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NEWS RELEASE

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East Branch of Black River Recognized for Water Quality Improvements

U.S. EPA's Great Lakes National Program Office has determined that benthic macro invertebrates, or the community of organisms that live all or part of their lives at the bottom of streams, have fully recovered in the East Branch of the Black River - an important indicator that water and habitat quality continue to improve.

After reviewing the latest benthos sampling results submitted by Ohio EPA and the Black River Remedial Action Plan (RAP) coordinating committee, U.S. EPA agreed to change the status of benthos in the East Branch sub-watershed from impaired to not impaired.

The remarkable recovery of benthos is proof that pollution control efforts are working in the East Branch of the Black River, which flows through Medina and Lorain counties. Improvements to Elyria's wastewater collection system and upgrades at the Grafton wastewater treatment plant are credited for the cleaner water.

While the Black River watershed still faces a number of impairments, the return of a healthy benthos population is expected to result in a better environment for fish.

U.S. EPA's announcement is welcome news to Ohio EPA and the 25 public and private partners that make up the Black River RAP coordinating committee. Together, the Agency and RAP members are taking on the remaining impairments by identifying pollution problems and implementing solutions. The long-term goal is full restoration and protection of water quality throughout the Black River watershed.

The International Joint Commission has identified 43 areas of concern around the Great Lakes where water quality is significantly degraded. The announcement that benthos in the East Branch is no longer considered impaired is the first delisting of any kind on the U.S. side of the Great Lakes.

More information on the Black River Remedial Action Plan and the delisting of benthos can be viewed online at: www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/rap/blackdocs.html.