

Briefing Paper

Establishment of the Dredge Research and Innovation in Farming Team

Commission Action Requested:

Resolved, that the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (Commission) hereby establishes the Dredge Research and Innovation in Farming Team (“DRIFT”) under Ohio Revised Code 1506.21(B)(8) to advise on the benefits, appropriateness, and effective methods of applying dredged material to farmland in Northwest Ohio. DRIFT will consist of an executive committee and members. The executive committee will be chaired by an Ohio EPA designee (David Emerman) and co-chaired by designees from Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority (Joe Cappel) and the Lucas County Soil and Water District (Joey Sink-Oiler). DRIFT membership and meeting location, times, and agendas will be determined by the executive committee.

Background

The commodities that pass through the Toledo Harbor contribute an annual \$7.07 billion in business revenue and support 40,000 jobs. To maintain adequate depth for vessels to traverse the Harbor, 850,000 tons of sediment are excavated annually and disposed of in the open waters of Lake Erie; a practice that is prohibited after July 1, 2020. A leading alternative to open Lake disposal is applying the dredged material to farm fields in Northwest Ohio.

DRIFT will advance and develop agricultural application of dredged material as an alternative to open Lake disposal by providing expertise and guidance. This advice will inform decisions on the evaluation of research proposals and demonstration projects, the development of research facilities, and the construction of dredge material related infrastructure, including providing advice on the two projects discussed below.

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To research farm field application of dredge material, the Toledo- Lucas County Port Authority opened the Great Lakes Dredged Material Center for Innovation, a 10-acre site filled with 70,000 cubic yards of dredged material. The Commission has recently issued a request for proposals to perform agricultural research at the Center for Innovation. DRIFT will advise on research performed at the facility and help identify future research needs.

Additionally, the Commission, in partnership with the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority and City of Oregon, submitted a grant request to the Army Corps of Engineers to develop a system of delivering the Toledo Harbor dredged material to farmland in the City of Oregon. DRIFT will advise on project specifics, such as development of the conveyance system, application of the dredged material, site improvements to the farm fields, and future research at the application sites.

Executive Committee Recommendation: Establish the Dredge Research and Innovation in Farming Team