



Meeting Minutes

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Quarterly Meeting, September 20, 2023
Lake Metroparks, Lakefront Lodge
30525 Lakeshore Blvd, Willowick, OH

Call to Order and Roll Call – Director Anne Vogel, Ohio EPA

Commission Members Present:

Director Anne Vogel, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
Mary Mertz, Director Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Kirk Hines, Designee Ohio Department of Agriculture
Tim Hill, Designee for Director Marchbanks, Ohio Department of Transportation
Scott Ryan, Designee for Director Mihalik, Ohio Department of Development
Gene Phillips, Designee for Ohio Department of Health
Bill Wolf, Commissioner
Crystal Davis, Commissioner
Danielle Giannantonio, Commissioner
Diane Miller, Commissioner

Staff Present:

Joy Mulinex, OLEC
Lynn Garrity, OLEC
Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC
Nicole Mieske Knab, OLEC
Hannah Boesinger, OLEC

Guests:

Speakers: 1
10 observers in the audience

Welcome and Agenda Overview: Director Vogel called The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed everyone.

She asked for roll call.

(roll call)

A quorum was declared.

Welcome from Meeting Host Paul Palagyi, Lake Metroparks - Executive Director, Lake Metroparks. Paul shared an update on the Painesville building, a 2.5 paved asphalt ADA

accessible path, directly on Lake Erie. Seeing economic change and investing in the community because of the installation of the trail.

ACTION: Approval of June 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve by Director Mary Mertz, and Commissioner Bill Wolf seconded the motion.
Motion carried with no dissent.

ACTION: Amending Bylaws (*Designees*)

Motion to approve by Commissioner Diane Miller, and Commissioner Danielle Giannantonio seconded the motion.
Motion carried with no dissent.

ACTION: Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest

Motion to approve by Commissioner Bill Wolf, and Tim Hill
Motion carried with no dissent.

Lynn Garrity spoke on the 2023 Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission received over 244 entries, the fifth largest pool since 1992. Shared community excitement over interest and Lake Erie continues today. Over 74 participants submitted photos. Extended thank you to judging panel that consisted of Ohio Lake Erie Commission, State Agency, and Commissioner Barter. Due to the large number of submissions, there were 12 photos selected for the 2023 Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest. The winners received Lake Erie experiences thanks to the photo contest prize partners including: Firelands Adventure Tours, Ohio Tourism, Sawmill Creek & Resort, Lakeside Chautauqua, Miller Ferry, Jet Express, Maumee Bay Lodge and Kayak the Bay.

Lynn handed the meeting back over to Director Vogel, who announced the 2023 Life on Lake Erie winners including:

- **Overall Judges Favorite:** : "Sailboats on the Vermilion River," Scott D. of Vermilion, OH
- Winning Photo: "Exiting the Storm," by Adrian Y. of Sandusky, OH
- "Sunrise Kayak," by Molly D. of Elmore, OH
- Winning Photo: "Autumn at Marblehead State Park," by Mark A. of Nova, OH
- Winning Photo: "Cotton Candy Pinwheel at the Beach," by Daryl M. of Willowick, OH
- Winning Photo: "Angry Lake," by Melissa V. of Vermilion, OH
- Winning Photo "Mather Sunset," by Doug T. of Shaker Heights, OH
- Honorable Mention: "Sunset Over Marblehead," by Anna L. of Brecksville, OH
- Honorable Mention: "Gathering at the Marsh," by Lori M. of Martin, OH
- Honorable Mention: "Visiting Perry's Victory Peace Memorial," by Elliot G. of Ashland, OH
- Honorable Mention: "Trumpeter Swan Family," by Joan P. of Delaware, OH
- Honorable Mention: "Sailboats, Lorain Harbor," by Scott D. of Vermilion, OH

Director Mertz asked about a public display and suggested Maumee Display, Geneva Display, which the commission has done in previous years.

