

OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION MEETING

Port Clinton, Ohio

September 18, 2018 – 10:00 a.m.

Call to Order and Roll Call – Craig Butler, 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:

Craig Butler, Director, Ohio EPA, OLEC Chairman
Jim Zehringer, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Gene Phillips, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Lyn Tolan, Director's Designee, Ohio Development Services Agency (ODSA)
Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Harry Allen, Commissioner
Amanda Bryant- Friedrich, Commissioner
Kevin Cogan, Commissioner
Jim Stouffer, Commissioner
Bill Wolf, Commissioner

Staff Present:

Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC
Lynn Garrity, OLEC
David Emerman, OLEC
Jessica Johnson, OLEC

(13 observers)

Welcome and Agenda Overview: Craig Butler, Director, OEPA

Director Butler called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to Camp Perry. He asked Jessica Johnson for a roll call.

(roll call)

Chair Report: business items

Before asking for a motion regarding the approval of last meeting's minutes, Chairman Butler asked Johnson to please read two corrections to the minutes. Johnson said there was a change in the date on the first page and a name change on the eighth page of the minutes.

Commissioner Allen moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the corrected meeting minutes from June 29, 2018.

Commissioner Stouffer seconded the motion.

Chairman Butler wanted to note that at the last meeting, even though it was not known at the time but that was Executive Director, Karl Gebhardt's last meeting. Gebhardt decided to retire from OLEC and Ohio EPA on August 31st after a long career of public service.

Chairman Butler said Karl is really enjoying retirement. He is currently traveling out West and staff mentioned he will soon be traveling to Arizona to see some of his grandkids. Butler said there is no one he knew of that had a truer dedication to the Lake. Karl was very hard working and passionate about bettering the Lake and the Commission. He will be truly missed. He also said that as we meet today, if Commissioners would give some thought on how maybe we as a Commission could honor Karl. He would gladly be up to any thoughts on this.

Chairman Butler then introduced Sandra Kosek-Sills to announce the winners of this year's Life on Lake Erie Photo contest winners.

Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest– Sandra Kosek-Sills

Kosek-Sills said that this year's contest had fewer than the normal amount of participants. She said judges were from OEPA's Public Interest Center and were asked to judge photos based on how they highlight the Lake and the many different activities to do on there. She said this year there were several landscape scenes of the Lake.

The judges overall favorite was from Tyler Harris of Westerville for his photo titled: *Great Wave off of Ruggles Beach*. Other winners were Dee Riley of Ashtabula with her photo *Headlands Beach Sand Sculpture*. Kosek-Sills noted that Riley has been a past winner. Another winner was Richard Smulski of Mentor with his photo *Cleveland Winter*. And finally, Richard McBride of Conneaut from his photo *Geese Flying Past Lighthouse*. She also mentioned McBride is a past winner as well.

Kosek-Sills mentioned that this is the 26th year of the contest. She said that now that Lynn Garrity has joined the OLEC team, she hopes that maybe they can get out and promote it even more.

Chairman Butler asked where the photos would be displayed this year. Kosek-Sills said that they are traditionally displayed at the Lake Erie Shores and Islands Office and the Ohio Statehouse. She said that they have a good partner in the Lake Erie Shores and Islands Office and appreciate their promotion of the contest.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report – Sandra Kosek-Sills

Kosek-Sills began the OLEC Office Report by introducing OLEC's newest team member, Lynn Garrity. Kosek-Sills then turned the floor over to Garrity to introduce herself and discuss a little more about the work she would be doing for the Commission.

Garrity said she is coming from ODNR's Coastal Office and that she will actually be working out of OLEC's office housed in ODNR's Coastal Office in Sandusky. She said

she was happy to be transferring to OLEC and that she has a couple of different programs she will be overseeing. She mentioned that she will be working on some of the programs that Karl was working on before he left. One focus being on a communications strategy for OLEC moving forward from Lake Erie program updates and license plates promotions. Her second focus will be working on gaining GLRI and LAMP funding. She said she will also be overseeing Ohio's AOC Program that will be moved under the umbrella of OLEC.

