

For Immediate Release
October 10, 2014

Dr. R. Peter Richards and City of Lorain Receive Ohio Lake Erie Awards

Dr. R. Peter Richards and the city of Lorain are the recipients of the 2014 Ohio Lake Erie Awards presented by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC). OLEC honors one person and one organization each year that have worked to protect and restore Lake Erie and its watershed. Since 1995, 19 individuals and organizations have been recognized for their stewardship.

“These award recipients have shown a great commitment to protecting and promoting Lake Erie and its watershed,” said Gail Hesse, executive director of OLEC. “We commend their efforts.”

Dr. R. Peter Richards is a senior research associate and former director of the National Water Quality Laboratory at Heidelberg University. Dr. Richards’ work has led to a greater understanding of the Lake Erie ecosystem and its watersheds. Dr. Richards investigated the relationship between the loading of phosphorus from the Maumee and Sandusky rivers and other tributaries and the formation of harmful algal blooms in the western basin of Lake Erie. His work also analyzed the development of hypoxia in the central basin. He played a key role in calculating binational lakewide loads of total and dissolved phosphorus to Lake Erie.

The city of Lorain has been a leader in environmental stewardship through its significant restoration accomplishments on the Lower Black River. The city and its partners have secured approximately \$14 million dollars to restore floodplain and riparian areas, remove slag and invasive species and establish fish habitat shelves. Post-project monitoring has demonstrated fish populations are recovering and wildlife is returning. As illustrated in the film “Bringing Back the Black River,” these restoration efforts are a critical step in bringing back the city of Lorain.

OLEC also administers Ohio’s Lake Erie Protection Fund, which was established to finance research and implementation projects aimed at protecting, preserving and restoring Lake Erie and its watershed. Grant projects have focused on an array of issues critical to the effective management of Lake Erie. The Fund is supported through tax-deductible donation

and through the purchase of a Lake Erie license plate displaying the Marblehead Lighthouse by Ohio artist Ben Richmond, or the Lake Erie life preserver.

OLEC was established for the purpose of preserving Lake Erie's natural resources, protecting the quality of its waters and ecosystem and promoting economic development in the region. The director of Ohio EPA serves as the commission's chairman. Additional members include the directors of the state departments of Transportation, Health, Development Services, Agriculture, Natural Resources and five additional members appointed by Governor John Kasich.

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