

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING

National Museum of the Great Lakes

March 20, 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 10:05 a.m.

Commission Members Present:

Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA, OLEC Chairman
Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Lydia Mihalik, Director, Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)
Gene Phillips, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Dorothy Pelanda, Director, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)
Kevin Cogan, Commissioner
Harry Allen, Commissioner
Dr. Amanda Bryant- Friedrich, Commissioner
Bill Wolf, Commissioner
Jim Stouffer, Commissioner
Richard Hylant, Commissioner

Staff Present:

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

(22 observers)

Welcome and Agenda Overview: Laurie Stevenson, Director, OEPA

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

(roll call)

Chair Report:

Director Stevenson asked for members to provide introductions. She then introduced the new OLEC Director, Joy Mulinex. Director Mulinex gave a brief introduction. Director Stevenson asked if there were any corrections for last meeting's minutes. There were no corrections.

Commissioner Bill Wolf moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the meeting minutes from December 12, 2018.

Commissioner Allen seconded the motion.

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

Director Stevenson recommended that action to vote on the Commission Chair be deferred until a future meeting.

Director Mary Mertz moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission defer the vote on a Commission Chair. Director Pelanda seconded the motion.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report – David Emerman

Mr. Emerman gave a dredge material program update. He discussed the importance of the eight federal commercial harbors in Ohio and the commodities that they move. He then discussed the need for dredging of the harbors and disposing of the dredged material. Open lake disposal of dredged material will no longer be an option after July 1, 2020. He discussed three methods that Ohio harbors are using to dispose of dredged materials: dredge to soil, dredge to wetlands, and dredge to farm fields.

Lake Erie Protection Fund

Sandra Kosek-Sills provided a brief summary of the Fund. Since 1993, more than 12 million has been distributed to projects. The fund is supported through donations and the purchase of a Lake Erie license plate.

There were no applications for grant funds in quarter three, but there will be in quarter four. Applications for Q4 are due May 10, 2019. She highlighted grant projects that have recently been completed. These include: 1) Dredged Material for Green Infrastructure - Evaluation of using light weight aggregate from dredge material as a growth medium, for example, on green roofs. 2) Brandywine Creek Watershed Study developing and ranking solutions for preservation and watershed enhancement projects. 3) Cost-Benefit Evaluation of Soft and Hard Approached for Lake Erie Shoreline Protection with results showed that soft shoreline protection is less costly over a 25-year life cycle. 4) The Toledo Zoo used grant funds to identify suitable Kirtland's Snake habitat and created a preliminary Kirtland's Snake distribution model for 22 counties in the western Lake Erie watershed. 5) Modeling streamflow and salinity in the Mentor Marsh watershed creating predictive modeling to estimate salt loadings for past and future scenarios.

Special Report—Scudder Mackey, Chief, ODNR-Office of Coastal Management (OCM)

Mackey provided an overview of the Ohio Coastal Management Program (OCMP). Historically, Ohio's program was federally approved in 1997 by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The program focuses on providing technical

assistance and guidance; implementing regulatory programs; improving water quality; promoting public access to the lake; implementing a grants program; and to network with other partners on issues affecting the lake. The OCM's regulatory program has authorization in five areas: shore structure permits, submerged land leases, Federal consistency authority, coastal erosion area permits, and salvage permits.

He described challenges to Lake Erie: water levels, climate variability, shoreline alterations, nutrient/sediment loadings, harmful algal blooms (HABs) nearshore water quality, habitat loss, invasives, shoreline development, coastal erosion and flooding, sand management, and public access. He then described the following goals of the OCMP: enhancing coastal resiliency, protecting sand resources, water quality, fisheries, access, and invasives.

He provided updates on current water level fluctuations and coastal erosion area mapping. Mackey then gave a brief description of the progress on the Sandusky Bay Initiative and the Healthy Lake Erie Fund.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report (cont.)– Joy Mulinex/Lynn Garrity

Director Mulinex provided an overview of OLEC functions. Ms. Garrity provided an overview of programs that OLEC is coordinating. The Area of Concern (AOC) program is Annex 1 of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA). There are four AOCs in Ohio—Maumee, Black, Cuyahoga, and Ashtabula Rivers. The program is now administered by OLEC in partnership with Ohio EPA. It is a partnership program that involves collaboration with federal agencies, other state agencies, local governments, park districts, and local Advisory Committees.

