The Black River – Lorain, Ohio

Push and Pull of Ecological Restoration and Economic Development

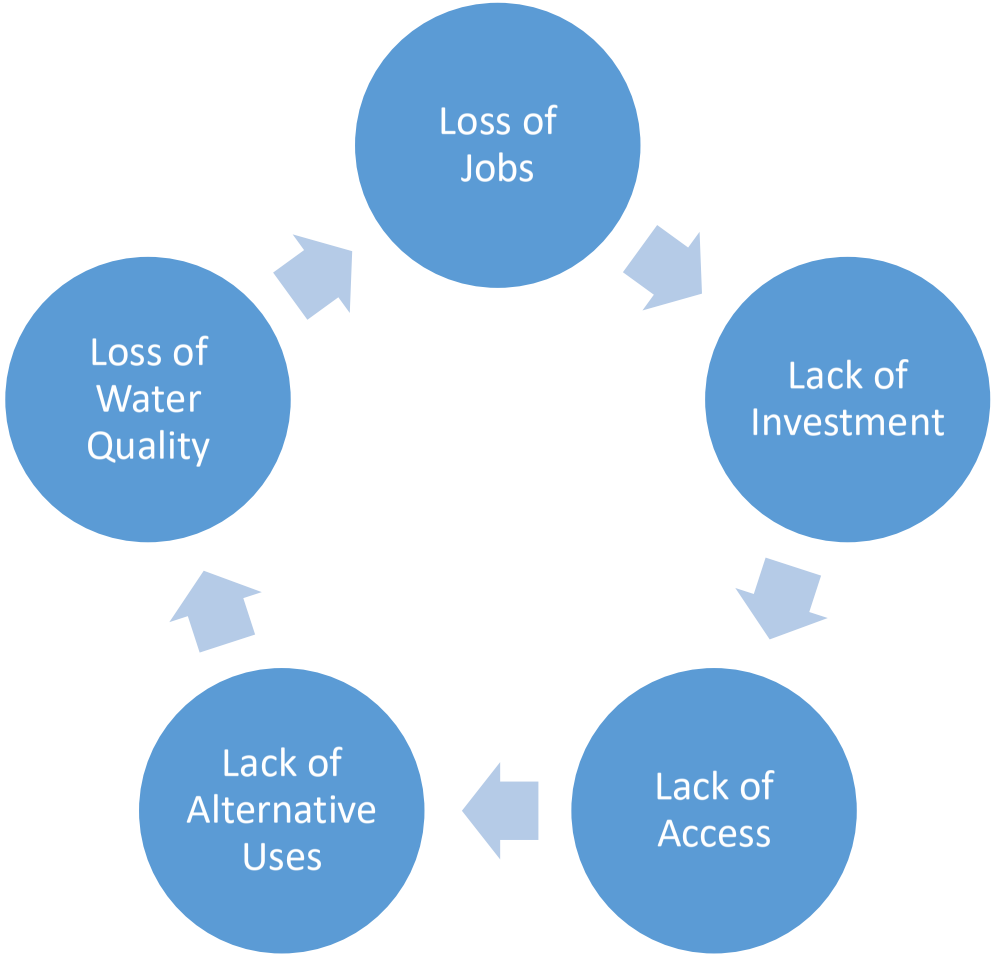
Great Lakes AOC Conference, Cleveland, Ohio September 2019

LORAIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

BLACK RIVER

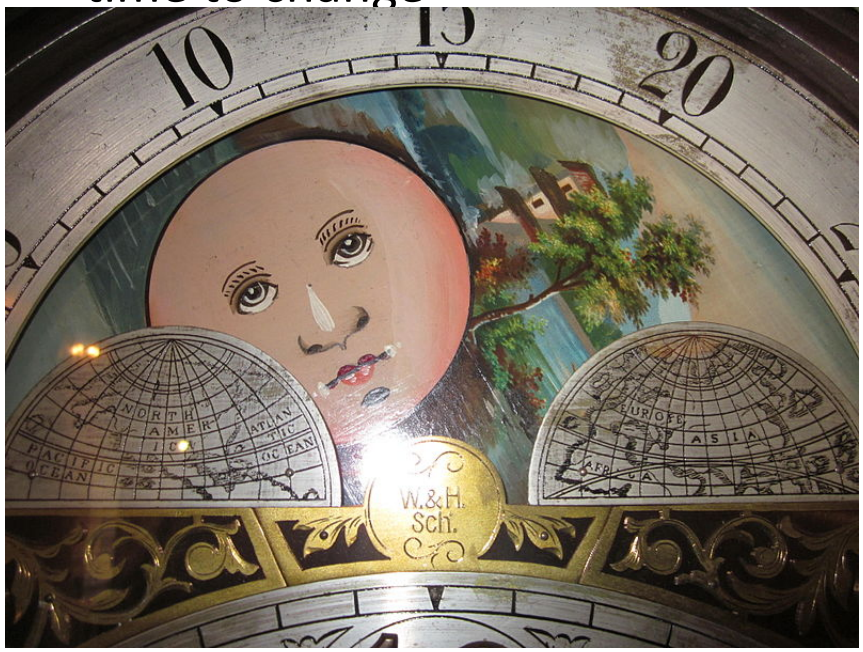
Feedback Loops are Hard to Overcome

- The Black was an industrial river
- Dominated by the Titans of Industry – Rail and Steel
- No Public Access
- No recreational uses
- No diversity of uses
- No champion

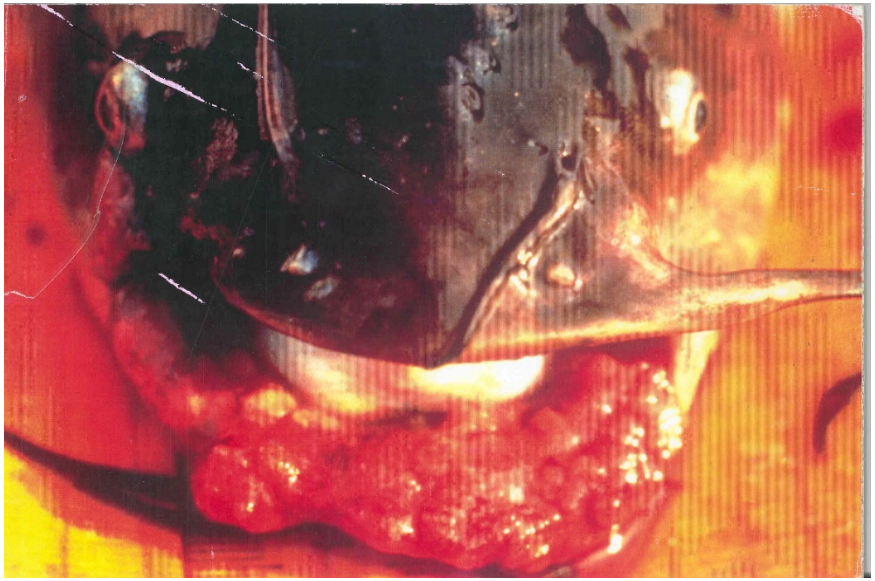


Time to Change – Where to Begin the Story

- Systems and Feedback loops take time to be established and time to change



- 1980 – Bullhead Catfish liver studies conducted (Houston, we have a problem!)



Waterfall of Bad News and Seeds of Hope planted

- Cascade of Data
  - 1982 OEPA Intensive Survey
  - 1983 –
    - Don't Touch the water
    - Don't Eat the Fish
    - Steel Mill Coking Plant Closes
  - 1984 – Declared an Area of Concern
  - 1984 –Bullhead Catfish Study
  - 1992 More Study of River and catfish
  - 1997- See 1992
  - 2011
    - Stage 2 Report completed
    - Fish sampling studies

