

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## Blanchard River Watershed Partnership



*Clean Water. Bright Future.*





# BLANCHARD RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

## STRATEGIC PLAN

(Amended January 4, 2014)

### Mission Statement

“The Blanchard River Watershed Partnership encourages water quality improvements to our geologically unique, northwestern Ohio watershed, through sustainable land and water use, collaboration, conservation and enhancement of natural and man-made resources.”

### Vision and Values Statement

**Vision:** To live in a clean and productive watershed that assures long-term value to all of inhabitants.

**Values:** The Blanchard River Watershed Partnership values...

- The Blanchard River Watershed for its ability to sustain life.
- The preservation of the natural environment of the watershed.
- The partnerships of stakeholders, agencies and organizations through an open dialogue with the community about our watershed.
- The rural lifestyle and the quality of life in townships, villages and cities.
- The use of best management practices to:
  1. Promote responsible agricultural practices, i.e. filter strips, cover crops, conservation tillage, etc...
  2. Encourage environmentally sound industrial development, and
  3. Promote responsible residential and other urban activities.

The Blanchard River Watershed Partnership Inc.(BRWP) is chartered under the State of Ohio and recognized by the IRS as a 501 (c) (3) tax exempt, charitable organization.

Serving Allen, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Seneca and Wyandot Counties, the Blanchard River meanders almost 100 miles to the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers, and into Lake Erie at Toledo. The entire watershed covers approximately 493,440 acres.

## Historical Perspective - BRWP Strategic Plan

**In 2002**, Hancock County officials and The Ohio State University Extension Watershed Educator took initial steps towards the formation of a local watershed group for the Blanchard River. That process began with a series of contacts, meetings and presentations to elected officials, engineers, regional planners, soil and water conservationists, park district, educators and the interested members of the general public throughout the six-county watershed. The objective was to promote the comprehensive watershed management concept as the most effective process by which the value of the Blanchard watershed can be increased for all to benefit.

**Support was evident.** The public meetings, collaborations and processes have resulted in what the watershed community now refers to as the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership (BRWP).

**On April 4, 2005**, these formative initiatives culminated when at a meeting of volunteers, invited to help form the organization, a steering committee was elected to begin the implementation of the preliminary plan. During 2005-06, the steering committee passed a set of By-laws, incorporated the organization in the State of Ohio and successfully petitioned the Internal Revenue Service to be granted non-profit, 501 (c) (3), tax-exempt status.

**In 2007**, a series of planning sessions were held around the watershed. As a result, the BRWP membership has authorized the implementation of a “Strategic Plan”, which continues to guide the Blanchard River Watershed Partnership’s Board of Directors (BOD).

**This initial “Strategic Plan” gave direction** to the steering committee during formative stages of the organization. The committee recognized that to effectively progress, a unifying statement of goals and action plans are necessary. An updated “Strategic Plan,” completed in 2009, is the outcome of those deliberations. The plan identifies a set of guiding principles, strategic issues, objectives and action items for implementation.

**Strategic plans are only effective when they are embraced by its members** and integrated into the organization operations and actions. Recognizing that challenge, the future BRWP leadership will necessarily periodically review and update this plan and the tactical plans that will be developed. As such, that “February 2011 Plan” was reviewed and discussed for this updated in January 2014.

## **BRWP Strategic Issues**

Five strategic issues have been developed as a focus for action plans to guide the BRWP through its Mission.

### **1. Organizational Development**

Maintain BRWP leadership with a professional staff position to implement the 2007 strategic plan and improve the effectiveness of the volunteer leadership through planned education.

### **2. Funding**

Initiate a series of BRWP actions that will insure the financial sustainability of the Watershed Partnership.

### **3. Image and Message**

Develop BRWP's image as the leading regional resource and advocate for watershed planning and improvement, "Clean Water. Bright Future."

### **4. Watershed Education**

Provide resources and create programs identifying watershed issues and recommended actions for the improvement of water quality for each of our stakeholder groups.

### **5. Watershed Action Plan**

Develop, gain approval and implement an Ohio Environmental Protection Agency - compliant watershed action plan to enable stakeholder authority to initiate restoration actions.

## **STRATEGIC ISSUE #1 - Organizational Development**

**Goal:** Maintain a professional staff position to implement the 2014 Strategic Plan and improve the effectiveness of the volunteer leadership through planned education.

### **Objective 1**

Sustain a Watershed Coordinator (WC) to oversee and manage partnership activities and coordinate the writing of Watershed Action Plans. (WAP).

- **Action 1** - Board of Directors (BOD) will seek and submit appropriate grant proposals (on-going).

### **Objective 2**

Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the volunteer leadership; recruit new leaders.

- **Action 1** - Utilize existing organizational chart and further define roles and committee tasks.
- **Action 2** - Fund professional development for key volunteers and coordinator (on-going).
- **Action 3** - Present low cost educational opportunities for all volunteers and stakeholders.
- **Action 4** - Recruit specialist volunteers with skills to implement BRWP goals on project basis.
- **Action 5** - The BOD will develop a succession plan for the coordinator and the executive committee.

### **Objective 3**

Organize our databases into a common water-issues library for stakeholder use.

- **Action 1** - Maintain a central log of resources, i.e. watershed research and monitoring.
- **Action 2** - Maintain a virtual library / clearing house of information both hard copy and web based.

### **Objective 4**

Develop a drainage area working group in each of the six sub-watersheds to help further WAPs.

- **Action 1** - Meet with interested organizations in the watersheds (continuing).
- **Action 2** - identify local interest projects, recruit leadership and meet with sub-groups and landowners as part of WAP development and implementation.

