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For Immediate Release

August 25, 2006

CONFERENCE ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, TO FOCUS ON LAKE ERIE ACTION LIST

TOLEDO, OH – An all-day conference on Thursday, September 7, in Elyria, will feature the release of the Lake Erie Action List, Ohio's near-term actions to implement the recommendations for the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes, according to the Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

The conference, entitled Lake Erie Protection & Restoration: Our Achievements – Our Challenges, will begin at 9 a.m. at Lorain County Community College , 1005 Abbe Road North , Elyria . A \$30 per person registration fee includes a continental breakfast, lunch, break refreshments, conference materials and parking. Registration deadline is August 31.

Ohio 's Lake Erie Action List represents Ohio 's strong commitment to the Regional Collaboration Strategy, which was developed by more than 1,500 stakeholders from throughout the Great Lakes . The Action List represents the most important steps that Ohio is taking to restore our great Lake Erie .

In addition, the commission will release a progress report on its own Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan, a long-term strategy for accomplishing the environmental, recreational and economic goals necessary to restore and sustain the lake and its watershed as Ohio 's most valuable natural resource. Governor Bob Taft unveiled the plan in 2000.

The conference will also include sessions with Lake Erie experts discussing invasive species, toxic algae, fishery and beach issues, recreation and tourism, habitat protection and restoration, as well as updates from project leaders on the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Initiative. Poster sessions and display tables will offer the opportunity to talk with more Lake Erie experts.

During the noon luncheon, the 2006 Lake Erie Awards will be presented to an individual and group that have made exceptional contributions to Lake Erie stewardship. The Lake Erie Ambassador Awards will also be presented.

Overnight accommodations for the conference are available at area hotels: Holiday Inn, 1825 Lorain Boulevard ; Country Inn & Suites, 645 Griswold Rd. ; Marriott Courtyard , 25050 Sperry Drive.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission is comprised of the directors of the Ohio DNR and Ohio EPA, as well as the departments of Transportation, Development, Health and Agriculture. It 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.

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The commission also oversees the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund, which is the source of grant money for projects that benefit the Lake Erie watershed economically and environmentally. This fund is supported by Ohioans who purchase a Lake Erie license plate displaying the Marblehead Lighthouse or Toledo Harbor Lighthouse designed by Ohio artist Ben Richmond.

During the last 13 years, the commission has raised more than \$8 million through the sale of Lake Erie license plates. The money has gone to a wide range of efforts to preserve and enhance life along Lake Erie .

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