- Seeds of Hope
  - 1984 Declared and Area of Concern
  - 1989 – Dredging of contaminated sediments
  - **1991 – Black River RAP formed**
  - 2002
    - We can touch the water
    - Fish tumors BUI revised to "In Recovery"
  - 2005 – Benthos delisted in the East Branch of Black River – 1st in US to remove any impairment
  - 2009 Lower Black River Ecological Restoration Master Plan
  - 2017 – Management Actions Letter approved by AOC
  - 2019 – Substantial completion of Management Actions scheduled

1991 #1 song – Bryan Adams – (Everything I Do) I Do It for You

Google Earth Image from 1994*

* #1 pop song from 1994 – Ace of Bass – The Sign

Champions for the Black and Why

- Black River RAP/AOC
- Lorain Port Authority
- Lorain County Health District
- City of Lorain
- Lorain County Commissioners
- Lorain County Metroparks
- LoCo Yaks
- Ohio EPA
- US EPA
- GLRI/GLNPO and Partner Agencies
- PEOPLE of Lorain

- ➢Kept the faith and clearinghouse
- ➢Partner - provided access
- ➢Acted as lead for decades
- ➢Kickstarted ecological plan
- ➢Developed Watershed Plan
- ➢Partner and investor
- ➢Facilitator/Educator/Engager
- ➢Funder/Technical Assistance
- ➢Funder/Technical Assistance
- ➢Radical change – Investor and Partner
- ➢Provider of inspiration and desire

We Are the Champions – by Queen – Ranked #25 in 1977

2002 – We can touch the Water

1994

2003

2003 #1 Pop song – Outkast – Hey Ya

2012 – First Fishing Tournament held
Cabela's Fishing Tournaments in 17 and 18

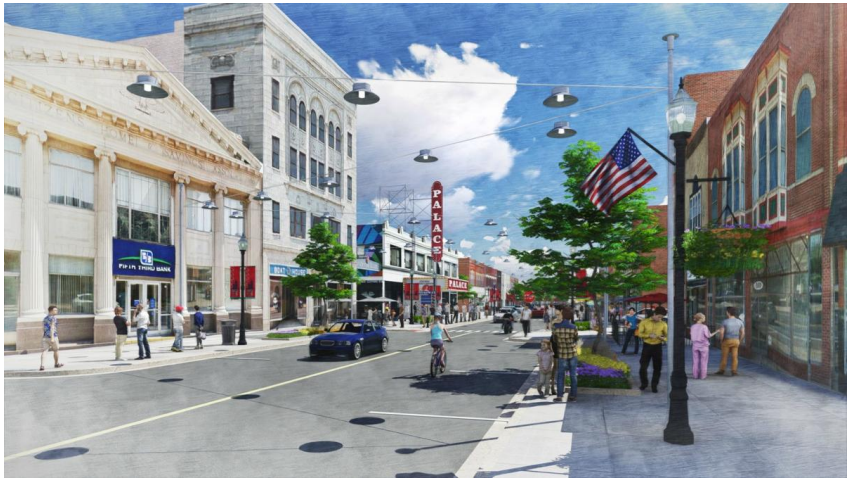
1994 Single use no access

1999-Boat Launch – First Public Access on the River

2012 #1 Song - Somebody That I Used to Know - Gotye featuring Kimbra

2018 – A Very Good Year

- New Hotel Renovation Announced
- Broadway Streetscape Announced
- First Black River Summit by AOC
- NAIOP / Opportunity Summit



2018 #1 Song – God’s Plan - Drake

2019 and Beyond

#1 Pop song 2019 – TBD – See You Next Year

CONTACTS

Black River AOC Advisory Committee

- **Chair - Donald Romancak, Director of Lorain County Community Development**
  Phone: (440) 328-2323
  Email: dromancak@loraincounty.us
- **Vice Chair - Tom Brown, Executive Director of Lorain Port Authority**
  Phone: (440) 204-2265
  Email: tbrown@lorainportauthority.com
- **Liaison - Kathryn Golden, Storm Water Manager for The City of Lorain Engineering Department**
  Phone: (440) 204-2003
  Email: Kathryn_Golden@cityoflorain.org
- **Facilitating Organization - LoCo 'Yaks**
  Phone: (419) 239-3779
  Email: lorainblackriveraocac@gmail.com