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OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION FUNDS RESEARCH ON LAKE ERIE WATER QUALITY, BIODIVERSITY

TOLEDO, OH - The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) will provide grants for three studies that will investigate water quality issues and biological diversity in Lake Erie and its watershed.

On September 28, 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 watersheds in Ohio. The fund is supported by Ohioans through the purchase of the "Erie...Our Greta Lake" license plates that displays the Marblehead Lighthouse, or renewal of the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse plate 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.

The Ohio State University, College of Public Health will receive \$14,997 for a project that will address two key issues in current beach quality monitoring: identification of better fecal indicators and development of rapid methods of testing. Researchers will investigate the significance of Bacteroides as a new fecal indicator in Lake Erie beach water, will do a comparison of its relationship with the current fecal indicator, E.coli, and develop rapid testing method.

University of Toledo, Department of Environmental Sciences will receive \$14,947 for a project that will: (1) characterize the demographics of existing mussel communities to provide important baseline data and fill in data gaps for the status of vulnerable species in the Lake Erie watershed; (2) characterize the habitat where diverse assemblages of freshwater mussels still occur to identify and protect important Lake Erie basin habitats; (3) quantitatively measure streambed parameters and stream channel parameters; (4) analyze the influence of these parameters on species abundance and distribution; and (5) investigate and develop unionid index of biotic integrity for western Lake Erie basin tributaries that can be used to evaluate beneficial use impairment.

University of Toledo, Lake Erie Center will receive \$15,000 for a project that will allow researchers to test possible mechanisms by which Dreissena may promote the growth of benthic algae and encourage blooms of nuisance algae. Existing experimental data show a small but statistically significant increase in photosynthetic rate of algae growing on Dreissena-colonized rocks, in both high and low light. Dreissena likely produce a limiting resource to benthic algae and thereby interact with available abiotic resources such as phosphorus level to influence the occurrence of algal blooms. Researches propose to test several mechanisms by which Dreissena may increase the growth of algae.

The Lake Erie Protection Fund was established to help finance research and implementation of projects aimed at protecting and preserving Lake Erie and its watershed.

The Lake Erie Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer

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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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