Garrity brought with her 2 handouts that were project list updates to the Cuyahoga and Maumee AOCs. She said each meeting she will continue to bring the Commission an update. One more note on the AOC was Garrity mentioned that the next AOC conference was going to be held in Ohio.

Chairman Butler added to Garrity's introduction, that as part of Gebhardt's long term visions for OLEC, he hoped that the Commission could be a beacon for the agencies to work together for the betterment of the Lake while also reaching out to other organizations and stakeholders to get us all on the same page so that our goals align. He feels Garrity will be a great asset to this and said welcome aboard.

Chairman Butler asked Garrity if she could speak more to the handouts. Garrity responded and said the handouts before the Commissioners is a snapshot of the Cuyahoga and Maumee projects and what stages they are in. She said she hopes to have a more detailed list and update at the next meeting but that for now this is what she had from just starting with the Commission the day before.

Chairman Butler asked if Garrity knew when the AOC conference was going to take place. She said they did not have a specific date but that it would be the month of September in 2019 in the Cleveland area. She said they have a meeting with USEPA next week and they hope they will be narrowing down a date for the conference. Butler had a follow up question and asked how many people usually attend. Garrity said that because it is binational she thought a few hundred usually attend.

Butler then introduced David Emerman to give the Dredge Material update. He said that David is just coming back after paternity leave.

Lake Erie Dredged Material Program Update – David Emerman (presentation on file)

Emerman said that today he would be discussing two grants that he is asking the Commission to fund but before he started into that he wanted to give a little background. He mentioned how this idea was developed from Senate Bill 1, which made it illegal for dredge to be dumped back into the lake. This is an issue because as Emerman pointed out the state wants to see the material used but how do they use it beneficially.

Emerman said that Gebhardt and Butler like to say that the best farm ground in Ohio is at the bottom of Lake Erie, so Emerman said they decided to test this theory so that they can find beneficial uses for dredge material to put on farmlands.

He said Toledo's Combined Disposed Facility (CDF) consists of 4 cells of material and that these cells are drying up. This gave them the idea to put out an RFP to determine the best way to use dredge material for farm field application with an emphasis of using CDF dredge.

OLEC received 6 proposals for research. Emerman said he invited all 6 researchers out to the CDF to help fine tune their proposals. Essentially, the Corps would be pumping the dredge and then it was up to researchers to determine what to do with that dredge.

Chairman Butler asked if Emerman could explain the photo in the powerpoint. Emerman said that the photo displayed was a photo of the CDF. He said that the Toledo Port Authority and the US Army Corps own this particular CDF. He said for these projects they would be using Corps material where they can stage the application.

Emerman mentioned that this project stems from a grant that OLEC and the City of Oregon are trying for in which they use the material from the Corps for farm field application.

Moving on to the grants, as Emerman said they received 6 proposals. He brought together OLEC's new committee, the Dredge Research and Innovation in Farming Team (DRIFT) to help score the projects. He said DRIFT was created back at the April meeting for this purpose. DRIFT's first meeting was an introductory meeting in June followed by an August meeting to score these projects.

Each member scored their favorite. BGSU was clearly the favorite and then there were 3 dead in the middle. He said BGSU's project was evaluating corn yield, metal uptake, and metal and nutrient runoff, using various proportions of a dredge/soil mix

He said two were a tie for second and that the commission couldn't go wrong with either project. One project was Wright State and the other OSU. He said to break the tie they asked two OEPA staff who sit on the committee but don't vote to rank them. That is what got them to recommend Wright State and BGSU for funding.

BGSU's grant would be evaluating corn yield, metal uptake, and metal and nutrient runoff, using various proportions of a dredge/soil mix. The Wright State would be studying whether cover crops will improve beneficial microorganisms and reduce contaminants in dredge.

