will continue to focus on reducing nutrient-related water quality concerns and supporting compliance with state water quality standards, including meeting a total phosphorus effluent limit of 0.5 mg/L by 2030 (through BPR) or 2035 (through BNR).

So far, the submitted NARPs show six general outcome types—from no impairment findings to recommendations for effluent levels below 0.5 mg/L, to alignment with TMDLs or Nutrient Science Advisory Committee (NSAC) guidance. Some NARPs also identify facilities with minimal nutrient contributions or propose future TP targets that will be evaluated over time.

The Agency is incorporating these findings into permit actions. NPDES public notice fact sheets summarize key NARP conclusions for relevant permits, compliance schedules for 0.5 mg/L TP are being established where appropriate, and additional effluent and stream monitoring is required in certain watersheds. The Agency is also hosting public meetings, collaborating on non-point source controls, and providing annual updates to track progress toward compliance with nutrient-related water quality standards.

Derived Criteria

Illinois EPA held a public meeting on November 20, 2025, to discuss proposed updates to its human health criteria derivation methodology and gather public feedback. The initial comment period ended December 12, 2025. However, the Agency extended the comment period to March 16, 2026, based on public request. The proposed changes and presentation materials are available on the [Illinois EPA's Water Quality Standards](#) webpage. The Agency will apply public input to the extent possible during the preparation to file its proposed changes before the Illinois Pollution Control Board.

Recreational Survey

Illinois EPA has partnered with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (or UIUC) to evaluate recreational use patterns on the Chicago Ship and Sanitary Canal, Bubbly Creek, and Brandon Pool through an on-site and online survey. The UIUC research team conducted the on-site portion of the survey during the 2025 high-use season and concluded the online survey in December 2025. The preliminary results from both the on-site and online surveys are expected during the 2026 calendar year.

PFAS Requirements in NPDES Permits

As of January 14, 2026, Illinois has issued 81 NPDES permits with PFAS Best Management Practices (or BMPs) and monitoring. Of the permits issued, 59 are industrial facilities and 22 are municipal facilities. These BMPs aim to reduce or eliminate PFAS in wastewater, sludge, and biosolids, with testing required to verify effectiveness. All PFAS testing must follow USEPA Method 1633a.

Illinois EPA will review new and renewal applications for PFAS requirements, and by the end of 2027, an estimated 341 permits (POTWs and industrial) will include these provisions. On August 28, 2025, Illinois expanded PFAS reduction efforts to require targeted industrial facilities discharging to minor POTWs to develop site-specific BMPs and monitor discharges. This expansion addresses gaps where smaller POTWs lack authority or expertise to manage PFAS. So far, 15 permits have been issued under these expanded requirements.

Public Water Supply

Regarding the Division of Public Water Supply's Compliance Assurance Section, IPCB has adopted identical-in-substance rulemaking for three Safe Drinking Water Act rules: the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (or LCRI), PFAS maximum contaminant levels, and an updated Consumer Confidence Report rule. These rulemakings will align Illinois regulations with recent federal requirements, and affected systems should anticipate compliance updates once adopted.

- Indiana -

Gabrielle French reported the following:

Monitoring & Sampling

Indiana is preparing for the 2026 sampling season, with probabilistic monitoring planned for the Upper Illinois River Basin and Kankakee River Basin. Fish tissue sampling will occur in the West Fork White River and Patoka River. The state also plans to incorporate the updated 2025 Great Lakes Consortium best practices into its fish consumption guidance, with the first round of updates expected this spring.

303(d) List

Indiana's 2026 Draft 303(d) impaired waters list has been posted to the agency's website, and the public notice period is currently open. Feedback received during this period will inform final decisions later in the year.

Water Reuse & Data Centers

Data centers have become an increasingly important topic in Indiana, particularly regarding water demand. Although a planned roundtable was canceled, IDEM's NPDES permitting staff participated in a water reuse regulatory focus group organized by Brown and Caldwell. Discussions included water reuse, surface water augmentation, and direct potable reuse, with data center growth identified as a potential driver for expanded reuse considerations.

PFAS (Drinking Water)

Indiana's Drinking Water Branch continues working with public water systems to complete required initial PFAS compliance monitoring before the end of the year. Special attention is being given to smaller non-transient community systems that have encountered challenges with initial sampling requirements.

