

For Immediate Release
July 11, 2013

Lake Erie License Plate Proceeds Fund Projects within the Watershed

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) awarded quarterly grants through Ohio's Lake Erie Protection Fund at its June meeting in Sandusky. The fund was established to help finance research and on-the-ground projects aimed at protecting, preserving and restoring Lake Erie and its watershed. It is supported by Ohioans who purchase a Lake Erie license plate displaying the Marblehead Lighthouse by Ohio artist Ben Richmond, and the new Lake Erie life ring license plate.

Grants were awarded to:

- **Kent State University** – \$15,000 to investigate microcystin-degrading bacteria. Microcystin is a toxin associated with harmful algal blooms (HABs). This project will study the natural processes that lead to microcystin degradation. It will provide a comprehensive view of microcystin turnover in Lake Erie and potentially aid in developing biofilters and other approaches for microcystin bioremediation solutions to HABs.
- **Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center** – \$14,785 to create a green space in an urban neighborhood in Toledo. This project will use six vacant parcels to create a green space near the building site of proposed new housing. A soil recipe using dredged materials will be developed for use in the green space. This project may identify a beneficial use of dredged material, demonstrate methods for reducing mowing costs of vacant parcels throughout the city and promote storm water retention through soil restoration.
- **The University of Toledo** – \$11,835 to study the impacts of urban river restoration in the Ottawa River. A project designed to test the effect of in-stream habitat structures on the fish community of the Ottawa River within the Maumee Area of Concern will be completed. This project takes advantage of ongoing river restoration on the University of Toledo campus. It will address the post-installation phase with the overall goal of identifying differences in the fish community before and after installation to validate the effectiveness of the restoration project.
- **Crawford Soil & Water Conservation District** – \$15,000 to complete a storm water runoff reduction project in the city of Bucyrus. The aim of this project is to focus on three water quality issues associated with storm water runoff into the Sandusky River: reducing storm water quantity, reducing nutrient loads and educating the public on the importance of storm water management. The applicant will provide a cost share to install up to 20 rain gardens within city limits.
- **Friends of Big Creek** – \$15,000 to continue a storm water retrofit implementation project in the Big Creek watershed in Cuyahoga County. The goal of this project is to reduce storm water runoff volume, reduce the storm water peak flow rate and improve overall water quality. Field surveys for 20 to 40 potential storm water retrofit sites and development of preliminary design work for at least four storm water retrofit projects will be completed. This project furthers implementation of its endorsed Balanced Growth Watershed Plan.

Citizens wishing to help fund projects that protect and restore Lake Erie and its watershed can send a donation directly to OLEC's office at 111 E. Shoreline Drive, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. All donations and proceeds from the sale of the Lake Erie license plates are used to fund grants to benefit Ohio's Great Lake.

OLEC was established to preserve Lake Erie's natural resources, protect the quality of its waters and ecosystem and promote economic development in the region. The director of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) serves as the commission's chairman. Additional members include the directors of the state departments of Transportation, Health, Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources.

For more information on the Lake Erie Protection Fund, or to read about past grant projects, visit: <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov/>.

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