Emerman opened it up for questions in which Director Zehringer asked if Wright State's research was going to be conducted out of the main campus? Emerman replied that they would be using the CDF for some of their research that that for h analysis they would be using some of BGSU's facilities. Chairman Butler asked what kind of time frame were these projects under and how were they going to share their results. Emerman said that each researcher had a different way they would promote their findings. Some of their examples were publishing articles, attending meetings and conferences with an emphasis on engaging farmers. He said some were doing local breakfast meeting with farmers. He

said in terms of timeframe, this will be an 18-month grant cycle. He said this way they can get the CDF ready for planting in May. Kosek-Sills added that she said this is a little longer than a normal grant cycle but that they wanted to allow for a crop year.

Chairman Butler mentioned that this idea started as a WIIN discussion, what will happen with this research if Ohio doesn't get selected for this grant? Emerman said that while he hopes Ohio gets selected, this won't impact this research. This was always the goal of using demonstrations for farmers to see the benefits of using dredge material. He said this is what they have always believed in terms of how good this material is to use but that now they will have the research to back up that claim.

Chairman Butler asked if Emerman could discuss a little more about the Ohio Dredge Summit coming up. Emerman responded saying that Ohio was hosting a Dredge Summit at the Lorain County Community College on October 15. This would be a follow up to the Dredge Workshop that OEPA hosted 2 years ago. Some of the things going to be discussed included hearing updates on OEPA dredge projects, regulatory updates and breakdown discussions on wetlands projects, farmfield application and dredge as a marketable soil.

Emerman added that this Summit is geared to be more conversational. He said they want to hear from stakeholders. He said that OEPA is working through the rules process on beneficial use. They just ended their public comment period. This is identifying what soil would need a beneficial use permit and that there is some that is already safe that wouldn't need a permit if their harbor is deemed "safe".

Commissioner Allen asked who was doing an economic costs/benefit analysis on this to determine the best ways to market or use this? Emerman said this is some of what they are trying to get at with the DRIFT grants. After concluding the research, they want to learn how to market or brand the use to show farmers. This research also helps understand the best way to transport the material such as pumping it or hauling it. Butler also responded to Allen's question that Ohio has come a long way. He mentioned that before Ohio really started moving on this they wanted to understand the material's composition and if it was clean. He said that since we have found most of this material to be clean, now we are working on the guideposts and then will push to understand the economic benefits.

Commissioner Stouffer asked if Emerman knew of any other places this type of research was being conducted? Emerman responded that he knew in Kansas he thought that there was research where dredge was applied to farmfields but that production had stalled and that he didn't know what results really came from that. He said each harbor has unique sediment that even if information came from that study it is tough to apply to Ohio's harbors because it is more of a case by case basis. Commissioner Wolf asked if both studies were going to be conducted in greenhouse? Emerman said that some of BGSU's study would be in a greenhouse.

Seeing no more discussion, Chairman Butler asked for a motion.

Commissioner Cogan moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the following Lake Erie Protection Fund grant proposals be funded:

Dredged material benefits for crop production and environmental implications, Bowling Green State University for \$50,000 and Dredged material benefits for crop production and environmental implications, Wright State University for \$50,000.

Commissioner Wolf seconded the motion.

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

Kosek-Sills wanted to briefly mention that with funding these two Dredge projects there was still close to \$100,000 for quarter 4 grants.

Kosek-Sills moved on to give a report on Ohio's Domestic Action Plan (DAP). She said that they made a few updates before Gebhardt left and that those were submitted to USEPA. Kosek-Sills mentioned that there were no significant changes but they did reference the integrated report including the impairment designation and the Maumee AOC BUI. She said they expect to have an update on the Portage River targets and the Maumee watershed for their next changes to the DAP.

Butler said the DAP has been a roadmap and that it will continue to adapt as more monitoring and data is collected and it allows for us to track our progress. He said he would be happy to have some Ohio EPA staff attend the next meeting and presents some of the monitoring data. Commissioners all agreed this would be beneficial since there had been come recent questions regarding these monitoring numbers.