Water Quality Criteria

Indiana has been actively implementing EPA's fish tissue-based selenium aquatic life criteria, with multiple site-specific studies underway, including bioaccumulation and fish tissue analyses. At the same time, the agency has formed a workgroup to begin the process of adopting EPA's aluminum criteria, bringing together assessment, permitting, and standards staff.

Program Highlights

In 2025, Indiana ranked first nationally for published nonpoint source success stories, with 13 documented cases. Additionally, Indianapolis Citizens Energy Group completed the 14-year Indy Tunnel combined sewer overflow (CSO) project, resulting in a 71% reduction in CSO events, marking a significant infrastructure and water quality achievement.

- Kentucky -

Katie McKone reported the following:

Criteria and Assessment Methodologies

The Kentucky Division of Water continues to implement SB89, which redefines Waters of the Commonwealth, and review the EPA and USACE proposed "Updated Definition of Waters of the United States" and potential program impacts. The [Senate Bill 89 Interim Guidance](#) webpage has been updated with three new resources:

- [Protecting Kentucky Waters Infographic 2026](#)
- [Protecting Kentucky Waters 2026](#)
- [Kentucky Water Resources 2026](#)

The Kentucky Division of Water (DOW) began its review of administrative regulations on Water Quality, Water Quality Standards, and Public Water Supplies for compliance with current law in accordance with Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 13A.3104 on the certification process required to avoid expiration.

The 2026 305(b)/303(d) integrated reporting cycle is in preparation for public notice. An updated Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM) will be available for review and comment during the public notice process, which will be a 60-day comment period.

Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet continues to provide technical assistance to drinking water and wastewater systems relating to PFAS, and we continue to make progress on getting emerging contaminants grant funding out to the communities to address PFAS in drinking water. We also continue to track any communication from the US EPA on regulatory activities relating to PFAS.

Monitoring

Monitoring for 2026 - QAPP and project study plans are being finalized for 2026 sampling. DOW has three intensive survey projects taking place in Ohio River tributary watersheds:

- First, the Trimble County Fiscal Court submitted an application for 319(h) funding for watershed-based plan development due to community interest in expanding recreational activities and mitigating effects of sedimentation, erosion, and agricultural and residential runoff on water quality. DOW will conduct monitoring within the Hardy Creek-Little Kentucky River watershed

to characterize existing water quality within the project area and obtain required data for developing the watershed plan.

- Second, the City of Maysville submitted a letter of intent to the Division of Water to pursue 319(h) grant funding to develop and implement a watershed plan for Limestone Creek, Kennedy Creek, Bull Fork Creek, and Goose Creek; all Ohio River tributaries. The City of Maysville has expressed interest in using Limestone Creek, which flows through the downtown area, for outdoor recreation.
- Third, monitoring activities will take place in the Kinniconick Creek watershed in Lewis County, Kentucky to support watershed planning. Kinniconick Creek has been identified as an aquatic biodiversity hotspot in Kentucky and is known to support a suite of federally endangered and state-listed species. Additionally, Kinniconick Creek serves as a destination for paddling and recreational angling and is renowned for its muskellunge fishery. Three major tributaries are impaired based on a range of causes including sedimentation/siltation, nutrient enrichment, and inadequate habitat. The goal of this monitoring is to collect water chemistry, pathogens, biology, and overall watershed condition data in support of 319(h) watershed planning and TMDL and/or TMDL alternative development.

Other Items

DOW presented at the Hypoxia Task Force annual meeting last week on Kentucky's progress and are working with ORSANCO to prepare for the March/April Ohio River Basin Hypoxia Task Force meeting.

Kentucky has developed a wastewater treatment plant optimization program. We have conducted audits on 23 facilities so far and have 7 more that are waiting for late spring. Paulette Akers, the WWTP optimization coordinator, presented on the program to the ORSANCO POTW sub-committee earlier this year.

- Ohio -

Melinda Harris reported the following:

Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment - 2026 Sampling Summary

Preparation for the 2026 field season is underway for the following projects:

- **Wadeable Probabilistic Survey** - Our largest effort will be the probabilistic survey of wadeable streams (3.1-500 mi²). Given the scale of this effort and the need to accommodate targeted sampling, the survey will be split across two years: 200 sites in 2026 and the remaining 56 in 2027.