ACTION: State Revolving Loan Fund – Resolution 32:19

Addresses concerns about the drinking water and wastewater State Revolving Loan Funds and which are important in Ohio and across the country for upgrading infrastructure associated with earmarks. The SRFs were established by the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act to provide funding to states to capitalize revolving loan funds which the states could use to make subsidized loans for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.

- Commissioner Giannantonio with Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District is a beneficiary, and their position is they don't want to see any restraints on the state borrowing side.
- Mary Mertz, asked if we added Ohio earmarks are we the same? Director Vogel, said no we are behind on funding for drinking water projects by \$5.6 million dollars.
- Diane Miller – abstained from voting. No one is questioning the projects are being funded, it's how they are earmarked.

Motion to approve by Director, Anne Vogel, and second by Commissioner Crystal Davis.
Motion carried with no dissent.

Special Reports

Maggie Rodgers, Plant Operations Manager, City of Cleveland - Drinking Water Infrastructure/Hypoxia

Questions

Diane Miller asked how long does the hypoxia usually run into the fall. Maggie responded that weather can break up remnants, or it can happen more calmly when the top section of the water cools – it takes less and less energy to break thermocline.

Bill Wolf – have you charted hypoxia if it's growing or decreasing, or any solution? Maggie mentioned that NOAA went back to 2006 using data available to figure out which wind conditions produce upwelling. Research is limited, but in the last couple of years you can get near-shore hypoxia and in deeper waters. Calm warm conditions cause near shore hypoxia, which we don't see as high levels of manganese.

Vogel, asked if the intact solution the first of its kind? Maggie confirmed yes.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report.....Joy Mulinex

Governor and General Assembly completed work on the 2024/2025 budget, and OLEC has been funded for the next couple of years. Budget includes ability to expand from 4 to 5 staff members.

The new Logo was issued "The Heart of it All" and will be rolled out on the OLEC platforms.

H2Ohio Annual Report includes update on how money is being spent, which came out recently. Visit H2Ohio.gov to review the budget.

OLEC 2024-2025 budget, rolled over into another two years of spending. Including applying for additional federal funding to be administered, and how to include additional grant funds in future snapshots.

Ohio DAP 2023/LAMP Sandra Kosek-Sills

The Great Lake Water Quality Agreement Annex 4 calls for domestic action plans on part of parties in the agreement to address harmful algae blooms and hypoxia. Action plan issued for trying to prevent and minimize problems. US/Canada will be revising their plan, Ohio is under the federal umbrella of the federal domestic action plan and revising our piece.

Held a workshop in the Spring, informing people of status of resources, actions, and plan to kick-off the process. Working through the summer with state/staff experts on actions steps we're taking. October will be a public meeting – DRAFT Domestic Action Plan will go out for review. State Agencies will get one more review, public comment for a month. Annex 4 will have a meeting of sub-committee in Mid-November, and final draft by then to present.

Annex 4 will be having a meeting of subcommittee in mid-December and will have a final draft to present to Annex 4 sub-committee. Michigan and Indiana in addition to federal governments are also working on their plans. An Annex 4 webinar in December is planned to the general public about status of Federal DAPs.

USEPA posted an RFA for the Great Lakes Environmental Justice Grant Program. Funding is from infrastructure and jobs act and specifically looks at putting GLRI projects closer to the ground in underserved communities who are not only disadvantaged but also historically affected by environmental challenges and have less capacity to go after a federal grant. OLEC will be administering the new grant fund if awarded and is working with the Black Environmental Leaders and Rural Action organizations. Appreciate help of Commissioner Crystal Davis to connect with communities/organizations. OLEC will do the administrative piece. OLEC applied for the grant, application closed on September 15 and hope to hear an update by January. We requested a little less than six million dollars for six years of programing.

LAMP: Due to be revised this year for 2024 – 2028. OLEC is currently assisting with the drafting and revising for the new Lake Erie LAMP with US and Canada. Sandra is on the writing committee, and assisting in making sure that Ohio projects and actions are updated. Internal and agency reviews will continue with hope to finish early 2024.