Commissioner Allen asked if Butler thought they were going to achieve their 40 percent reduction goal. Butler replied that he thought the 40 percent was a policy response to a science problem. He said he could see that that state could be at 39 percent reduction and there could still be a bloom. He mentioned that people should be cautious about these numbers and that is why the DAP was built on adaptive management so we can adjust the targets if needed.

Kosek-Sills moved on to give a LAMP update. She explained that the LAMP is the Lake Erie Lakewide Action and Management Plan and she sits on the committee that is working to update it. Kosek-Sills showed the Commission the table of contents. She said that if anyone had further questions on this to ask her. She then mentioned the LAMP's schedule and said that it is due to be released June 2019.

Butler proceeded to discuss OLEC's financial report. He said that state agencies were due to have their budgets in next week. He said that Ohio EPA and OLEC were working on transition documents for the new administration. He said until the new administration takes over he didn't plan on appointing a new executive director as he felt that should be left up to the new administration.

Commissioner Allen asked what happened to the money left over in OLEC's account if it is not spent? Butler introduced Laura Factor, Ohio EPA's Assistant Director to answer Commissioner Allen's question. Factor said that the money will remain in the account and that the Commission will just have to ask for the spending authority to use it in the future. This tends to happen a lot and would not be unique for the Commission to have to do this.

Kosek-Sills mentioned that OLEC's license plates sales actually showed an increase in sales this quarter. She said that now that Garrity was on board they hoped to work on a better sales strategy for the license plates. Butler mentioned that there was a lot of competition out there now in terms of different license plates since the state had changed the rules on creating new ones.

Before Butler moved on to Agency Reports, he asked that Ohio Sea Grant give an update on their grant work. Sarah Orlando stood up and said she was filling in for Chris Winslow. He was unable to attend because he was at a meeting with all the Sea Grant directors in the country. Orlando mentioned that Ohio Sea Grant had been very busy this summer and fall hosting many events and getting more funding for research.

She said Ohio Sea Grant helped to host the annual State of the Science about Lake Erie. She said it was broken into 3 sessions, one was a panel of farmers to discuss HABs that had over 200 in attendance. She said its purpose was to bring together more partnerships and move toward solutions.

Then she mentioned the passage of a Senator Gardner and Representative Arndt bill that allowed for more funding to go toward the lake. She thanked both the legislators for their work. In that bill, Ohio Sea Grant asked for money toward updating their lab space and for monitors that collect real-time data. She also mentioned that they were gearing up to meet with state agencies to see what their research needs were for ODHE funding.

Finally, she said that Ohio Sea Grant is gearing up for their national site visit. This visit is made by NOAA every 4 years to assess Ohio Sea Grant as a program and let them know of potential funding opportunities. She said they were very excited. Chairman Butler thanked Orlando for the updates and moved on to agency reports.

Agency Reports:

Tim Hill, ODOT – Hill mentioned that ODOT had several projects up on the lake this year. He mentioned they had a shoreline repair project in Lake County starting soon, partnered with ODNR. He also mentioned that the damage at Stanton Park they were able to put back the sand and assist in any other erosion that took place.

Director Jim Zehringer, ODNR – He said it's a good year to fish in Ohio. Zehringer mentioned ODNR hosted 2 Fish Ohio Days this year, one in the central basin which was good for perch and then one in the western basin which was good for walleye. He said the Lieutenant Governor was in attendance for one of those.

Zehringer said that he and Director Butler attended a meeting at Region 5 USEPA with all Agriculture, Natural Resource and EPA directors of the Great Lakes states to discuss runoff. He said it is not just an Ohio problem. However, he felt that Ohio is leading the way on finding a solution to this issue. He mentioned while he was down in Florida they were experiencing the red tide. He said that HAB has greatly affected the state and Ohio should look at what work is going on there. However, he still thinks Ohio is on the right step especially in the case of St. Mary's.