Each site will include:

- Qualitative habitat assessments
 - Fish and macroinvertebrate sampling
 - One modeling visit (with chemistry)
 - Two rounds of water chemistry sampling
 - Sediment and *E. coli* sampling will occur at a subset of sites.
- **Targeted Sampling** - Seven smaller projects will be completed to address specific DSW needs that have been identified and prioritized. These projects came about following an internal solicitation of data needs to all the DSW programs.

Water Quality Standards Program

Work is underway on the Water Quality Standards Triennial Review. The public hearing was held on January 15, 2026, and the deadline for public comments was January 16, 2026. We are currently reviewing internal and external comments and developing our work plan for the next three years. We are currently working on several rulemakings include the Stream Nutrient Assessment Procedure, Antidegradation, Aquatic Life Criteria, and waterbody beneficial use designations.

NPDES Program

The NPDES program is developing a Data Center general permit that will cover the discharge of non-contact cooling waters, reverse osmosis reject waters, and other waste streams associated with data centers. This GP will include direct dischargers to the Ohio River. The comment period on the draft general permit closed on January 16, 2026. Ohio EPA received over 7,000 comments. A response to comments is in preparation, and no determination on next steps has been made.

Also, the draft Stream Nutrient Assessment Procedure Implementation rule is available for interested party review and comment until February 20, 2026. The intent of the rulemaking is to formalize a structure to determine what, if any, NPDES permit conditions are appropriate when Ohio EPA has determined that a discharger's receiving stream or river is impaired or at risk of becoming impaired for the aquatic life use due to excessive nutrients.

TMDL Program

Draft East Fork Little Miami River TMDL was available for public comment until January 26, 2026. This report identifies nutrient reductions needed and calculates TMDLs for 17 small watershed assessment units in the East Fork LMR watershed. These nutrient TMDLs address 1) aquatic life use impairments of several streams due to organic enrichment and eutrophication and 2) the public drinking water supply use impairment of Harsha Lake due to harmful algae blooms. The same total phosphorus and total nitrogen targets are used for both the aquatic life use and public drinking water use impairments. Ohio EPA worked closely with Chris Nietch and others at U.S. EPA on modeling for this TMDL. The draft report is available on Ohio EPA's website at: <https://epa.ohio.gov/divisions-and-offices/surface-water/reports-data/water-quality-programs>

401 Program

Ohio EPA is currently reviewing an individual 401 Water Quality Certification application for the Pike Island Hydroelectric Project on the Ohio River in Belmont County. The application is available for review and comment on our webpage at:

<https://dam.assets.ohio.gov/raw/upload/v1764088912/epa.ohio.gov/Portals/35/401/Applications/241290A.zip>

- Pennsylvania -

Christine Phillips reported the following:

Water Quality Standards & Rulemaking

The Site-Specific Criteria final-form rulemaking amendments were approved by EPA Region 3 on October 9, 2025 and added to the *Pennsylvania Code* online § 93.8d in November 2025. These amendments are now available for Clean Water Act purposes.

The DEP's 10th Triennial Review of Water Quality Standards final-form rulemaking was approved by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) at its October 16th 2025 meeting and was published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* on December 20, 2025. Currently, DEP is waiting for EPA Region 3 approval.

The final-form rulemaking for DEP's most recent Class "A" Stream Redesignations is scheduled to be present to the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) at its next available meeting (tentatively March 10).

- New York - No update provided

- West Virginia -

Jeremy Bandy reported the following:

Water Quality Standards & Rulemaking

West Virginia is currently midway through its legislative session, with two primary agency rules under consideration. The first is a statewide revision to selenium fish tissue criteria, proposing a standard of 8.5 for sturgeon waters and 9.5 for non-sturgeon waters. The revision anticipates similar site-specific requests following a prior legislative update. The second is a new rule establishing a fee structure for Class 6 underground injection control wells for carbon capture and sequestration. After becoming the fourth state to receive primacy for the program, West Virginia has received multiple applications. The proposed rule includes a \$55,000 application fee per well and a \$0.13 per ton annual storage fee.

