

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING
The City of Mentor ~ Mentor Beach Park Pavilion
June 7, 2006

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

Roll Call:

Sam Speck, Commission Chairman; Director, Ohio Dept of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Cash Misel, Commission Secretary; Assistant Director, Ohio Depart of Transportation (ODOT)
Bill Skowronski, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA)
Gene Phillips, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Bill Goodman, Ohio Dept. of Agriculture (ODA)

Guests:

Matt Adkins, ODNR – Division of Soil & Water
Mark Cain, Eastlake Port Authority
Edith Chase, Ohio Coastal Resource Management Project (OCRMP)
Steve Davis, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Dan Donaldson, Lake County SWCD
Jeff Frischkorn, The New-Herald
George Hadden, LCSMD
Edwin J. Hammett, Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
Steve Holland, ODNR – Office of Coastal Management
Amy Holsthouse, Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc.
John Hoornbeek, Kent State University-Center for Public Admin.
Evelyn Kiffmeyer, citizen
Rachel Klimentov, Ottawa County Visitors Bureau
John Konrad, City of Mentor
Frank Lichtkoppler, Ohio Sea Grant
George Maier, Mentor City Council
Christine Masach, citizen
Bill Merrill, Citizen
John Niedzialek, NRCS
George Pantages, citizen
Randy Sanders, ODNR
Molly Schnoke, Cleveland State University
Andy Vidra, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA)
Sara Ward, Ohio Dept of Development-Ohio Energy Office
Carolyn Wetzal, City of Mentor
Jill Woodyard, Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
Bob Zertz, citizen from Eastlake, OH
Scott Zody, ODNR

COMMISSION BUSINESS

WELCOME

City Manager John Konrad, City of Mentor, welcomed the Lake Erie Commissioners and provided an overview on the city's successful efforts in their recent land acquisition to expand the Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve. Kurt Kraus, City of Mentor's Director of Parks, Recreation & Public Lands, further reported on the 99-acre Morton Salt property adjacent to the Preserve that was acquired through collaborating partners including The Trust for Public Land, Morton International, Ohio DNR, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Mentor City Council and support from federal officials to procure federal funding to meet the purchase price

of \$3.0 million. The City and environmental groups have sought to protect this property for many years and it provides critical habitat for birds and wildlife, protection of water quality, as well as, providing recreational opportunities for the citizens of Ohio. Mentor Marsh Preserve consists of more than 640 acres of wetlands and has become a destination for naturalists and bird watchers from across the region. An interpretive center, pedestrian pathways and biking trails are among plans for enhancing the Preserve in their continuing efforts to increase ecotourism as well as protection of this property.

Chairman's Report

Minutes

Motion was made by ODOT and seconded by ODH to accept the March 15, 2006 meeting minutes as presented with no changes. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried.

Executive Committee Report

Scott Zody, Executive Committee Chairman; ODNR, presented a program overview on the *Lake Erie Balanced Growth Strategy* for the Commission's consideration and approval. The Strategy is a toolkit to provide state support for watershed plans. The Balanced Growth Task Force originally advised the Commission on ways to develop strategies that will balanced the protection of Lake Erie with continued economic growth. One recommendation was the development of state incentives which would identify programs and policies that state agencies can use to assist and encourage local governments in implementing the Watershed Balanced Growth Plans. The incentives will influence local governments to conduct and implement balanced growth planning, help developers develop Priority Development Areas (PDAs), help public and private entities protect and conserve Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs) while encouraging redevelopment of urbanized areas defined as PDAs. Motion was made to approve the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Strategy by ODOT and seconded by OEPA. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion was carried.

