



*Meeting Minutes*

**OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING**

**Webinar**

Wednesday September 9, 2020 10:00 a.m.

**Call to Order and Roll Call--Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA and Commission Chair**

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order at 10:18 a.m.

**Commission Members Present:**

Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA, OLEC Chair  
Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)  
Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)  
Matt McClellan, Director's Designee, Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)  
Gene Philips, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Health  
Dorothy Pelanda, Director, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)  
Bill Wolf, Commissioner  
Kevin Cogan, Commissioner  
Amanda Bryant-Friedrich, Commissioner  
Jim Stouffer, Commissioner  
Richard Hylant, Commissioner  
Kate Bartter, Commissioner

**Staff Present:**

Joy Mulinex, OLEC  
Lynn Garrity, OLEC  
David Emerman, OLEC  
Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC

**Welcome and Agenda Overview: Laurie Stevenson, Director, OEPA**

Director Stevenson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. She asked for a roll call.

(roll call)

**Commissioner Richard Hylant moved the following resolution:**

Resolved, that the Commission approves the meeting minutes for June 17, 2020. Bill Wolf seconded the motion.

No discussion followed. A roll-call vote was held, and Commission members voted all in favor. The motion carried.

**Commissioner Richard Hylant moved the following resolution:**

Resolved, that the Commission approves the 2020 Life on Lake Erie Award Winners. Gene Phillips seconded the motion.

Lynn Garrity, OLEC staff member, provided an overview of the photo contest and Director Stevenson presented the winning photos. A roll-call vote was held, and Commission members voted all in favor. The motion carried.

**Commissioner Kevin Cogan moved the following resolution:**

Resolved that the Commission approve the appointment of the H2Ohio Technology Assessment Program (TAP) Public Advisory Council. Bill Wolf seconded the motion.

David Emerman, OLEC staff member, provided an overview of the council and detailed its objectives. Director Stevenson provided further explanation. A roll-call vote was held, and Commission members voted all in favor. The motion carried.

**Director Mary Mertz moved the following resolution:**

Resolved, appreciation of service to Commissioner Kevin Cogan. Gene Phillips seconded the motion.

Commissioner Cogan spoke about the pleasure and privilege of serving on the Commission as well as recommendations for the future. A roll-call vote was held, and Commission members voted all in favor except for Commissioner Cogan, who abstained from the vote. The motion carried.

**Director Dorothy Pelanda moved the following resolution:**

Resolved, appreciation of service to Commissioner Amanda Bryant-Friedrich. Tim Hill seconded the motion.

Commissioner Bryant-Friedrich recognized the Commission for their hospitality and spoke about the honor it was to serve on the Commission. She challenged the Commission to remember that the Lake is for everyone and to bring members into the fold. A roll-call vote was held, and Commission members voted all in favor except Commissioner Bryant-Friedrich, who abstained from the vote. The motion carried.

## **Lake Erie Water Levels Special Report:**

Keith Koralewski, Buffalo District Chief of the Hydraulics and Hydrology and Water Management Section, with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), provided a special report on Lake Erie Water Levels. Chief Koralewski spoke about water level trends in the Great Lakes since 1918. Water levels tend to increase in late winter/early spring and decline into winter. Longer trends show record lows in the early 2000's and rising levels since 2012/2013. According to NOAA information, the Great Lakes Basin has experienced the wettest 60-month period of precipitation over the last five years. In addition, from 2011 to 2018, 41% of the continental U.S. has received the most rainfall going back to 1901. Chief Koralewski explained that water level forecasts will need to look at what has happened in the past to predict the future.

Phil Stitzinger, USACE Buffalo District Chief of Emergency Management and Dave Schulenberg, Chief of Planning, provided an overview of the Emergency Management System. The system focuses on short term measures that stabilize a situation, before handing it over to engineers that handle recovery and mitigation. The main program is the continuing authorities program. Dave reviewed the three sections that apply to Lake Erie interests. All three are cost-shared. Section 14 focuses on streambank and shoreline protection; Section 204 addresses regional sediment management; and Section 103 is focuses on hurricane and storm damage reduction.

## **Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report:**

Joy Mulinex reported that the first year of annual H2Ohio spending was released, and a report can be found at [H2.Ohio.gov](http://H2.Ohio.gov).