PFAS

The state reinstated a government-to-government grant in partnership and, with the West Virginia Rivers Coalition, has conducted public outreach meetings with modest but engaged participation. The state has contracted with USGS for seasonal sampling of public water systems and follow-up investigations of potential PFAS sources. Draft PFAS action plans are being developed with interagency review and are expected this spring.

Permitting

The Division of Water and Waste recently received its first NPDES permit application related to a data center-associated power generation facility in Mason County near the Ohio River. Air quality permits for similar microgrid projects are currently under appeal.

Monitoring

The state is also coordinating with ORSANCO on proposed monitoring projects, including HAB monitoring, water quality sampling on select West Virginia tributaries to the Ohio River, and fish tissue analysis for contaminants. Watershed efforts include ongoing TMDL development and pre-TMDL monitoring in several watersheds. The DEP responded to a January oil spill caused by vandalism at an American Electric Power substation near East Lynn in Wayne County. Approximately 4,900 gallons of non-PCB mineral oil were released. Containment, soil excavation, and extensive water sampling were conducted, and over 27,000 gallons of oil-water mixture were recovered. A temporary drinking water advisory for the Town of Wayne was lifted, and there is no indication the spill reached the Ohio River.

Water Infrastructure

Combined sewer overflow communities along the Ohio River are advancing major infrastructure upgrades. Wheeling is planning system and treatment improvements, while Huntington is investing approximately \$290 million in system upgrades, separation projects, expanded capacity, and backflow prevention to address longstanding overflow and river intrusion issues.

- Virginia -

Jeffrey Hurst reported the following:

Triennial Review

Virginia DEQ is continuing the Triennial Review of the Water Quality Standards Regulation. The proposed amendments were presented to the State Water Control Board in November 2025 and include:

- Consideration of the 2024 recommended aquatic life criteria for PFOA and PFOS.
- Designation of additional areas for the Deep Water use in the Chesapeake Bay. Consideration of site-specific Dissolved Oxygen criteria for the tidal Chickahominy River and the brackish portion of the tidal Pocomoke River.
- Addition of a significant digit to Bay Dissolved Oxygen criteria and modification of Bay criteria implementation language to allow for multiple assessment methods in the Bay.
- Addition of a performance-based approach for implementing the biotic ligand model (BLM) to derive freshwater copper criteria

After completing the Executive Branch review process, staff will move forward with public comment and a hearing. More information and status updates are available on the [TownHall website](#).

Monitoring

Virginia DEQ has published the [2026 Annual Water Quality Monitoring Plan](#). This plan provides transparency regarding DEQ's monitoring activities and includes an interactive dashboard detailing monitoring station locations and types and frequency of monitoring. In addition, DEQ has initiated the process for the public to nominate Virginia's waterbodies for monitoring for the 2027 monitoring plan. Nominations will be accepted from January 1 through April 30, 2026, via the [DEQ Volunteer Monitoring webpage](#).

Virginia DEQ has been working to implement previous legislation to identify sources of PFAS in the source water of drinking water systems that have measured an exceedance of PFAS MCLs. One of those drinking water systems draws its raw water from the Middle Holston, a tributary of the Tennessee and Ohio Rivers. DEQ has required certain permitted dischargers upstream of the drinking water intake to sample their effluent for one year. In addition, DEQ has been performing its own ambient PFAS monitoring at 5 sites in the watershed, sampling

monthly since April 2025. The results from the ambient monitoring should be posted to our website over the next month. More information about Virginia DEQ's PFAS efforts are available on our website and in our annual report available on our website and at <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2025/RD1016/PDF>.

TMDLs

Lower Clinch TMDL Implementation Plan: The first community engagement meeting to discuss development of the Lower Clinch Implementation Plan is set for February 24, 2026 *starting at 2:30pm at the Lebanon Public Library*. This meeting is open to the public, and all interested parties are welcome. In the event of inclement weather, the meeting will be held on March 4, 2026, at the same time and location. During the meeting, we will discuss potential best management practices to include in the plan that will address sediment and bacteria reduction targets. We will also discuss different educational and outreach strategies and identify partner organizations that we can collaborate with once we move into the implementation phase of this process. The boundaries of this plan include impairments within Russell, Scott, Wise and Dickenson Counties, including the towns of Dante, Saint Paul, and Dungannon.

