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**For Immediate Release**

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## **OLEC Funds Projects to Promote Regional Collaboration, Advance Research on New Technologies**

**TOLEDO, OH** – The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) will provide grants for four studies that will enhance regional collaboration, study environmental concerns along the lake and provide educational resources for those in the watershed.

On June 3, OLEC members approved the latest round of Lake Erie Protection Fund small grants. The grants fund a variety of projects that provide direct benefit to Lake Erie and its tributary watershed in Ohio. The fund is supported by Ohioans through the purchase of the “Erie...Our Great Lake” license plates that display the Marblehead Lighthouse, or renewal of the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse plates as designed by noted Lake Erie artist Ben Richmond. Fifteen dollars from the sale of each plate is invested in the Lake Erie Protection Fund grants program.

**GreenCityBlueLake Institute at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History** will receive \$15,000 for a project to help design a process by which planning agencies in the region can work with local elected officials to explore ways to collaborate on land-use planning and economic development to enhance the Lake Erie watershed.

**The University of Akron** will receive \$15,000 for a project in which researchers will construct and test-deploy a Sensobuoy in Lake Erie. A Sensobuoy is a sensor platform designed for long-term, unattended monitoring of the depletion of dissolved oxygen. This is a severe, recurring environmental problem in Lake Erie and its exact causes and development patterns are not completely understood. The project which will be partnership between The University of Akron and Kent State University, will monitor the long-term trends in near-shore water quality.

**Kent State University** will receive \$15,000 for a project aimed at identifying naturally occurring heterotrophic bacterial species that can actively remove microcystins from open waters. The findings will serve as the basis for development of management tools, that could ultimately be used to remediate the effects of harmful algal blooms (HABs) in drinking water supplies.

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**Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc.** will received \$14,900 for a project that will develop high quality web resources that link specific community issues to nonpoint source, storm water management, watershed planning, balanced growth, sustainability, regional and community events. The grant will create a Northeast Ohio Clean Water Portal to update CRWP and the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District web sites, provide assistance to individual communities to update their web sites with information and resource links and develop a survey to access the effectiveness of the web resources as educational tools.

The Lake Erie Protection Fund was established to help finance research and implementation projects aim at projecting and preserving Lake Erie and its watershed.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission 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 the Ohio Department of Natural Resources serves as the commission's chairman. Additional members include the directors of the state departments of Transportation, Health, Development, Agriculture and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

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