



## *Meeting Minutes*

### **OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING**

**Port of Lorain**

September 18, 2019 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 10:08 a.m.

#### ***Commission Members Present:***

Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA, OLEC Chairman  
Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)  
Lyn Tolan, Director's Designee, Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)  
Gene Phillips, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)  
Dorothy Pelanda, Director, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)  
Harry Allen, Commissioner  
Dr. Amanda Bryant- Friedrich, Commissioner  
Bill Wolf, Commissioner

#### ***Staff Present:***

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

(12 observers)

#### **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)

#### **Introduction to the Port of Lorain: Tom Brown, Executive Director, Port of Lorain**

Tom Brown, Executive Director of the Port, provided some background on today's Port of Lorain. He explained that Black River Landing, a former 25-acre industrial site has become a public access space for recreation. The site hosts music events and fishing tournaments, provides public access to the riverfront, and offers facility event rental. Tom described the rehabilitation of the Broadway Building, the downtown streetscape project, and other improvements happening in the city of Lorain.

#### **Chair Report:**

Director Stevenson asked if there were any corrections for last meeting's minutes. There were no corrections.

**Commissioner Harry Allen moved the following resolution:**

**Resolved**, that the Commission approves the meeting minutes from June 12, 2019.

Lyn Tolan seconded the motion.

No discussion followed. Commission members voted all in favor and the motion carried.

**Life on Lake Erie Photo Awards: Laurie Stevenson, Director, OEPA**

Director Stevenson presented the awards for the 27<sup>th</sup> annual photo contest. There were 95 entries this year, which is the most since 2015, and 11 winners were chosen for 2019. Winning photos can be viewed on the OLEC website and in the 2020 Gallery tour. Locations and dates to be determined. The judges overall favorite photograph was taken by Hari Gopalakrishnan, and he attended the OLEC meeting. Mr. Gopalakrishnan described to the crowd how he captured the winning photo, *The Lifeline of Erie*. He was also recognized for his photo, *The Glow in the Darkness*. Another judges' favorite was *Room with a View*, by Shea Allmont. She was also recognized for her photo *Dinosaur Driftwood*. Ms. Allmont also attended the meeting to receive her award and speak about her winning photos.

**Lake Erie Protection Fund: Sandra Kosek-Sills/Lynn Garrity**

Sandra Kosek-Sills reviewed the state fiscal year 2019 report. Grants are selected based on the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan (LEPR). Projects that address beneficial use of dredged material received half of the funds available. Over the past five years, one grant has been approved in just about every priority area. Two grant projects closed the past quarter.

The first project was a time series analysis of Lake Erie Phytoplankton Dynamics, which examined patterns in phytoplankton communities over a 20-year period. The analysis showed that cyanobacteria blooms increased after 2003, likely due to warmer water and total bioavailable phosphorus loading. The biomass of green algae, diatoms, and cryptophytes also increased between 1995 and 2015.

The second project involved the development of best management practices (BMPs) for Dewatering and Stabilization of Dredged Materials in Ohio. A comprehensive literature review of dewatering techniques for dredged materials was performed, and a decision-tree, for selecting the best dewatering option, was developed. Researchers were also able to identify approaches for shoreline restoration and erosion control associated with dewatering projects.

Lynn Garrity spoke to the commission about suggested changes to the grant administration process. OLEC staff reviewed the process and made the following administrative recommendations: increase grant award minimum to \$15,000; decrease initial payment to 50% of grant award; submission of applications electronically only; eliminate the requirement of a grant match minimum requirement; eliminate the requirement of Agency Advisor approval; and revise the approval process so that staff recommends grant awards to OLEC Director who recommends to Commissioners in Briefing Books for Quarterly meeting; change the grant cycle timeline so there is one LEPR Grant Cycle for FY2020 for the full amount available in FY2020; and establish key priorities for the Grant Award by using the 2019 LEPR Plan and the State Science Priorities in conjunction with the Ohio Sea Grant Higher Education Fund.