Virginia DEQ is currently drafting updates to the current [NPS BMP Guidelines](#) and [NPS BMP Specifications](#) based on feedback from current subrecipients. We anticipate this to be effective from 7/1/2026 until 6/30/2028. For more information, contact Tashema Pulliam at Tashema.Pulliam@deq.virginia.gov.

Virginia DEQ recently submitted draft of FY26 Section 319h NPS Implementation Workplan to US EPA for review to continue to support existing projects. If awarded, projects will start no sooner than 10/1/2026. Section 319h funding supports implementation projects for Best Management Practice (BMP) installation, outreach/education, and water quality monitoring.

Virginia DEQ's current five-year Nonpoint Source management plan was extended to 9/30/2026, to allow time for EPA to provide feedback on the next 5-year draft plan that DEQ submitted in November 2024. Final approval is anticipated in 2026. The current plan can be found [here](#).

There are a number of other TMDL initiatives taking place in Virginia, within the Ohio River watershed, including the following:

- Middle Fork Holston River has a Benthic Aquatic Life Use impairments TMDL redo which has been Virginia State Water Control Board approved, and currently at EPA for review and approval.
- Wolf Creek Benthic Aquatic Life Use impairments TMDL is in process, pending additional benthic monitoring. We anticipate completion in late 2026 or early 2027 depending on monitoring results.
- Big Reed Island Creek Bacteria and Temperature Use impairments TMDL; started 2026; completion in 2027/2028.
- Bluestone River has been recently sampled supplementing data for a PCB study of the water quality and fish tissue quality. Virginia continues working with West Virginia analyzing this data in consideration of TMDLs to address the interstate impairments of water and fish tissue. It is on the priorities list for this 2-yr (2027-28) cycle.
- The North Fork Holston River, a tributary to the Tennessee River, has a TMDL to address mercury in fish tissue impairments and former chlorine plant site remediation. Recent related activities include:
 - The responsible party recently submitted a final report (Jan. 23, 2026) that completes a four-year study to characterize remaining sources of mercury discharging to the North Fork Holston River from the Saltville Waste Disposal Ponds Superfund Site. The results of this study will be used to inform a remediation strategy to reduce mercury flux to the river from the site.
 - EPA plans to move the investigation under their authority and plans to acquire resampling sediment in the 10-20% of the downstream locations that were included in the previous Mercury concentration assessment. The results of that effort will determine whether the old data is still representative of the mercury concentrations in the North Fork Holston River sediments.

Finally, Virginia DEQ is actively following the current session of our General Assembly, which began on January 14, 2026, and is expected to adjourn on March 14, 2026. There are a number of bills under consideration related to PFAS, biosolids, and data centers, including water use by data centers. I should be able to provide a complete update at the Commission's next meeting.

- **USEPA** -

Diane Tancl reported the following:

Integrated Reports & 303(d) Lists

Region 5 is working with states on Integrated Report and Section 303(d) list submittals, which are due in April. Public comment periods are open, and staff are coordinating with states to enter data into ATTAINS. The region's Nonpoint Source Section is also planning a regional BMP workshop for this winter to highlight implementation successes, in partnership with several states.

Water Quality Standards & Rulemaking

In FY25, Region 5 completed 30 water quality standards actions, including triennial reviews—reportedly the highest total nationally. The Standards Section is reviewing a full support document for aquatic life PFOS and PFOA water quality standards, which will be released by headquarters once finalized. Region 5 is also coordinating with headquarters on the proposed Section 401 rulemaking, which is open for public comment through February 17.

National Aquatic Resource Surveys

The National Aquatic Resource Surveys will resume this summer with the wetlands survey, including upcoming training and site selection. Planning is also underway for lake assessment surveys, though rising contractor costs may result in program reductions, particularly fewer site revisits, which are important for quality assurance and tracking temporal trends.