## **STRATEGIC ISSUE #2 - Funding**

**Goal:** Insure that the BRWP becomes a financially sustainable entity.

### **Objective 1**

Develop annual budget with 3 and 5 year projections based on goals and fund raising.

- **Action 1** - Using the strategic plan to develop budgets and projections from project goals.

### **Objective 2**

Sustain a funding base to include operations, projects and WC programs.

- **Action 1** - Using fund raising / marketing plan (current and updated), identify and invite new stakeholder groups, government partners and public / private partnerships that can increase funding capacity BRWP.

### **Objective 3**

Maintain and increase the membership rolls in the individual and sponsorship categories.

- **Action 1** - Utilize Membership Plan adopted January 2011.

### **Objective 4**

Explore funding and grant opportunities, plan ahead for WAP projects and submit applications.

- **Action 1** - Utilize partners to develop projects, grant opportunities and writing successful grants.
- **Action 2** - Develop a fundraising plan for the BRWP

## **STRATEGIC ISSUE #3 - Message and image**

**Goal:** Expand BRWP's image as the leading local and regional resource and advocate for watershed improvements.

### **Objective 1**

Uniformly promote and integrate BRWP's image in all publications, communications, and personal contacts.

- **Action 1** - Utilize AR Marketing Plan (2013) to integrate message / tag line for all printed materials, news releases and communications (focus issues: drinking water, storm water prevent contamination / toxic algae and Lake Erie).
- **Action 2** - Engage news media in watershed projects and programs by providing ongoing news articles, press releases of updates and activities on an ongoing basis to ALL local media
- **Action 3** - Expand BRWP communications kit for distribution and exhibit at events.

### **Objective 2**

Communicate effectively to a defined, diversified audience the values of the BWRP and the services it can provide.

- **Action 1** - Expand a unified list-serve database with interest groups and news media, from which BRWP can effectively reach a selected audience.
- **Action 2** - Continue and expand the distribution of the quarterly BRWP Times as a general interest communication document (support WC in this assignment with stories, pictures, and feedback and distribution contacts).
- **Action 3** - Improve and expand synergy with educational institutions to integrate students with BRWP projects and programs.
- **Action 4** - Create and expand a series of BRWP Fact Sheets that can be utilized as message carriers, components of a media press kit and speaking points for BRWP representatives.

### **Objective 3**

Improve the usefulness of the social media, i.e. web site, facebook.

- **Action 1** - Maintain website updates; continue feedback to improve effectiveness.
- **Action 2** - Utilize Facebook and other social media links



## **STRATEGIC ISSUE #4 - Education & Outreach**

**Goal:** Expand opportunities to reach out to stakeholders about BRWP Mission & Values.

### **Objective 1**

Promote educational resources through the BRWP.

- **Action 1** - Create a series of printed and electronic publications for all to use, and as requested by educators in the watershed.
- **Action 2** - Serve as a resource for accurate information and data on water quality issues.

### **Objective 2**

Participate in public planning, discussions and projects in support of good stewardship of the watershed among local government, agencies and conservation group.

- **Action 1** - Expand local government contact list (county commissioners, township trustees, city/village officials) for communications.
- **Action 2** - Strengthen a collaborative network with affiliated conservation organizations in the watershed (volunteer project to develop contact list and engage groups).
- **Action 3** - Update “watershed report card” for promoting needs, issues and health of the watershed (focus “watershed as a patient”).
- **Action 4** - Create a watershed advocacy program template (talking points) that can be used by volunteer presenters (speaker’s bureau) at local meetings.
- **Action 5** - Continue to display, participate and partner at events around the watershed to maximize educational opportunities and outreach “(County fairs, river clean ups, home shows, school and/or community rain barrel projects, and annual meeting or other fundraisers.)”

## **STRATEGIC ISSUE #5 Watershed Action Plan**

**Goal:** Write an OEPA / ODNR compliant watershed action plan to enable stakeholder authority to initiate watershed restoration actions (Primary work assignment for watershed coordinator”).

### **Objective 1**

Continue implementation of The Outlet/ Lye Creek WAP by distributing public information and promoting action plans / projects with related landowners and appropriate agencies.

- **Action 1** - Continue to work with agencies to implement the WAP in the Lye Creek watershed and other watersheds in The Outlet/Lye Creek watershed.
- **Action 2** - Continue to seek grants to help implement the WAP

### **Objective 2**

Continue implementation of the Riley Creek WAP by distributing public information and promoting action plans / projects with related landowners and appropriate agencies.

- **Action 1** - Continue to work with agencies to implement the WAP in the Upper and Lower Riley Creek watersheds and other watersheds in the Creek watershed.
- **Action 2** - Continue to seek grants to help implement the WAP

### **Objective 3**

Establish water quality monitoring and chemical testing of priority areas.

- **Action 1** - Engage and train volunteers, utilizing area professionals and test labs.
- **Action 2** - To do monthly Chemical Testing in the Lye Creek watershed and the Upper and Lower Riley Creek watershed to collect information on the water quality for the GLB and GLRI grants

### **Objective 4**

Determine next order of sub-watersheds for study and project funding needs.

- **Action 1:** To form a group of volunteers to start collecting data to write the WAP for one of the remaining watersheds.

Special thanks to the Board of Directors and other Friends of the Watershed for the time and effort on January 4, 2014 in the updating of this document.

The Strategic Plan is intended for review and updating every three years as a work in progress. Next review will be in 2017.