

RAP

March General Meeting

by Frank Barnett

In the early 1970s, my brother and I tried to develop film using straight Cuyahoga River water. He had heard of someone successfully doing that with some other river's water. Well, that river must have been conveniently polluted with the right chemicals, because our experiment produced only a blank strip of film.

The Cuyahoga has indeed become a lot cleaner since then, but there is still room for improvement. That is why a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was set up with the Ohio EPA. At the CWC meeting on November 16 and again on March 15, two members of the RAP spoke. (It makes a lot of sense for CWC to consider environmental problems. It amounts to preserving what has always been there, in addition to developing it.) Virginia Aveni is chairman of the Communications Committee for the Cuyahoga River RAP, and Bob Wysenski, of the Ohio EPA, is Coordinator of the RAP.

The need for RAPs was identified in 1985 by the Water Quality Board of the International Joint Commission. The Board is made up of representatives of eight Great Lakes states and the Province of Ontario. In Ohio there are also RAPs for the Maumee, Black, and Ashtabula rivers.

Most of the meeting consisted of a slide presentation. We were taken on a 100-

mile river bed journey from Geauga County, with its more serene stretches, right on through to its lower 40 miles, from the Ohio Edison dam in Akron to Lake Erie. One could see how very rural it is before Akron, like a different river entirely, and how much healthier it is.

What keeps it healthy is the very fact that it can remain more natural. Wysenski noted that water serenely tumbling over stones gets re-aerated. In the more industrial areas, the necessary dredging not only takes that quality away but also the invertebrates that fish eat to survive. These areas also require concrete banks which of course is that much less of a natural state. This altering of nature makes it harder to control, regardless of the junk that man dumps into it. Sewers overflowing into the river is also a problem and is expensive to control. But Ohio has been a leader in the studies that determine the health of water.

And no, the famous paradox of burning water, the 1969 Cuyahoga River fire that brought us national attention and Randy Newman singing "Burn on, big river, burn on", was not the first fire on the river. In 1936, floating debris and a spark

from a blow torch set off a fire that lasted for five days. And there were actually several more fires before 1969, when a 24-minute, too brief for anyone to even snap a picture of it, river fire added to Cleveland's infamy and accelerated cleanup efforts which had already begun. By 1972, the Ohio EPA was set up and Congress passed the Clean Water Act.

There were two or three slides of a scene which looked familiar though we may have forgotten about. At its worst, the river really was more than one color through the Flats as chemicals floated on its surface, including the appalling gold color of acids. That was when the best word to describe it was that non-word "Yuck!" So, the improvements are very encouraging.

There will be future workshops as the RAP starts its public outreach. Their 35-member coordinating committee includes CWC representation; Ellen Kowall, Executive Director and founding member Emeline Clawson.

We urge you to attend these vital workshops. See notice on page .

GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING

GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING

GENERAL
MEMBERSHIP
MEETING

Meeting Date Changed!

This meeting will be held in lieu of the
General Membership Meeting

When: May 22, 1990 (Tuesday) 7:00 p.m.

Where: Cleveland Convention Center
E. 9th & Euclid

Topic: Dike 14 Public Hearing

Who: Army Corps of Engineers (COE)

Plan to Attend! See article on page 2.