

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION
QUARTERLY MEETING
Ohio DNR – Wildlife District 1, Columbus, OH.
December 20, 2006

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order by Commission Chairman Sam Speck, Director; Ohio Department of Natural Resources at 10:30 a.m.

Roll Call:

Sam Speck, Commission Chairman; Director, Ohio Dept of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Tim Hill, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Joe Koncelik, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA)
Gene Phillips, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Michael Bailey, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)
Brad Biggs, Ohio Department of Development (ODOD)

Guests:

Russell Bimber, Retired Chemist formerly with Diamond Shamrock
Edith Chase, Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project (OCRMP)
Dr. Konrad Dabrowski, OSU
Bill Goodman, ODA
Edwin J. Hammett, Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
Ed Hauser, Friends of Whiskey Island
Kristy Meyer, Ohio Environmental Council
Xinong Niu, OSU
Dr. Jeffrey M. Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant College Program
Gene Wright, ODNR – Office of Coastal Management
Jill Woodyard, Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
Scott Zody, ODNR

COMMISSION BUSINESS

Chairman's Report

The Commission Chairman provided his report during the Commission Agency Reports.

Minutes

Motion was made by OEPA and seconded by ODOD to accept the September 6, 2006 meeting minutes as presented with no changes. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried.

2007 OLEC Meetings

A list of recommended quarterly meeting dates was presented for calendar year 2007: March 14; June 6; September 5; and December 12. Motion was made by ODA and seconded by OEPA to approve these meeting dates. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried. The location of the meetings will be determined at a later date.

Executive Committee Report

Scott Zody, Executive Committee Chairman; ODNR, presented the committee recommendations for selection of the 2007 Commission Chairman and Secretary. It was recommended that the chairmanship remain with ODNR and the position of secretary would remain with ODOT. Motion was made by OEPA and seconded by ODA to accept the Executive Committee's recommendations. All members were in favor and the motion carried.

It was further reported that the Technical Advisory Committee on Balanced Growth recently met on December 12 in Ashland, OH. The members were provided with an overview and update on the implementation of the Balanced Growth Program.

Grants Committee - Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF) Report **Small Grants Program**

Bill Goodman, Grants Committee Chairman; ODA, presented an overview of the Small Grants Program and Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF). The Fund is presently conducting a quarterly Small Grants Program with a maximum grant award of \$10,000 per project. The majority of the LEPF revenue is generated from the sales of two Lake Erie License Plates: the Marblehead Lighthouse Plate and the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse Plate both designed by Lake Erie Artist Ben Richmond. Each plate sale represents a \$15.00 donation to the LEPF which is used solely to award grants benefiting Lake Erie. The budgeted funds available during FY 2007 are: \$200,000 for the Small Grants Cycle; and \$100,000 for the Balanced Growth Program. The funding priorities include any projects that address: *Ohio's Lake Erie Action List ~ Great Lakes Regional Collaboration*; and the 84 strategic actions within the *Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan*. Applicants are asked to cite the strategic action their proposal will address and to work closely with state or other governmental agencies responsible for implementing the strategic action to assure the project is directly implementing the *Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan*.

The Grants Committee recommended funding six small grant projects for the second quarter of FY 2007 in the total amount of \$49,891. Motion was made by ODOT and seconded by ODH to accept the committee's recommendations. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried to approve the following six small grant projects:

- *"Influence of vitamin concentrations in eggs on survival of walleye embryos in Lake Erie"* awarded to The Ohio State University Research Foundation, Project Director: Dr. Konrad Dabrowski, in the amount of \$10,000.
- *"Predicting E. coli using turbidity at the Cuyahoga Valley National Park"* awarded to the U.S. Geological Survey, Project Director: Amie Brady, in the amount of \$10,000.
- *"TDR demonstration study and public forum"* awarded to Cleveland State University, Project Director: Kathryn Hexter, in the amount of \$9,999. This grant project will be funded from the Balanced Growth Funds in the LEPF.
- *"Trends in bioavailable phosphorus loading to Lake Erie"* awarded to Heidelberg College, Project Director: Dr. David B. Baker, in the amount of \$10,000.
- *"Yellow perch foraging on Hexagenia spp.: effects of hypoxia and Dreissena spp."* awarded to The University of Toledo – Lake Erie Center, Project Director: Dr. Christine Mayer, in the amount of \$9,891.
- *"Quantifying the role of mayflies in transfer of toxic materials in western Lake Erie basin"* awarded to BGSU, Project Director: Dr. John Farver, in the amount of \$10,000.

