

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION (OLEC) MEETING
Horace R. Collins Laboratory ~ Alum Creek State Park
March 10, 2010

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order by Commission Chairman Sean Logan, Director; Ohio Department of Natural Resources at 10:08 a.m.

Commission Roll Call:

Sean Logan, Director; Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Commission Chairman;
Robert Boggs, Director; Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA);
Chris Korleski, Director; Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA);
Tim Hill, Director's Designee; Ohio Dept. of Transportation (ODOT/Commission Secretary);
William Murdock, Director's Designee; Ohio Department of Development (ODOD); and
Gene Phillips, Director's Designee; Ohio Department of Health (ODH.)

Chairman's Report

The Commission Chairman welcomed the meeting attendees to the Collins Laboratory and invited the guests to tour the facility that houses Ohio's Earthquake information Center and is part of the seismic network throughout Ohio. After an overview of the agenda topics, it was reported that 36 projects totaling \$22M were submitted by state agencies to USEPA for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) with over 117 projects being submitted from Ohio. It was further reported that Governor Strickland has recently become the co-chair of the Council of Great Lakes Governors.

BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes

The Commission members approved the December 16, 2009 quarterly minutes from the Lake Erie Commission meeting held at the Ohio Department of Transportation. Motion was made by OEPA, seconded by ODA to approve the minutes as presented. The commission members voted all in favor and the motion carried to approve the minutes with no changes.

Executive Committee Report

Cathryn Loucas, Executive Committee Chair, reported on the recent meeting of the Executive Committee and the members' discussion of Ohio's involvement with the GLRI. The chair thanked and acknowledged the Commission staff and their efforts for Ohio projects submitted to the GLRI. USEPA has reported that over 1,000 projects have been submitted from the Great Lakes region with over \$942M requested from this first USEPA RFP. It was further reported that Governor Strickland prepared a letter to support each Ohio project stating the GLRI would allow the state to conduct more ambitious projects and enable Ohio to achieve a balance between the use of Lake Erie and its preservation.

Grants Committee Report – Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF)

Small Grants Program

Julie Letterhos, OEPA, presented the Grants Committee funding recommendation for one small grant project submitted third quarter of State Fiscal Year 2010 in the total amount of \$14,707. Motion was made by OEPA and seconded by ODOT to fund the project. The commission members voted all in favor and motion carried to approve the following small grant project:

- Cleveland State University for project entitled, "*Protecting mussel habitat on Lake Erie's Coast*", Dr. Robert A. Krebs, Project Director in the amount of \$14,707.

Proposal dates were reviewed for upcoming deadlines for future quarterly applications. The next application deadline is April 22, 2010 which allows a six-week review period prior to the next quarterly Commission meeting of June 23, 2010.

INVITED REPORTS

Summary Results of Phosphorus Research Forum

Dr. Jeffrey M. Reutter, Director; Ohio Sea Grant College Program, presented the results from the Phosphorus Research Forum held February 11-12, 2010, hosted by the LEMN (Lake Erie Millennium Network) at the University of Toledo's Lake Erie Center. The purpose of the forum was to look at the phosphorus issue which is a greater problem for Lake Erie compared to the other Great Lakes. The program allowed research scientists to share their preliminary results, hold informal discussions about the results and their management implications, while developing a list of research priorities. Besides the research community, there were over 55 participants which included the IJC, LaMP, WLEB Partnership, Ohio Phosphorus Task Force, LEMN and the Council of Great Lakes Research Managers. The forum produced key points from the discussions among these points were: Managers should focus on bio-available phosphorus (P), not total P; P limitation of algae may be decreasing; high nitrogen levels may be pushing algae away from *Anabaena* and *Aphanizomenon* and toward *Microcystis*; increased turbidity from the Maumee River sediment is advantageous to harmful algal blooms (*Microcystis*); *Microcystis* is found in sediment prior to bloom and sediments may be acting as a source; and reducing phosphorus loads should still be the goal. If P is reduced, nitrogen will also be reduced. It has been found that for most counties in Ohio, soil test P levels have declined but in Mercer County they are excessively high. Dr. Reutter reported that there will be more results and more data collected in April and will be analyzed through grant projects, including those funded through the LEPF, and conducted by Dr. David Culver, OSU, Dr. Tom Bridgeman, UT-Lake Erie Center and Heidelberg College. It is hopeful that there will be answers about how much of the algal bloom is being loaded by sediment. Sediment is some of the source, but it is unclear how significant it is.