Grants Committee Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF) Report

Small Grants Program

Bill Goodman, Grants Committee Chairman; ODA, presented an overview on the Small Grants Program and Lake Erie Protection Fund (LEPF). The Fund is currently conducting a quarterly Small Grants Program with a maximum grant award of \$10,000 per project. The primary source of revenue comes from the sales of two Lake Erie License Plates, the Marblehead Lighthouse and the Toledo Harbor Light designed by Ohio Artist Ben Richmond. Each plate sale represents a \$15.00 donation to the LEPF. Funding priorities for grant projects are the strategic actions of the *Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan* and the Near Term Actions of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration. The Grants Committee recommended funding two grant projects for a total amount of \$19,465. Motion was made by ODOT and seconded by OEPA to accept the committee's recommendations. The Commission voted all in favor and the motion carried to approve the following two small grant projects:

"Ex Post Benefits of the Ashtabula River Dredging Project: Preliminary Data Collection" awarded to The Ohio State University, Project Directors: Dr. Leroy J. Hushak and Frank R. Lichtkoppler, in the amount of \$10,000.

"Prioritizing Restoration Opportunities in the Chippewa Creek Watershed" awarded to the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization, Project Director: James White, in the amount of \$9,465.

Lake Erie Commission (LEC) Office Report

Lake Erie Balanced Growth Program

Ed Hammett, LEC, provided an update on the Balanced Growth Program in which the Commission's approval today of the Incentives Strategy Plan represents significant progress for the implementation of the program. Other program areas being developed include technical training and public awareness sessions for the Best Local Land Use Practices and the three pilot projects that began their work in January this year for the Chagrin River watershed, the Upper Branch of the Rocky River and Swan Creek in northwest Ohio.

Ohio Lake Erie Conference

Mr. Hammett presented an overview on the 2006 Lake Erie Conference entitled, "*Lake Erie Protection & Restoration: Our Achievements – Our Challenges*" which will take place September 7 at the John A. Spitzer Conference Center at the Lorain County Community College. Panel and poster sessions will highlight what Ohio has achieved these past four+ years for the restoration and protection of Lake Erie and the challenges that lie ahead. The day-long program will include release of the Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan Progress Report, Ohio's two-year Near Term Action List in conjunction with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, announcement of the 2006 Ohio Lake Erie Awards and the "Life on Lake Erie" Photo Contest winners. The day before on September 6, the quarterly meeting of the Lake Erie Commission will take place also at the Spitzer Conference Center.

Lake Erie License Plates Program

It was reported that Lake Erie License Plate sales have in the past month increased by \$2,000 in revenue to the LEPP compared to May 2005, bringing in over \$34,000 during the month of May 2006. This translates to 2,289 plates purchased by Ohioans in May and represents the first increase in over a year. The sales of the Lake Erie License Plates are popular and run second to Ohio's Cardinal plate.

Ohio Lake Erie Awards

It was further reported that nominations are now being accepted for the 2006 Lake Erie Awards. The purpose of the awards is to honor one Ohio citizen and one organization that have made outstanding contributions to Ohio's Great Lake and have devoted their life's work to the environmental stewardship of Lake Erie. Nomination forms are online at the Commission web site; deadline for nominations is July 20, 2006.

Coastweeks 2006

The annual celebration of Lake Erie kicks off September 7 through the 22 and will focus on cleanup events along the shoreline. Cleanups have been the most popular events with the greatest support and interest from citizens and media. A planning toolkit is available online including a planning event form. To date, ODNR is leading the way with the first cleanup on International Cleanup Day, September 16, which will be a park-wide and beach cleanup at Maumee Bay State Park. Other Coastweeks events will continue to be listed, but special emphasis is being placed this year on shoreline cleanups.

"Life on Lake Erie" Photo Contest

The 2006 photo contest is being presented again this year for Ohioans who are amateur photo enthusiasts and enjoy taking snapshots of Lake Erie. We are seeking photos from the Lake Erie watershed that depict people, wildlife, shoreline activities or any scenes that capture the unique character of Lake Erie. Photographers are not restricted to categories; deadline for entries is July 20, 2006. All winning photos will be exhibited throughout the year at various points of interest along Lake Erie as part of the Lake Erie Commission's Photo Gallery.