Ms. Garrity discussed the 2019 Life on Lake Erie photo contest, an OLEC annual tradition. The contest kicks off today and continues until July 31, 2019. A tour of previous photo contest winners will be making its way around the state over the next few months. There will be five sites where the display will be exhibited.

Ms. Garrity provided an update on the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). GLRI resources are used to accelerate progress toward protection and restoration. GLRI funding is structured around five focus areas. She provided an overview of current and past projects. GLRI Action Plan III will be forthcoming from USEPA in the coming year.

Ms. Kosek-Sills provided an update on the Domestic Action Plan Implementation Grant activities that was received by OLEC through GLRI Funding.

Agency/ Commissioner Reports:

Director Laurie Stevenson, OEPA – She commended the OLEC on their work and acknowledged partnerships with ODOT on projects. She is learning in her new role and has hit the ground running. She is meeting with the leadership team to identify priorities to create an agency-wide plan.

Director Mary Mertz, ODNR – She thanked the staff for their reports. She is excited about projects that are in motion, like the Sandusky Bay Initiative. In the coming year, ODNR will focus on wetlands for water quality and wildlife habitat.

Tim Hill, ODOT – He provided an overview of some recent ODOT projects—slope repair in Ashtabula County, the Port Clinton lift bridge, and work on state routes 963 and 53. He described the focus on streetscape projects that aim to improve the livability of towns along Lake Erie. Improvements to Lorain’s Broadway Avenue are an example of this.

Gene Phillips, ODH – The BeachGuard website was updated in 2017 and ODH is in contract with a vendor to make further improvements. Visitation to the site was very high in 2018. ODH has an RFP for on water quality testing at beaches for E. coli bacteria.

Commissioner Bill Wolf – He spoke about the need to engage at all levels from the Lake to the farmer. He also spoke about the need to develop a plan that is based on science and to operationalize that plan. He explained that we have decades of information on the reduction of phosphorous.

Commissioner Jim Stouffer – He agreed with Commissioner Wolf; it is about collaboration. A solution to the problem is critical to the Lake’s tourism and fishery industries. He is positive about the DeWine administration putting together the right team to address problems.

Commissioner Harry Allen – He agreed with previous statements. We need to use science to move ahead.

J. Kevin Cogan, OBWC – He spoke about the need to establish benchmarks. This would allow the public to see results and monitor progress.

Commissioner Richard Hylant – The Governor has a lot of work ahead; he has proposed a bold initiative from a funding standpoint. He asked how the Commission members can support that initiative through their conversations with the public.

Commissioner Dr. Amanda Bryant-Friedrich – She stated that constituents don’t always understand data the way it is presented; we need to include them in the process, so that they can have confidence in the process. We need to look at educators to help with this.

Partner Reports:

Chris Winslow, Ohio Sea Grant – He discussed Sea Grant’s role, in terms of the need to talk about successes and discuss the logistical barriers. He discussed HAB research funding and the need establish priorities. OSU’s Stone Laboratory and Ohio Sea Grant will host NOAA’s annual HABs Forecast for western Lake Erie on July 11. The model

from last year predicted higher than observed bloom. The satellite information for 2018 wasn't accurate due to wind. Money allocated to the Ohio Sea Grant, as part of Senate Bill 299 (Clean Lake 2020 Plan), will be used for new monitoring equipment in the Maumee and improvements to Stone Lab.

Kari Gerwin, TMACOG – She explained that TMACOG works with local governments to identify concerns in the region. Water quality is a big issue. They are working on project updates to the 9-element plan, which is required for non-point federal and GLRI dollars.

Public Comment:

Tahree Lane, Citizen Advocate – Lane is a board member of the Lake Erie Waterkeeper Organization. She spoke about the need for accountability for and transparency of money spent on Lake Erie water quality and the need for ODA rule change regarding CAFO's. She is optimistic about the changes occurring within state government—the new energy, as related to Lake Erie.

Michelle Soviar, resident of Oregon, OH – She asked about the authority to change rules regarding CAFO's and nutrient loading. She spoke about the need for people (constituents) to be more active and not just rely on the commission to provide information.

Sandy Bihn, Lake Erie Waterkeeper– She spoke about the need to reduce run-off during heavy rain. She spoke about the trend of commercial fertilizer use going down and the increased of manure as fertilizer, which results in increased phosphorous. She thanked ODOT, TMACOG, and Lucas County for their support of the Toledo Lighthouse Restoration and recommended opportunities to highlight Ohio's Lighthouses.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:14 p.m.

Signature of Chair:

Laurie Shouse

Date:

10/30/19

