Ohio | Lake Erie Commission

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING
The Lodge, Geneva-on-the-Lake, Ohio
September 28, 2016 – 10:00 a.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call – James Zehringer, Director, Ohio DNR

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

Commission Members Present:
James Zehringer, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Richard Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Kirk Hines, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)
Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Harry Allen, Great Lakes Power Group, Chairman
Paul Toth, Jr., Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, President/CEO

Staff Present:
Karl Gebhardt, Ohio EPA/OLEC
Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC
Brenda Culler, ODNR – Office of Coastal Management

(10 observers)

Welcome and Agenda Overview: James Zehringer, Director, Ohio DNR

Director Zehringer provided an overview of the agenda.

Photo Contest

Each year OLEC asks the public to submit photos of their experiences of "Life on Lake Erie". While we are all so focused on the policies and programs affecting Lake Erie, the photo contest is a reminder of how the public experiences Lake Erie every day. The photos show us many special moments that people have on Lake Erie, whether in various forms of recreation, spending time with family and friends or simply time in quiet reflection in nature.

Photo Contest winners Richard McBride of Conneaut and Dee Riley of Ashtabula were present to receive their awards from the Commission. Promotional materials were provided as prizes by Ohio Clean Marinas and Clean Boaters, ODNR Coastal Management and ODNR Parks, and Lake Erie Shores and Islands Welcome Center. Miller Ferry provided complimentary ferry tickets for the Judges Overall Favorite winner (Dee Riley). ODNR Parks is also providing complimentary overnight camping passes to all of the winners which will be mailed separately.

Chair Report:

Commissioner Toth moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the meeting minutes for June 22, 2016. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Allen had one minor correction to the minutes (to note that he was in fact present at the meeting).

The Commission members voted all in favor and the motion carried.

Lake Erie Protection Fund

Sandra Kosek-Sills presented the Lake Erie Protection Fund Grant proposal. One proposal was recommended for funding this quarter by the Grants Committee.

Commissioner Hodges moved the following resolution:
Resolved, that the following Lake Erie Protection Fund grant proposal be funded: "Elucidating Microcystin Degradation Pathway." Dr. X. Mou. Kent State University. $15,000. Commissioner Allen seconded the motion.

Discussion: Commissioner Toth asked how this project fits with the other projects funded through the LEPF and what would be the end result. Kosek-Sills responded that this is a next step from the previous work completed by this researcher. It is a basic science research proposal but it is part of a larger effort (with other funding) to develop a biofilter specific for the degradation of microcystin that could be part of a water treatment plant treatment train.

Director's Designee Hines asked about the funding amounts typical for the LEPF. Kosek-Sills provided an overview of the small grant and targeted grant funding levels, which are determined by the commissioners as needed.

The Commission members voted all in favor and the motion carried.

Kosek-Sills then provided an overview of four recently completed LEPF projects.

Lake Erie Commission Office Update

Gebhardt gave the update on the Lake Erie Commission Office. Kosek-Sills reported on the recently closed Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant for the Cooperative Science Monitoring Initiative for Lake Erie. The Executive Summary fact sheet for this project is available on the Commission website.

Gebhardt then went over the fiscal report. Finances are in good shape, mostly because of the reduction in office rental fees and low personnel costs while the office remains with only one staff person. There is some consideration of shifting funds from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, traditionally used only to fund office operations, over to fund

programs while using more of the state GRF from the departments to augment office operations. This would be more consistent with how other states use their portion of GLPF allocations. Commissioner Toth asked for more information about how the other states use their GLPF allocations. Gebhardt replied that there will be a Great Lakes Commission meeting next week, and we can get more information from them then. Commissioner Zehringer asked about the GRF contribution of the agencies. Gebhardt replied that traditionally the agency allocation has not been needed since operations had been funded through the GLPF but that was one of the changes being evaluated as part of the state budget process. .