Zehringer mentioned that ODNR would be hosting the grand opening of the lodge on North Bass Island. He said ODNR would like to invite all commissioners up to the opening this Thursday. He mentioned that for years the lodge sat vacant but now visitors can take their families up there and enjoy many new things like their kayaking water trail.

He also mentioned they just finished the boat ramp at Catawba Island. He said ODNR has also completed several other improvements to Marblehead and East Harbor.

Director Butler, Ohio EPA - Butler said he thought the meeting in Chicago Zehringer referenced was a success. He said they discussed nutrient loading issues, HABs and asked, "what is the science telling us?" about some of these issues. He said they also hosted USEPA Region 5 Administrator, Cathy Stepp, in Cleveland with ODNR. He said they visited a dredging and drilling site. He said that Stepp appreciated all the various issues Ohio has to deal with and the work its agencies do.

Butler also said that Ohio had hosted Bill Northey, Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services. During their tour they went on several farm tours. He said he would like to follow up with his office on Ohio's ongoing efforts.

Finally, Butler mentioned that there is still ongoing discussion regarding the Governor's Executive Order on watersheds in distress. He said their recommendations are with the Soil and Water Conservation Commission. He said they have a meeting in early October to decide on the rules. Butler expressed that he thought these rules were important and that we need to move forward with them.

Lyn Tolan, ODSA – She mentioned that they were still promoting people to come visit the lake. She said they had a fabulous year around the lake in terms of marketing. She said this year they have worked on more media for Ohio's trails. To find the trails, visit trails.ohio.org. She said they have beer, ice cream and wine trails.

Tolan said this year they doubled their earned media and increased their paid media. She said they have been working in a 300-mile radius to attract visitors. They are currently in the middle of their fall campaign and November 1 kicks off their winter campaign. She said they are starting to see their impact and continue to go to businesses to see what else they can do.

Gene Phillips, ODH – Phillips said ODH was working on their end of the season beach report, as part of their funding. He said E coli data will be posted on ODH's website very soon.

John Schlichter, ODA – not present.

While Agency Reports were going on, Chairman Butler asked all the Commissioners to also give an update if they would like.

Commissioner Allen – He mentioned that East of the lake was seeing good fishing. He wanted to mention that a while ago the central basin had seen a decent bloom and that several citizens had started sort of a "GoFundMe" account to work on a solution. He said it might not have been a long-term solution but that the work they are doing, everyone is interested and willing to contribute to a solution.

Commissioner Stouffer – Stouffer mentioned it had been a dynamic summer up on the lake especially for walleye and perch. He said the Lake Erie Foundation was having a lot of good conversations about the Lake. He said he was thankful the lake did not see a large bloom this year.

Commissioner Wolf – He mentioned that him and Kosek-Sills met with Joe Netter on what his team is doing in Bryan, Ohio. He is conducting research on pH in soil and said he has an impressive operation out there.

He also mentioned that he was a part of a group of business leaders in the Toledo area who have been meeting regarding the lake's issues. This group that included Wolf and Commissioner Hylant also met in D.C. to discuss nutrient runoff. They hope to continue these conversations moving forward so that the business community is also part of the larger solution.

Chairman Butler said he appreciated those meetings and encouraged these businesses to stay engaged.

Commissioner Bryant – Friedrich – no report.

Commissioner Cogan – He mentioned he was glad to be back on the commission and continue to work at achieving the 40 percent reduction goal. He said he had a great summer on the lake.

Public Comment – no public comments.

Chairman Butler asked if there were any more comments. Director Zehringer said that he wanted to add that ODNR's Coastal Office was very busy with emergency shoreline protections requests. He said if anyone had questions to ask their Coastal Office. He also said that it is being reported this is the second-best record for walleye hatch in the Western Basin.

Seeing no more comments, Chairman Butler asked for a motion of adjournment.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:48 a.m.

Signature of Chair:



Date:

~~12-13-18~~ 12-13-18