Update on Phosphorus Task Force Report

Gail Hesse, Environmental Manager; Ohio EPA, provided an update on the findings of Ohio's Phosphorus Task Force which was originally convened by Ohio EPA to review data regarding current conditions in Lake Erie. The Task Force has analyzed the relationship between increases in soluble reactive phosphorus levels and increases in algal blooms. The initial findings show that soil nutrient interactions are key to understanding the nutrient movement. Soil phosphorus naturally fluctuates between dissolved and solid forms with soils in the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers being unique and also include nitrogen that may be affecting the algal blooms. Point source findings show that they have remained relatively consistent, lawn care can have a localized impact, and zebra mussels have altered phosphorus cycling, but to what extent is unknown. Findings show that we need to manage phosphorus inputs. Agriculture trends show that overall nutrient inputs such as biosolids, animal manure and commercial fertilizer are down. The Task Force recommendations include increasing frequency of soil testing, update screening tools that account for agronomic needs and environmental risk, link soil test results to fertilizer recommendations and link the recommendations to applications. Recommendations also focus on "Priority Practices" for nutrient management, using innovative approaches to sell these practices, pursue the research agenda "field to stream to nearshore to in-lake", and review new information, monitor progress and course correct as necessary. Research projects funded by the Lake Erie Commission, USEPA and other projects of from the LEMN are ongoing efforts that will help keep the Task Force informed. The web address for the Phosphorus Task Force information is www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission ~ Office Report

Ed Hammett, OLEC, presented the Commission Office Report for the following projects and programs: Balanced Growth Program – two significant aspects of Balanced Growth have taken place during this part quarter for Best Local Land Use Practices (BLLUP) and Watershed Planning. Since the last technical sessions were held in 2008 and 2009, individuals were asking for more technical information, so case study workshops have been developed and will be offered May 4, 5, 12 and 13, particularly for

engineers, surveyors, planners and landscape architects. The Balanced Growth website at <http://balancedgrowth.ohio.gov> has gone statewide and also includes the BLLUP documents, issues, guidance and recommendations. Additional watershed planning projects have been funded expanding the program both in the Lake Erie watershed and the Ohio River Basin which includes Eastern Lake County, Cuyahoga County – Furnace Run, Medina County – Upper Chippewa Creek, Clermont County – Middle East Fork, Trumbull County – Lower Mosquito Creek and the Olentangy River watershed. And the Balanced Growth documents are being updated by the State Assistance Work Group who are working on updating the Balanced Growth Strategy document and the incentives contained in the Inventory of State Programs.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) – Chris Riddle, OLEC, presented an overview on projects submitted to the GLRI. Over 1,048 projects were received by USEPA totaling over \$942M with decisions expected between April and June 2010. Updates can be found at <http://greatlakesrestoration.us/> The Ohio agencies participating included ODA, ODH, ODNR, OEPA and OLEC. Proposals were submitted under the categories of Toxics & Areas of Concern, Invasive Species, Nearshore Health & Nonpoint Source Pollution, Habitat & Wildlife Protection, Accountability, Monitoring, Evaluation, Communication and Partnerships. Other RFP's responded to included: USFWS - removal of the Ballville Dam (ODNR - \$2M request), USDA Forest Service – restoration of riparian forests in rural settings (ODNR \$500K), NOAA – NERRS Science Collaboration with other RFP's are pending for release this spring.

Ohio's Coastweeks (CW) Program – Coastweeks 2010 will be held Saturday, September 25 on International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) day which will mark the 25th anniversary of the ICC program. Ohio's CW program will focus on cleanups in the Lake Erie watershed. Event planning forms will be available later in March to organize a cleanup by contacting the Commission Office or by going to the website for your form at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov> CW emphasizes public awareness of the value and fragility of Lake Erie and its watershed.

Ohio Lake Erie Awards – A call for nominations has been released for this year's recipients of the 2010 Ohio Lake Erie Award. Deadline for name nominations is July 16, 2010 in which one individual and one organization are recognized each year for devoting their life's work to the environmental stewardship of Ohio's Great Lake. Nomination forms are available by contacting the Commission Office or by going to the website for the form.

"Life on Lake Erie" Photo Contest – The 2010 contest is getting underway this month. Photos taken between July 9, 2009 and July 9, 2010 are eligible. Contest ends July 16, 2010 with winners being announced at the September 22 OLEC meeting. Contest flyers will be available at the Commission Office or by visiting the website at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov> The winning images are featured in the Commission's Photo Gallery which tours the shoreline and is currently on display at the Huron Public Library for Earth Week during March and April 2010. These images serve as Ohio's Lake Erie Photo Library and are online at the Commission's website for promotion of Lake Erie through educational, informational and environmental publications.

The next quarterly OLEC Meeting will take place June 23, 2010 at the University of Toledo's Lake Erie Center.

Agency Reports

Director Boggs, ODA, reported that it is AG week across the country. Akron/Summit County Food Center will focus on getting more fresh foods to those in need. The Ohio Neighborhood Harvest is a new program recently announced by Governor Strickland in 2010 and is a statewide effort to ensure that Ohioans in every neighborhood have access to locally-grown, healthy food.

William Murdock, ODOD, introduced new employee, Erin Hazelton, who will be helping with Lake Erie issues and Balanced Growth. The new census form coming out is a major effort and involvement for the agency; and as part of the federal stimulus program on March 26 their appliance rebate program will begin to help with purchases of higher, more energy efficient appliances.

