

Maintaining Public Awareness and Involvement

The general public and other decision-makers do not appear to be fully aware of the progress achieved by NRTMP and the two associated RAP efforts. Since 1996, the Commission has noted a general decline in public consultation activities within the AOC.

During the Commission's Status Assessment process, citizens informed the Commission of a lack of funding for public information activities in regard to the New York RAP. Ensuring that RAP efforts within the New York portion of the AOC achieve and maintain suitable visibility will require a greater dedication of personnel and funding. Public workshops and other visible events could be used to explain progress to date and the long-term benefits of fully restoring beneficial uses.

Representatives of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) recently met with representatives of the U.S. EPA Niagara Falls Public Information Office (NFPIO) and future liaison between the two organizations may enable coordinated public information programs that more effectively target citizens within the AOC. The NPCA has recently demonstrated an effective outreach effort in their Welland River activities and the NFPIO has a long history of effective public outreach related to remedial programs.

The NRTMP activity is well funded, highly successful, and provides an annual reporting of progress, and, more importantly, through the NPCA and NFPIO, it affords considerable opportunity for public consultation. The Niagara River RAP efforts in New York and Ontario could benefit from increased support for public involvement.

Recommendation

Enhance Public Outreach Efforts.

A better integrated approach to public outreach is required. Planned coordination between the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority and U.S. EPA's Niagara Falls Public Information Office is an important step. Outreach efforts should explain the linkages between the two RAPs and the NRTMP. Progress made to date and the actions required to restore the beneficial uses need to be clearly outlined. A suitable theme might be "Progress Achieved and the Remaining Need".