Regional Science & Research Projects

Despite delays during the transition from ORD to OASES, Region 5 continues supporting completion of its mayfly decline study, which uses non-targeted analysis and metabolomic profiling to evaluate regional declines in *Hexagenia* mayflies. A partner presentation is planned, and manuscripts are being developed with analytical support from Florida. The region's diatom multi-metric index project, that covers three different indices, is also nearing completion, with a focus on nutrient assessments and incorporation of DNA metabarcoding to ease taxonomic challenges. A continuation proposal for the mayfly project, adding lipidomics analysis, has been approved pending funding.

Monitoring Strategy Updates & Organizational Transition

Region 5 is participating in a national workgroup to update the Elements of a State Monitoring Strategy guidance, incorporating newer tools such as the Water Quality Portal, adding language on monitoring initiative funds, and providing clearer examples—particularly for programmatic evaluation sections. Following the transition from ORD to the new Office of Applied Science and Environmental Solutions (OASES), programs are stabilizing, with work plans under development and webinars and newsletters expected to resume.

Upcoming Event

EPA will host a multi-day, national virtual Cyanosymposium in March focused on human and animal health effects of cyanotoxins.

- **USACE** -

Erich Emery reported the following:

Low Flow Study

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has completed its low flow study and submitted it to a journal for publication. The article is expected to be published soon, after which it will be shared for distribution to the committee.

Data Centers & Water Resources

USACE is also working to better understand the implications of data center growth, particularly regarding current and future impacts on water resources, as this issue continues to gain attention across agencies.

- **USGS** -

Pete Cinotto reported the following:

Monitoring

Funding was approved for continued USGS collections at their Super Gage stations on the Ohio River main stem and some major tributaries. Those data will continue to be available on the USGS website.

- Industry Advisory Committee -

Kathy Beckett reported the following:

ORSANCO's Role in Ohio River Basin Restoration Legislation

The Industry Advisory Committee (IAC) has met several times in recent months and expressed concern about proposed federal legislation related to the Ohio River Basin currently before Congress. The proposal appears to position Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) as one of many entities serving on an advisory council, rather than recognizing its long-standing leadership role and extensive institutional knowledge in managing water quality. In the mind of the IAC it raises a question about whether ORSANCO's historic authority and expertise are being fully leveraged in this effort.

This lack of emphasis is further concerning as the proposed legislation references funding levels comparable to other major watershed initiatives—potentially hundreds of millions of dollars annually—while ORSANCO itself is currently seeking relatively modest financial support from industry and other partners. IAC members questioned whether the proposal sufficiently addresses ORSANCO's direct funding needs and raised broader concerns about top-down federal funding models. Specifically, what portion of funds is directed to on-the-ground efforts (central to ORSANCO's current budget concerns) versus the administrative costs of federal agencies.

- Power Industry Advisory Committee -

Krystina Garabis reported the following:

State and Federal Rulemakings

The committee is closely monitoring a range of state and federal rulemakings that could affect power generation, transmission, and distribution, particularly those pending review following executive orders issued by Donald Trump emphasizing continued energy generation.

At the federal level, this includes developments related to the effluent guidelines (ELG) rule, the coal combustion residuals (CCR) legacy rule, proposed changes to water quality certification rules, and revisions to the WOTUS definition, all of which may have implications for state regulations and permitting.

The committee is also tracking state-level energy policy rulemakings, including efforts by states to obtain authority to regulate CCR facilities and the development of permitting programs for new construction projects, particularly those associated with data centers and related generation facilities.

- Public Information Advisory Committee -

Betsy Mallison Bialosky reported the following:

Basin-Wide Communications

PIACO met on February 10 with public information staff from Ohio EPA and the Kentucky Department of Energy and Environment. ORSANCO and PIACO are working to engage communications representatives from all member states to strengthen best practice sharing, crisis coordination, consistent basin-wide messaging, and public understanding of technical issues. Feedback on the effort was positive, and the team plans further outreach in conjunction with the June Commission meeting. The communications team also aims to work more closely with the TEC Committee to translate technical topics into accessible language.

River Sweep and Education

She highlighted updates on River Sweep, now coordinated by new ORSANCO staff member Bethany Miller, who brings nearly 15 years of communications experience. Interest in this year's cleanup is growing following the initial public call for sites. Last year's event included over 5,000 volunteers who removed significant debris across 224 miles of shoreline. A one-day mega cleanup in October is being explored. Additionally, ORSANCO launched the Ohio River Academy pilot program, which connects students to watershed science, stewardship, and STEM career pathways through classroom, virtual, and field-based learning experiences.