Special Funding Recommendation

The Grants Committee Chairman presented a special funding recommendation from members of both the Grants and Executive Committees for project entitled, *"Assessing the Role of Turbid River Plumes in the Development of Microcystis Blooms in Lake Erie with Molecular Techniques"* from The University of Toledo-Lake Erie Center. The objective of this project is to determine whether light and nutrient conditions inside the Maumee River plume act as an incubator of *Microcystis* blooms which may spread to other parts of the Lake. This research should help focus future efforts in preventing blooms. The total grant request is \$105,268 over a two-year period. This project was previously selected by Ohio Sea Grant through a rigorous, competitive process. The Grants and Executive Committee members have agreed that cooperative funding of this project both by Ohio Sea Grant and the LEPF would assure the project would get underway this spring. It was recommended that each organization split the cost, by funding one-half of the project each year.

Dr. Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant, emphasized their commitment and support and that due to future funding cuts, the project is in jeopardy of being funded. He further stated that co-funding of this project with the Commission would guarantee it would begin March 2007; and, could be a model

for co-funding future projects. Ed Hammett, OLEC, reported that a balance of \$148,452 is available today in the LEPF and that remaining funds for FY 2007 should not restrict funding of small grant projects based upon past project numbers. Motion was made by OEPA and seconded by ODOT to accept the committees' recommendation. The Commission voted all in favor and motion carried to approve the special funding recommendation.

Small Grant Cycle Timeline

The Grants Committee Chairman further reported on the application deadline dates for the small grant cycle in 2007 which allows for a six-week review period prior to each quarterly OLEC meeting based on today's approved meeting dates. The quarterly application dates for 2007 are: January 31; April 25; July 25 and October 31.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) Office Report

Ed Hammett, Executive Director of the OLEC Office, introduced new employee, Chris Riddle, Environmental Specialist, who will be working on many of the commission's projects and managing the LEPF.

Financial Update

Mr. Hammett presented a financial update on the commission's Lake Erie Resources Fund for operations. It is projected that revenue to support operations will continue from Ohio's annual state share from the Great Lakes Protection Fund - approximately \$250,000 to \$300,000 will be received this spring; and grants from the Office of Coastal Management supporting the implementation of the Balanced Growth Program.

Lake Erie License Plates Program

Mr. Hammett further reported on Lake Erie license plate sales revenue that supports the Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF) for grant projects. Since inception of the program, over \$8.0 million has been raised for grants. However, sales revenues continue to decline between 10-11% per year. Efforts have been made to stem the decline that includes releasing the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse Plate and distribution of promotional posters and flyers to deputy registrars and lake-related businesses along the shoreline. The office will continue to work on additional promotions, but will need to consider alternate revenue sources for the LEPF.

Proposed Biennial Budget SFY 2008-2009

The proposed biennial budget was presented for both the Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF) and Lake Erie Resources Fund (LERF) for SFY 2008-2009. Annual income of \$550,000 is anticipated for the LEPF representing \$350,000 per year in license plate sales and \$200,000 income contributed by grant funds from OWDA for the Balanced Growth Pilot Projects. This represents a biennial total of \$1,100,000 reflecting a 37% decrease from the previous biennial budget. The LERF for operations is budgeted at the same level as the previous biennium at \$492,794 per year for a biennium total of \$985,588. This budget would support five full-time employees, if there are sufficient revenues. Three income sources that support the proposed biennium budget are: (1) Great Lakes Protection Fund – Ohio's state share; (2) Grants that have been secured to support the Balanced Growth Program from the Office of Coastal Management; and (3) Member Agency contributions to support the Commission (contributions have been made in the past year.) Operation expenditures have been held below \$325,000 the past two years with revenues just over \$300,000 in FY 2006 and similar in FY 2007. A normal year for current staffing would be about \$375,000. This budget request also includes an amendment to language in the OLEC statute to allow Agency support for the Commission. Motion was made by OEPA and seconded by ODA to accept the biennial budget information as presented. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried.