Gene Phillips, ODH, announced the agency is preparing for this year's beach season and will be putting out RFP's for beach grants and sampling and information programs. The agency is moving forward with sewage legislation and hopes to see something this July.

Director Logan, ODNR, reported on Great Lakes Days in Washington, D.C. and the focus on the Asian Carp issue wherein the eight Great Lakes states met on February 23 to discuss the potential long-term agreement for permanent separation of basins. The USACE will study how to do the permanent ecological separation from Indiana to Chicago's drinking water intake. The Great Lakes Compact Advisory Board also met last week and led the way with recommendations for greater information for the private sector. Kristy Meyer, OEC, was recognized for her work as well as Mike Angle's work at ODNR's Geo. Survey and Coastal Management for developing 600 map frames of the coastline showing where coastal erosion is taking place.

Tim Hill, ODOT, introduced Mark Locker who is the agency's new administrator for the Office of Maritime in Columbus. Mr. Locker provided an update on their projects related to Lake Erie which included the ferry boat stimulus project on Middle Bass Island which is an important, economic project providing for a better dock and terminal building for goods movement out to the island. The design elements being used in the dock construction will ensure future habitat protection. The agency has also partnered with ODNR, Great Lakes towing service vessels and the USCG to work on maintenance of vehicles in the Great Lakes system without having to leave the area.

Director Korleski, OEPA, reported on ARRA stimulus dollars which included Clean Water SRF Programs with \$280M received from the federal government and placed in contracts in one year. Ohio is proud that 274-320 projects are out the door. Villages will now have drinking water that they never had before.

Advisory Committee Reports

Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project (OCRMP). In lieu of not being able to attend the meeting, Lynn Garrity, President of OCRMP, provided written comments to the Commission members encouraging the State to continue providing tools to communities on best practices for coastal properties, and continue to work toward supporting research and resources to find and remediate sources that continue to inhibit fish consumption in Lake Erie. It was also reported that OCRMP's next newsletter will be a digital release in April and their new website will be launched spring 2010 and will provide links to all resources available on Lake Erie coastal issues.

Dr. Jeffrey M. Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant College Program, reported that the Lake Erie Millennium Network Conference will be held in April with plans for Legislature Day at Cedar Point to take place July 16, 2010. It was also reported that NOAA has selected a new marine coordinator, Sarah Opfer, who will be located at Stone Lab and during the winter will be at the Ottawa County Extension Office in Oak Harbor, OH. Scholarship awards will begin next week which are fully funded endowments and are all private collected monies. Work weekend for volunteers at Stone Lab will be held April 16-18, 2010. Tory Gabriel will be leading that program.

Cheryl Rice, NRCS, reported on the planning process in launching dollars that NRCS will be responsible for related to funding GLRI projects. The next Western Lake Erie Basin meeting will be held April 14 at Toledo Botanical Gardens.

Mary Wells, NOACA, reported on the Toledo Harbor Dredge Summit held in February. In 2009, NOACA helped with developing the lower Black River master plan and collaborated with the Rocky River Watershed Council. CRCPO to Chippewa Creek and the Balanced Growth Initiative plans will all assist in this effort.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Sandy Bihn, Executive Director of the Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper Association, provided comments on possible actions to help reduce algae growth in Lake Erie and increase the number of fish in the western basin of Lake Erie. A copy of a letter sent to Governor Strickland (dated March 10, 2010) was submitted to the Commission members addressing two issues: (1) Near Shore Dumping wherein the USACE is seeking a permit to dump 1.35M cubic yards of dredged material about two

miles past the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse; and (2) Fish Kills at the Bayshore Power Plant wherein the Bayshore/First Energy Plant is being asked to temporarily shut down three of its four units during spawning season to help reduce fish kills in the western basin of Lake Erie.

Kristy Meyer, Ohio Environmental Council (OEC), inquired how the new Balanced Growth Watershed Planning Projects in the Ohio River Basin were funded. Gail Hesse, OEPA, responded that the Ohio Water Development Authority provided the funding. Another question was asked how zebra mussels affect total phosphorus. Dr. Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant, responded that zebra mussels take in algae/plankton and then release it as pseudofeces with no net change.

Meeting Guests:

Mike Angle, ODNR; Sandy Bihn, Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper Assn.; Dick Bartz, USGS; Johnnie Freeman, Miami Valley RC&D; Ed Hammett, OLEC; Erin Hazelton, ODOD; Gail Hesse, OEPA; Roger Knight, ODNR; I-Chiech Lee, OSU; Ernie Liu, OSU; Julie Letterhos, OEPA; Mark Locker, ODOT-Office of Maritime; Kristy Meyer, OEC; Greg Nageotte, ODNR; Cheryl Rice, USDA-NRCS; Chris Riddle, OLEC; Rachel Tarbee, Lawhon & Assoc.; Krista Wagner, Lawhon & Assoc.; and Jill Woodyard, OLEC.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

*Prepared by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
on behalf of the Commission Secretary*