Lynn Garrity reported that videos of progress on the Maumee Area of Concern (AOC) are being launched. The screening event is October 27, 2020, and details can be found on the EPA website.

## **Agency/Commissioner Reports:**

**Director Mary Mertz, ODNR-** The agency is partnering with the Ohio Water Development Authority (OWDA) on the H2Ohio water quality initiative. OWDA has approved \$5 million to fund additional wetlands efforts in ODNR's H2Ohio program.

**Director Dorothy Pelanda, ODA-** The agency has been busy working with the Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) to complete registration and participation in the H2Ohio program with farmers. H2Ohio will provide funding directly to farmers to supplement the cost of implementing the best conservation practices for their land. September 1, 2020, Soil and Water Conservation Districts began to approve enrollment in the program. Funds will be dispersed between November 2020 and January 2021 to those farmers participating. The ODA is exploring all financial opportunities to expand the program.

**Matt McClellan for Director Lydia Mihalik, ODSA-** Tourism continues to be a push for the ODSA. People are looking for outdoor locations within driving distance, and Lake Erie is perfect for that. The 2020 census response rate is a little over 90%.

**Gene Phillips for Interim Director Lance Himes, ODH-** Beach monitoring data collected is being validated and results will be provided to the Ohio EPA by the end of the year.

**Bill Wolf, Commissioner-** He commended the work being done with farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin, but he expressed concern about the number of animal units in the basin and mitigation efforts. He asked what H2Ohio is doing from a technological/funding basis.

**Jim Stouffer, Commissioner-** The marina/hospitality industry has had challenges this season.

**Richard Hylant, Commissioner-** It has been a tenuous time managing the Great Lakes Protection Fund (GLPF) assets.

**Kate Bartter, Commissioner-** She is taking over as chair of the GLPF and would like to update the commission on the status of the fund.

#### **Partner Reports:**

**Chris Winslow, Ohio Sea Grant-** The annual Understanding Algal Blooms: State of the Science Conference was successful. A video of the event and Power Point materials are available on the Ohio Sea Grant website. Ohio Sea Grant has been invited to provide HAB updates to academic institutions in Ohio monthly.

**Tim Brown, TMACOG-** They are working on an update to the water quality agenda for Lake Erie 2021/2022 recommendations. Webinars in June continued. The water trail is completed. He thanked agency directors for their support and partnership.

#### **Public Comment (Comments were received electronically via the webinar's chat function):**

**Kristy Meyer-** what beautiful pictures and talented photographers. Love the commentary, especially the lighthouse one.

**Shea Allmont-** thanks everyone for allowing us the opportunity to participate in this contest and share our love of Lake Erie through our photographs.

**Scudder Mackey, Chief, Office of Coastal Management-** With respect to innovative monitoring technologies, ODNR has provided funding for field verification of innovative sensor technologies at the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve.

This is through a grant award through the Cleveland Water Alliance to test and validate these technologies in a real-world environment.

**Sandy Bihn-** Would like to thank the Ohio Department of Transportation, Lucas County and TMACOG for the \$638,000 Toledo Lighthouse Restoration project. This unique lighthouse is a tourist magnet, and when complete will allow visitors from spring through fall, having great positive impacts for the Northwest Ohio economy.

This has been a great summer on Lake Erie with a small harmful algal bloom. Cool waters into June, few heavy rains and low winds allowed a light bloom. At the same time, we know that excessive manure phosphorus applications in the Maumee watershed continue. The manure saturates the soils with more phosphorus than crops need that runoff and fuel harmful algae in Lake Erie. This is a request to the Lake Erie Commission to ask ODA to assess manure and other source reductions in addition to the H2O Best Management Practices. As long as there is more permitted manure phosphorus added to the soils year after year beyond crop needs, Lake Erie will have harmful algal blooms. Best Management Practices is a maintenance program to keep phosphorus runoff to the lake. But maintenance alone will not work if excessive source soil phosphorus applications continue year after year. Again, this is a request to reduce permitted excess manure phosphorus in the soils at the source. I would appreciate a response to this request.

Gene Phillips moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Wolf seconded. A roll-call vote followed.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:01 p.m.

**Signature of Chair:** Laurie A. Stevenson

**Date:** December 22, 2020

**Signature of Secretary:** Mary C. Metz

**Date:** December 18, 2020