Gebhardt discussed the office move. The Sandusky office has been closed. ONDR – Office of Coastal Management has offered an office to house one additional OLEC staff member in their building, thanks to ODNR and Chief Mackey for allowing that to happen. This is an annual savings of $10,000 for space rental.

We are working to add Action steps to the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan 2016, mostly with ODNR.

Senate Bill 333 includes the updated OLEC statutes. Public comments have been received and will be provided out to the commissioners. The bill is expected to be introduced after the election in November.

The Western Lake Erie Basin Collaborative Implementation Plan should wrap up the current rendition soon. This version addresses public comments received on the initial rendition.

The Sandusky Bay Focus Area project is moving forward. Sandusky Bay is a microcosm of Lake Erie – its physical and biological dynamics are similar in a smaller size. It has early and severe HAB problems, shallow slow moving waters, and a need for dredging. Senator Gardner has been working with the ODNR Office of Coastal Management and the City of Sandusky on funding for projects to utilize dredge materials for ODNR habitat restoration projects in the area, which should address some of these issues and be a demonstration of how these solutions could work. Commissioner Allen asked about flows. Gebhardt replied that the Sandusky River has less flow than the Maumee River, but Sandusky Bay is smaller and shallower so the effects are similar. Commissioner Allen then asked if this was a scalable project. Gebhardt replied that it is. The idea is to set up habitat for emergent plants. There was additional discussion about the role of wetlands in removing nutrients at various points in the system and the Sandusky River watershed being eligible for agricultural practices assistance, including drainage controls to help address flow fluctuations.

Presentations:

James White, Sustainability Coordinator for the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Port Authority, gave a presentation about the bedload interceptor in the Cuyahoga River and efforts by the port and others to use the materials collected (presentation on file).
Commissioner Paul Toth, of the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, gave a presentation on the Dredged Material Center for Innovation now in operation in Toledo (presentation on file).

Agency Reports

Kirk Hines, ODA – The fertilizer certification program is well underway and has reached a large number of dealers and others in northwest Ohio. Education is very important. There have been about 100 exemption requests from smaller (non-CAFO) operations for manure applications – ODA is working with this group to install holding facilities so that the exemptions are not needed in the future.

Tim Hill, ODOT – No report.

Gary Obermiller, ODNR – The merger of Parks and Watercraft was completed on September 12. This saves about $1M. ODNR is doing a lot of work on invasive species - basin cut offs to prevent the spread of Asian carp, also prevention and removal of Phragmites. The department has been improving many orf the facilities at state parks as a result of increased capital dollars including a new shoreline erosion control wall at Geneva State Park.

Richard Hodges, ODH – Beach monitoring ended Labor Day. ODH is creating the final report to USEPA which should be available by the end of the year. There were 2,902 samples taken for Lake Erie beaches by all the parties involved, including NEORSD, the University of Toledo, and local health departments. About 400 samples were over the e. coli limit. ODH is continuing the process of implementing the HSTS rules with the local health departments, a lot of education happening and needed.

Director Zehringer expressed his appreciation for ODA, ODH, OEPA and ODNR all working together on these issues.

Agency Partner Reports

OSU Sea Grant Program (Dr. Kristen Fussell) – The recent HAB conference was successful with over 300 participants. OSG hopes to do the event again. The NSF-funded Lake Erie Area Research Network (LEARN) is getting started. This group will consolidate research proposals, build a network among the research labs, and hope to develop larger, more broadly based proposals to meet Great Lakes needs. OSG is also part of the Sea Grant Network, and promotes Ohio's efforts to research HABs and other topics through this forum.

There was a brief discussion about the presentations and highlights of the HAB conference.

Natural Resources Conservation Service – No report.

NOACA – No report.

TMACOG – No report.

Public Comment

Brian Hincheberger, Army Corps of Engineers, introduced himself and stated an interest on the part of the Corps in being involved in dredged material beneficial use projects via the Commission.

Director Zehringer adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m.

Signature of Chair: _____

Date: 12/14/16.