Ed Hammett also reported on the recent State Audit that took place at the OLEC Office and that the auditing procedures found no material instances of noncompliance or reportable conditions of internal control. Audit comments were submitted in two areas: (1) sales tax was being charged

within the DSL computer billing charges by AT&T. This has been corrected; and (2) OLEC Office needs to keep a record of reconciliation on bills paid by OEPA's Fiscal Administration and revenue submitted. A method of reconciliation has been established.

Projects Update

Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program - Ed Hammett provided the following progress report on implementation of the Balanced Growth Program:

Pilot Projects

Three Watershed Planning Partnerships were chosen in September 2006 to receive approximately \$200,000 each in funding provided by the Ohio Water Development Authority. The pilot areas selected were: (1) Chagrin River - project managed by the Chagrin River Watershed Partners; (2) Upper West Branch of the Rocky River – project managed by the Medina County SWCD; and (3) Swan Creek – project managed by the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments. Also, the Cuyahoga River Planning Organization has received funding from the Office of Coastal Management to prepare a watershed plan for Chippewa Creek. This watershed affects the Cuyahoga National Park area. This watershed plan is being considered a fourth pilot project.

Best Local Land Use Practices

The OLEC Office contracted with Cleveland State University for Kirby Date to conduct awareness and technical sessions on Balanced Growth. To date, three general public awareness sessions took place across the Lake Erie basin on October 11, 18 and November 15, as well as a presentation at OEPA for brownfield redevelopment. Eight to ten technical sessions are scheduled for January 10, 17, 25 and 31 through March 2007. Community assistance will also be offered to ten communities in the use of the recommendations. These will take place April through June 2007. After the sessions take place, an evaluation will be conducted to make further recommendations how to proceed with this portion of the Balanced Growth Program. Also, the OLEC Office received approval that a grant for \$10,500 from the Giving Circle Group will be received for development of a DVD on the Best Local Land Use Practices.

Coastal Protection Section

This section includes three models: (1) Surface Water Management; (2) Meadow Protection; and (3) Coastal Protection – this model is not complete. This will be completed in 2007.

A group of local officials and interested parties will be convened to draft model local coastal protection regulations that will be recommended to local governments. The group will be asked to develop a model that incorporates shoreline land-use decisions into local zoning and subdivision regulations compatible with existing state law. This model will be recommended to local governments for voluntary adoption. Funding has been secured from ODNR's Office of Coastal Management.

Balanced Growth Indicators

In January 2005, approximately 70 individuals from local, state, regional, federal and academic areas participated in a roundtable meeting for purposes of developing a suite of indicators to measure the future progress on balanced growth. These indicators will help to establish a baseline of information and monitor changes as the program is implemented. The three indicator categories are: (1) programmatic accomplishments; (2) land use changes; and (3) water quality improvements. Funding has been secured from the Office of Coastal Management to begin the process of implementing these indicators in the first half of 2007.

Balanced Growth Funding Support

Mr. Hammett further reported that \$1.2 million has been contributed to support the Balanced Growth Program which includes: (1) \$200,000 from the Lake Erie Protection Fund; (2) \$600,000 from the Ohio Water Development Authority (pilot projects); (3) \$140,000 in Coastal Management Grants; and (4) \$274,000 from The Joyce Foundation awarded to EcoCity Cleveland. And, as stated earlier, \$10,500 from the Giving Circle Group.

Mr. Hammett answered questions about how to involve local officials in the watershed planning process. It is required that 75% of local governments must approve the planning process and, again, 75% in the implementation. In order for the watershed plans to work, each pilot project must be talking to and working closely with their local governments. Development of the DVD on Best Local Land Use Practices will help to further explain the projects to local governments

Public Outreach

Coastweeks 2006

This year's program took place September 11–24 in which special emphasis was placed on cleanup events along the shoreline with sponsorship provided by The Ocean Conservancy. Ten cleanup events took place with 940 volunteers cleaning almost 40 miles of shoreline and removing 28,449 pounds of trash. Coastweeks 2007 will kick off September 5 and will run through September 22, 2007. These dates will include Put-In-Bay's Historical Weekend activities and Underwater Cleanup at the Put-In-Bay Harbor of which OLEC is a sponsor.

2007 Ohio Lake Erie Awards

OLEC established this award in 1995 to honor Ohio's citizens and organizations who have made outstanding contributions to enhance our Great Lake. Each year the Commission chooses a qualified individual and organization based on nominations from member agencies and collaborative partners. Nomination forms will be available at the Commission website. Deadline for nominations is July 19, 2007.

