



Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

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Possible MORPC Position on SB1140 - WOTUS

1. Interested Party – Issue Statement from MORPC on SB1140:

Advocating for innovative and balanced strategies to maintain water quality and quantity, reduce pollution and protect health by working with government, agricultural community, universities, residents and business partners is a key priority for the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. We strive to implement this approach through thoughtful, collaborative planning and programs.

MORPC appreciates that the intent of the US Environmental Protection Agency's new rule, Waters of the United States (WOTUS), strives to protect water quality, better define terms and simplify the permit review process. Streams and wetlands are scientifically shown to have the greatest impact on downstream water quality and form a foundation to our nation's water resources.

MORPC works on behalf of our more than 60 local government and regional organization members to develop innovative and responsive public policies and legislation that will foster economic prosperity, enhance the quality of life, and secure a competitive advantage for Central Ohio.

On behalf of these local governments, MORPC wishes to express concerns regarding WOTUS and related efforts. Specifically, MORPC has some feedback regarding SB1140:

- SB1140 should stay focused on protecting our water quality and the original intent of WOTUS to better define terms while simplifying the permit review process.

- We appreciate that SB1140 specifically directs the US EPA to have more robust discussions with states and local governments and to seek their input and advice on approaches. We are key partners in our nation's efforts to implement Clean Water Act (CWA) programs and it is important for all levels of government to work together to form practical and workable rules and regulations that achieve our shared goals of protecting water resources, ensuring the safety of our communities, and minimizing unnecessary delays and costs.

- We agree that additional clarity and certainty in definitions of "waters of the U.S." will benefit local governments in implementing

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Executive Director

Eric S. Phillips
Chair

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Secretary

- CWA programs and reduce unnecessary costs.
- A change to the “waters of the U.S.” definition may have far-reaching and unintended consequences for all state and local CWA programs (including permitting), so we agree that additional economic consultation is necessary to fully understand the actual costs and impacts to development and transportation projects. The current permitting process is already cumbersome and time consuming. Many of our local government members struggle with receiving timely reviews on their designs, thus significantly delaying their projects. It is important that SB1140 direct the US EPA and Army Corps of Engineers to work closely with states and local governments in identifying ways to significantly streamline the permit application and review process.

Considerations for taking this position:

- MORPC has effectively influenced and engaged in federal and state legislation by taking an interested party position and developing a statement of positions that include both concerns and support for legislation (examples – federal transportation bills, HB130 -Data Bill, and MORPC’s original position on HB5 – Municipal Income Tax Uniformity).
- This position best represents the variety of support and concern with SB1140 and WOTUS among our local government and associate members as well as our community, agricultural, environmental and business stakeholders.
- Allows MORPC staff and legislative consultants to work across both aisles with our Congressional members and their staff to address our members’ concerns and comments. We can be a resource to our Congressional offices and provide opportunities for our local government members to give feedback and input.
- Taking an interested party position allows us to adjust our position as needed.

MORPC staff and legislative consultants will continue to educate and update the MORPC membership and committees on status of SB1140 and WOTUS.