- Watershed Organization Advisory Committee -

Heather Hulton VanTassel reported the following:

WOAC Participation

After careful thought and multiple conversations with WOAC members, the watershed organizations have decided to have a reduced role in ORSANCO at meetings but not absent. When WOAC was formed it was to comment on and provide feedback to ORSANCO when it was engaged in issuing and proposing water quality standards for regulatory purposes. Now that ORSANCO no longer focuses on amending water quality standards for regulatory purposes, WOAC members have a reduced influence and purpose, thus there has also been reduced participation and interest due to the lack of connection with the purpose of WOAC and scope of influence in ORSANCO. Furthermore, there are many other coalitions forming around the Ohio River Basin, shifting priorities for our small watershed organizations. We plan to maintain a presence and collaborative partnership when it comes to protecting the Ohio River Basin, particularly in efforts that would lead to great protections and restoration efforts.

Moving forward, WOAC will provide comments and feedback where appropriate. Nevertheless, there may be times where WOAC does not have a comment or feedback to provide and may choose to be absent. This decision was not done lightly nor is it a reflection of a lack of partnership and understanding between WOAC and ORSANCO. Rather, we must recognize limited resources and prioritize where watershed organizations can be most effective within their mission.

- POTW Advisory Committee -

Reese Johnson reported the following:

Committee Activities and Recommendations

The POTW Advisory Committee held a virtual meeting hosted by ORSANCO last month, with representatives from SD1 in Northern Kentucky, Cincinnati MSD, and Louisville MSD participating. The meeting focused on nutrient optimization at wastewater treatment plants, featuring a presentation on Kentucky's pilot program with Tennessee that led to a five-year implementation plan for major plants. The discussion highlighted energy-saving opportunities, including reduced aeration costs and the use of variable frequency drives.

ORSANCO staff Stacey Cochran provided an update on water quality monitoring methods, including new technologies such as the Proteus instrument and the Fluidion Alert system. While acknowledging some challenges, the committee expressed support for ORSANCO's efforts to test and compare innovative monitoring approaches, particularly for bacterial monitoring.

The POTW community voiced strong support for the proposed expansion of ORSANCO's bacterial monitoring program, noting the significant financial investments communities are making to reduce watershed impacts and emphasizing ORSANCO's unique role in providing defensible, basin-wide data to guide consistent policy decisions across state lines.

Upcoming POTW Meeting

The committee hopes to again hold a joint in-person meeting with the Water Users Advisory Committee in May to address shared challenges, including staffing issues and the role of AI in treatment operations.

- Water Users Advisory Committee -

Chris Bobay reported the following:

Committee Activities and Recommendations

The Water Users Advisory Committee (WUAC) met on January 27, 2026 to discuss, among other issues, considerations and recommendations regarding proposed changes to ORSANCO's monitoring program. WUAC input and recommendations were provided to the Technical Committee in a separate memo, which I've submitted along with my comments today to the Commission. In general, WUAC members did not feel comfortable weighing in on monitoring efforts not directly related to drinking water. Water systems would like to see continued support for source water protection and emergency response (SWPER) efforts. The sustainability of Organics Detection System (ODS) is always a top priority. We are encouraged by ORSANCO's work to seek and secure state and federal funding for monitoring. These investments come at a critical time when replacement of

old equipment and instrumentation is necessary to continue providing support to water systems. That said, we know that the ODS Network is costly to maintain. Our committee is committed to looking at opportunities to increase utility cost share to counter rising operational and maintenance costs and to put things on a more sustainable footing. We believe these programs are vital for the protection of drinking water supplies and ensuring public health. For that reason, WUAC does not support reductions in staff that would impact critical staffing levels and technical capacity for emergency response efforts, especially for the all-hands-on-deck incidents that present challenges on many fronts.

River Conditions Update

2025 marked the second consecutive year of extended dry-weather and severe (both duration and intensity) algae-related taste and odor conditions in the river with some late-season HAB activity. Many water systems reported the presence of *Microcystis sp.*, a known odor and toxin producer, in the river the past two years. In Louisville, we had more than 100 straight days with significant treatment impacts in 2024 and 2025. We appreciate ORSANCO's continued support to water utilities for river-wide algae and HAB monitoring.