"Life on Lake Erie" Photo Contest

The 2007 contest is being announced again this year. Lake Erie photos taken between August 4, 2006 and July 9, 2007 are eligible. Deadline for entries is July 19, 2007. Entry forms will be able from the OLEC Office. The 2007 winning images will be announced at the OLEC Annual Meeting in September. You can visit the 2006 "*Judges' Favorites*" online at the OLEC website. The Lake Erie Photo Gallery is currently on tour for two months at the Ottawa County Visitors Bureau ~ Lake Erie Regional Welcome Center. The photo gallery will continue to tour the shoreline at various locations in 2007.

Next Quarterly OLEC Meeting - The next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2007 in Columbus.

Invited Report

GLRRIN

Dr. Jeffrey M. Reutter, Executive Director of the Ohio Sea Grant College Program, presented a report on the Great Lakes Regional Research and Information Network (GLRRIN) which is an informal network that is being led by a bi-national team of Sea Grant, university and federal researchers through a grant from the National Sea Grant Program. GLRRIN seeks to promote enhanced information exchange and coordination between Great Lakes researchers, universities and federal, state/provincial and other agencies that have Great Lakes research priorities and budgets. A model will be expanded for each of the Great Lakes for coordinating research and information.

Great Lakes Regional Collaboration ~ Ohio's Lake Erie Action List

Joe Koncelik, Director; OEPA, reported on the efforts of *Ohio's Lake Erie Action List* which was released in September 2006 at the Commission's Lake Erie Conference. The *Action List* identifies Ohio's commitment to protect and restore Lake Erie through a prioritized list of activities and actions during a two-year time period (2006–2007) in conjunction with the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration*. *Ohio's Lake Erie Action List* demonstrates the state's proactive initiative to move forward on Great Lakes restoration. It has been favorably received nationally and Ohio has been recognized as the first in the region to take this leadership role in helping to attract federal dollars into the Great Lakes. It was further stated that the Lake Erie Commission provides a critical role in this effort being an umbrella to provide oversight on what is being done by Ohio, by working with each agency director, and providing a mechanism to track programs for Great Lakes restoration.

Great Lakes Compact

Sam Speck, Director; ODNR, provided an update on the Great Lakes Compact which is presently before a number of legislatures throughout the Great Lakes. The Compact is an important safeguard against water diversion that sets the standard for management of the Great Lakes. The state legislatures need to ratify the Compact so that it will become state and federal law. In Ohio, the Compact recently passed one chamber with an 82 to 5 vote in Ohio's House. The next step will be for the document to go before the Senate.

Agency Reports

Brad Biggs, ODOD; Michael Bailey, ODA; Joe Koncelik, OEPA; and Tim Hill, ODOT, thanked the Commission Chairman and all the members for the opportunity to work with them during this administration. The members recognized the Commission Chairman for his outstanding work on behalf of Lake Erie and commission programs.

Advisory Committee Reports

Edith Chase, President of OCRMP, thanked the Commission Chairman and members for all their work and moving forward with Lake Erie issues, and to continue working towards funding of the carp barrier.

Dr. Jeffrey M. Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant College Program, announced that Melinda Huntley, Executive Director of Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, has been hired as a new extension agent to serve as tourism coordinator and to enhance education and outreach .

Steve Davis, NRCS, provided an update on the Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership and announced that a new GIS web-based program is available through The University of Toledo's web viewer on watershed maps.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Russell Bimber, retired chemist from Diamond Shamrock, distributed written comments to the Commission members on a project regarding 1,550 feet of Lake Erie shoreline between a one acre hazardous chemical waste landfill and the Harbor Town Point Marina.

Ed Hauser. Friends of Whiskey Island, provided written comments to the Commission members on the status of Whiskey Island's coastal resources. He further presented a listing of Coastal Management's policies that relate to Whiskey Island.

Kristy Meyer, Ohio Environmental Council, thanked Directors Sam Speck and Joe Koncelik, and Executive Director Ed Hammett for their work on the Lake Erie Commission. It was also announced that a grant was received from USDA for a LaMP meeting to be held next May in Toledo, and the OEC luncheon will be held on January 29 at ODOT.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by OEPA, seconded by ODA, all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
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