Tim Hill raised concerns about the deletion of the requirement to have agency advisor approval. He was concerned about the lack of agency involvement. Lynn Garrity explained that the grant review process involves agency representation from each Commission member agency on the Grants Committee.

Amanda Bryant-Friedrich raised concerns about a recipient's ability to complete a project with only 50% of the grant award/the lack of match. Lynn Garrity explained that grantees can request interim invoicing through the duration of the grant.

Harry Allen asked about Sea Grant partnership on LEPP grants. Lynn Garrity explained that the process is ongoing and Ohio Sea Grant continues to progress on those partnership grants.

### **Special Report—H2Ohio Lake Erie Plan: Joy Mulinex, Executive Director, OLEC**

Mulinex explained that the H2Ohio Fund will be invested in targeted solutions to ensure safe and clean water across Ohio. It is a statewide initiative to address water challenges. Roughly half of the funding would be used for the Western Basin of Lake Erie. The Fund is designed to last 10 years.

One-hundred and seventy-two million has been appropriated for FY2020-2021. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will receive eight million in FY2020 to support infrastructure improvements, water quality monitoring, and technology research and development. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will receive thirty million in FY2020 to support best management practices for water quality. They also have an additional twenty million for soil and water phosphorous programs in the Western Lake Erie Basin. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will receive forty-six million in FY2020 to restore and construct wetlands to capture and filter nutrients from runoff.

Under the Department of Agriculture, H2Ohio will focus on best management practices in the areas of Nutrient Management, Soil Management, and Water Management.

DNR funds will focus on restoring and constructing coastal, inland, and statewide wetlands. Nineteen coastal wetland projects will maximize nutrient reduction flowing into Lake Erie. Projects include the creation of multiple "in-water, flow through wetlands" in the mouth of the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers and other critical areas. Also included is the reconnection of diked wetlands and adjacent tributaries including agricultural drainage channels that flow directly into Lake Erie.

There are fifteen targeted inland projects in the Lake Erie Basin that are anticipated to have a positive impact on streams and habitats. Statewide wetland projects will be focused on other regions in the state experiencing harmful algae blooms and other water quality challenges.

The Ohio EPA's funds will be focused on disadvantaged community drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, reducing the risk of drinking-water related lead exposure in daycares and schools, enhancing state water quality monitoring capabilities, and support for research and development for wastewater treatment technologies.

Tim Hill asked if other agencies, like transportation, would be contacted to assist with projects. Mulinex responded "yes, there have been discussions."

Harry Allen asked Dorothy Pelanda if we are quantifying projects for best results. Pelanda responded that experts are predicting what we can anticipate. This is important because we need

to be able to educate farmers about the benefits. Farmers need to see potential if they are investing money—they need a return on the investment to engage in best management practices. Mulinex added that the Lake Erie Commission must explain results and provide follow-up—accountability is key.

Harry Allen shared that he would like to see more of a sense of urgency.

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

Sandra Kosek-Sills stated that there have not been any new updates on Domestic Action Planning efforts. The water monitoring summary is out for 2018. This report includes stations chosen from a larger set. Another report will include all stations.

David Emerman discussed the dredge material program at Toledo's, Center of Dredge Innovation. The infrastructure for the Center was purchased with Healthy Lake Erie Capital dollars. Placement of the dredged material was funded through the EPA's Soil and Water Improvement Fund. Research is funded through the Lake Erie Protection Fund. Two projects are occurring at the center and are managed by BGSU and Wright State University. Emerman also discussed the Dredge Research and Innovation in Farming Team (DRIFT), which is composed of farmers and representatives from state and county agencies. When the dredge material was first unloaded in November of 2017, farmers on the team were skeptical. The cells were planted in August 2019 and are thriving. No phosphorous was added—only nitrogen. The DRIFT group was impressed but recommended needing three years of data. Emerman expects that researchers will be able to collect and present research by the end of the year. Emerman also discussed a large-scale pilot project in Lorain using material dredged by ODNR. The pilot involves adding polymers to the dredge material for rapid dewatering.