PFAS Update

Many of the water systems are actively monitoring for PFAS at their intakes. Initial monitoring, for treated water, under the new PFAS Rule must be completed by April 2027. While average PFAS levels in the Ohio River continue to trend below the new standards, Ohio River water systems continue to see episodic detections of river PFAS, namely PFOA and GenX, at levels that require additional treatment to ensure compliance new drinking water limits. Many of the water systems are engaged in long-term studies and infrastructure improvement projects to evaluate and implement treatment technologies to ensure continuous compliance with the new PFAS standards. We appreciate ORSANCO's continued efforts to provide a forum for data and knowledge sharing among utilities on this important issue.

Upcoming WUAC Meeting

Our next meeting will be on May 27-28, 2026 ahead of the June Commission meeting. This will be a joint meeting with the POTW Committee. We had a successful joint meeting last year that was well received. And we hope to continue our collaboration efforts around issues and challenges that we share.

Next Technical Committee Meetings

The next Technical Committee meeting will take place on June 9-10, 2026, in French Lick, Indiana; the October 2026 meeting time and location have yet to be determined.

Comments by Guests

There were no comments by guests.

Adjournment

The 240th meeting of the ORSANCO Technical Committee was adjourned by Chairman Hurst at 11:50 a.m. on Wednesday, February 11, 2026.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jeffrey Z. Hurst".

Commissioner Proxy Jeffrey Hurst

Roster of Attendance

Technical Committee

Chairman	Commissioner Jeffrey Hurst
Illinois	Yetunde Agbesola (virtual)
Indiana	Gabrielle French
Kentucky	Katie McKone
New York	Nick Balrup (virtual)
Ohio	Melinda Harris
Pennsylvania	Christine Phillips (virtual)
Virginia	Jeffrey Hurst
West Virginia	Jeremy Bandy
US Army Corps of Engineers	Erich Emery
US Coast Guard	Michael Callinan
US Environmental Protection Agency	Diane Tancl (virtual)
US Geological Survey	Pete Cinotto (virtual)
Chemical Industry Advisory Committee	Kathy Beckett
Power Industry Advisory Committee	Krystina Garabis
Public Interest Advisory Committee	Betsy Mallison Bialosky (virtual)
POTW Advisory Committee	Reese Johnson
Water Users Advisory Committee	Chris Bobay
Watershed Organizations Advisory Committee	Heather Hulton VanTassel (virtual)
ORSANCO Executive Director	Samuel Dinkins
Staff Liaison	Ryan Argo

Commissioners/Proxies

Douglas Conroe, George Elmaraghy, David Flannery, Kevin Halloran, Bruce Herschlag, John Hoopingarner, Emily Jenkins, James Jennings, Bradford Kasberg, John Lyons, Sarah Marshall, Jason Minnich, Lou Wallace, Mike Wilson (virtual)

Staff

Ryan Argo, Alexis Brandenburg, Elizabeth Burton, Nick Callahan, Stacey Cochran, Sam Dinkins, Tracey Edmonds (virtual), Emilee Harmeling (virtual), Riley Lanfear, Erin Linko, Bethany Miller, Taylor Parker, Adam Scott, Rob Tewes, Jamie Tsiominas, Greg Youngstrom, Lila Ziolkowski

Guests

Duke Adams (virtual)	PA DEP
Scott Bessler	Metropolitan Sewer District of Greater Cincinnati
Christina Bozio	US EPA
Sara Breitmeyer (virtual)	USGS
Joyce Gentry (virtual)	Benchmark Safety, Health & Environmental Services
Jim Gibson	SD1
Brian Heflin (virtual)	USGS
John Hirschfield (virtual)	Westlake
Richard Harrison	Northern Kentucky Water District
Jim Lazorchak (virtual)	US EPA
Cary McElhinney	US EPA
Chris Nietch	US EPA
Nick Reif	KY Division of Water
Jeff Thomas (virtual)	EPRI
Matt Thompson (virtual)	ICL Industrial Products
Jit Weir (virtual)	IDEM