Invited Reports

Report on Wind Power

Sara Ward, Chief of the Ohio Energy Office from ODOD, and Randy Sanders, Environmental Administrator with the Division of Real Estate & Land Management; ODNR, presented an overview on the Wind Power program and its potential role in Lake Erie's Balanced Growth program. It was reported that wind power studies have shown enhancement of the economic vitality in communities through job creation and property tax revenue. It minimizes loss of farmland due to lease payments from wind developers and can reduce pollution levels. Wind power reduces the need to withdraw water and has the potential to help restore the water quality in the Lake Erie watershed.

A Wind Working Group was formed in September 2003 with the mission to increase awareness and use of wind energy, while studying its impacts to wildlife and promotion of economic development through advancement of the Ohio wind industry. The group meets quarterly and represents stakeholders in all areas of wind energy including NGOs, developers, government, manufacturers and installers. Information can be obtained at their web site at www.ohiowind.org. To date, recommendations have been made for further exploration of wind power energy in Ohio and the Lake Erie watershed. These include: (1) recognizing economic and environmental benefits of wind power and support on-land wind power by working with developers and wind turbine manufacturers to locate in the Lake Erie Watershed; (2) encouraging proper siting of turbines through adoption of good neighbor policies using tested guidelines; (3) monitoring and studying avian impacts from wind turbines both on and off-shore; (4) working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife to improve guidelines to minimize avian impacts from the turbines; and (5) monitor offshore project developments and cost reduction opportunities for future development.

Agency Reports

Sam Speck, ODNR, reported on the Annex to the Great Lakes Charter in which the Annex Implementation Agreements were signed by the eight Great Lakes states Governors and Premiers on December 13, 2005. The Annex sets the standard for management of Great Lakes water. The next step is to put these agreements into action which requires the state legislatures to ratify an interstate Compact which will then become state and federal law. The states and provinces will continue to meet to discuss and further develop use of the guidance for enforceable standards. Director Speck will continue to attend these meetings on behalf of the Governor.

Gene Phillips, ODH, reported on the agency's beach monitoring program. As beach samples are taken the information is placed on the ODH's web site. The agency has also set up a toll-free hotline with information about which beaches have advisories.

Bill Skowronski, OEPA, provided an update on the Ashtabula River cleanup which kicks off this week and will begin in the fall. The \$50 million sediment cleanup represents a milestone for Ohio waterways. It is projected the cleanup will be completed in 2009.

Bill Goodman, ODA, reported on the quarantine areas of the Emerald Ash Borer with 12 million trees being affected in Ohio and Indiana. The infestation has traveled one-half mile per year with extensive eradication taking place in the region. Michigan has had to close some of its state parks due to trees falling on power grids. Ohio is continuing with educational programs for the public and providing detection guidelines.

Advisory Committee Reports

Edith Chase, President of OCRMP, reported on concerns of the impacts of coal fire in Ohio and that the state needs to do a lot of work regarding the releases of coal fire power plants.

Steve Davis, NRCS, announced that he is the new watershed coordinator for the agency and his Lake Erie work includes the Western Lake Erie Partnership with a goal to leverage good resource management. The states of Indiana and Michigan are also engaged in this effort. An update was provided on the special equipment project in Ohio which provides funding/incentives to farmers on

filter strips, drainage control, no tillage and the CREP program. Over 235 farmers applied representing 61,000 acres of farm land.

Andy Vidra, NOACA, provided an update on the LEPF grant project awarded to the organization in 2001 entitled, "Developing Regional Watershed Based Model Storm Water Permit Implementation Plans." NOACA is three years into its implementation working with 15 communities in adopting the plan as a model ordinance. It is anticipated in 2008 to have all the communities involved. Printed publications of this information will be provided at the September LEC meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Frank Lichtkoppler, Ohio Sea Grant Extension Agent, reported that their newly awarded Lake Erie Protection Fund grant project will document the Ashtabula River cleanup. The project directors will be working with the Ashtabula RAP Coordinator, Natalie Farber of OEPA, and other agency representatives in this effort. It was also reported that Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, under the direction of Executive Director Melinda Huntley, has achieved the new designation for Ohio's Lake Erie shoreline, the "Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Trail" as part of the National Scenic Byway program.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by ODOT, seconded by OEPA, all in favor, the meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office
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