Lynn Garrity discussed the Area of Concern (AOC) program. She shared that attendance was reported as the highest ever at a Great Lakes Area of Concern conference that was held in Cleveland, on September 11 and 12. Also, a public meeting about the beneficial use impairment (BUI) of fish tumors and other deformities was held in Ashtabula on August 26 for the Ashtabula Area of Concern. Ms. Garrity provided further AOC program updates including an award to the Great Lakes Commission through the NOAA Regional Partnership Grant for Ohio AOC projects and substantial completion on the Black River AOC Fortune Ditch restoration project. Ms. Garrity provided an update on funding Ohio has received through Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Action Plan I and II by entities receiving funding and by Focus Area for each federal fiscal year. Generally, Ohio received approximately \$149 million in Action Plan I over the period of 2010 to 2014 and approximately \$85 million in Action Plan II from 2015-2018. 2019 funding is still being compiled. Garrity showed fiscal year breakdowns of GLRI funding in Ohio for fiscal years 2010 to 2018. Garrity explained that staff is looking at measures of progress, and in conjunction with Commission agencies, will be making recommendations on funding under Action Plan III. Finally, she spoke about the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration (LEPR) Strategy updates.

### **Agency/ Commissioner Reports:**

**Gene Phillips, ODH** – Beach monitoring ended Labor Day. They will be sending an annual report to the EPA. This year they focused on improving the data entry side of Beach Guard to allow for partner input.

**Tim Hill, ODOT** – The \$650,00 Toledo Harbor lighthouse project will start in the Spring of 2020.

**Lyn Tolan, ODSA** -- Tourism Ohio is excited about the OLEC photo contest. Right now, they are beginning fall season marketing. On October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Co-Op Advertising Program opens. This Tourism Ohio program allows a dollar-for-dollar state match up to \$25,000 to grow Ohio organizations that benefit from a healthy tourism economy. Ohio.org is a multi-media website that offers free listings about Ohio tourism. They are asking entities to update information that is listed on the website.

**Director Laurie Stevenson, OEPA** – She looks forward to the H2Ohio partnerships.

**Bill Wolf, Commissioner** – He stated that his position puts him in front of thousands of farmers, and he can say there is a disconnect with farmers; farmers believe they are doing everything correctly. He asked if the ODA had data on farmers.

**Harry Allen, Commissioner** – He observed the Canadian side of the Eastern Basin experienced a bad summer for HABS.

**Amanda Bryant-Friedrich, Commissioner** – A new chemistry lab for Water Chemistry and Environmental Analysis will be dedicated tomorrow at the University of Toledo.

**Partner Reports:**

**Chris Winslow, Ohio Sea Grant** –Lynn Garrity gave Chris Winslow's report. Stone Lab/Sea Grant's next annual report will be October 31. The summer's high water created difficulties at Stone Lab. Three-hundred and fifty people attended the State of Science Conference in Toledo; it was a success.

**Public Comment:**

**Sandy Bihn, Lake Erie Waterkeeper**– Ms. Bihn discussed the "terrible" quality of the water near Maumee Bay State Park, and she brought a sample of water from a ditch adjacent to the park. Ms. Bihn is concerned about the number of animals creating manure in the Maumee River Watershed, and the effect on water quality. She is asking for not just best management practices (BMP's), but a reduction of the animals allowed. Ms. Bihn shared that she would like animal manure treated to human standards. She also mentioned the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse project and the Toledo Zoo's recent sturgeon release.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:19 p.m.

Signature of Chair: Laurie Stevenson

Date: 12/20/15

Signature of Secretary: Mary Merty

Date: 12/17/15