GLRI, AOC, LEPF.....Lynn Garrity

GLRI: Funding coming into Ohio based on state priorities. The Commission meets with the state agencies to learn priorities to submit for GLRI. Under FFY23, the state received under 15 million to date but this number will likely go up. This funding outlined in the information provided is only to state agencies. There are a number of local partners and implementers that also receive GLRI funding. For FFY24, the state submitted its last priority in September. The State has submitted over 64 million in state priorities for GLIR FFY24.

GLRI Action Plan 4 is underway by US EPA, who will assemble draft document. That will be shared with state and then the public over the course of the next six months. The Commission is aware that NOAA has a number of request of applications for a number of coastal habitat opportunities and have shared with over 100 Lake Erie stakeholders in the basin.

AOC: A milestone was achieved reaching 50% of BUIs removed in Ohio's AOC. Two were removed over the summer, and Black River is with US EPA for final approval. AOC Program is well underway to get to the last 17 BUI's done in the years to come plus i40+

Management Projects currently underway. Up to ten projects are in construction in 2023. Current Great Lakes Legacy Act Projects: Cuyahoga Gorge, Lower Maumee.

LEPF: One Closed Grants in Q1 through city of Defiance, for the project Maumee River Stabilization and Riparian Restoration – conducted a preliminary design for 1,400 linear feet of the Maumee River. The Commission is looking to identify partners for future focused projects on improving LEQI, and continuing to review that for LEPF funds for 2024.

Annual Lake Erie Protection Fund Report: Awarded \$8,278 for 2023 with work underway on updating LEQI metrics.

Joy Mulinex added that The Commission has finished the state audit. There was a recommendation to run an additional payroll report.

Commissioner Reports: Each Commission member will provide a brief update as time allows.

Crystal Davis:

- Alliance for the Great Lakes has partnered with a number of organizations to create the SRF advocates form – srfadvocatesform.org. This is a platform where SRF administrations and environmental non-profit organizations and utility operators can collaborate to comment on intended use plans and advocate strategies and shared learning. Crystal leaves tomorrow for D.C., for Congressional Black Caucus and will be meeting with Congresswoman Sykes, who is a member of the Water Resources and Environment Sub-Committee of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.
- Alliance for the Great Lakes hired new Senior Agriculture and Restoration Policy Manager
- Healing our Water Conference is set for October 12 & 13 in Cleveland.

Commissioner Danielle Giannantonio:

- Clean Water SRF nominations end next week. The Sewer District works with member communities who haven't entered in the SRF's and educating and assisting with filling out forms.
- Annual Clean Water Fest – family-friendly event 9am-4pm on Saturday where people can come for tours, educational events and activities.

Commissioner Diane Miller:

- August/September the research team University of Toledo goes out on the research vessel, important part of education and research mission.
- Events: Oct 2, ODNR doing groundbreaking for constructed wetlands going in at the Alumni Center. Oct 20, 2-5pm University of Toledo, Water Taskforce (WTF) doing a showcase on campus. Interdisciplinary group that stretches across colleges/campus that participate in showcase.

Gene Phillips: End of swim season, all beach water quality data is being collected and prepared for submission to US EPA.

Director Tim Hill: Project on Route 531 will address erosion issues. 5 million dollars have been set aside to address issues. A major storm hit that caused erosion issues and resources are being utilized to restore the area. Partnering with ODNR and Army Corp, 23 million dollars has been set aside to examine long-term fixes to 531.

Designee Kirk Hines: Director Baldrige attended the National Association of state directors of AG in Wyoming. Recognized staff of OLEC, passion and dedication and enjoy working with staff. Shared update on activities related to H2Ohio, with focus on 24 counties in the western basin side – started with 14 and added 10. Currently doing re-enroll for original 14 between now and December.

Director Mary Mertz: H2Ohio, given budget in July, for the wetlands project of \$30 million. ODNR have $\frac{3}{4}$ of contracts in place to get this year's new projects moving. Conferences being held included OSU State of the Science, Great Lakes Commission in Toledo Oct 4/5, and Healing Our Waters.

Director Scott Ryan: Shared congratulations for the photo contest winners. Acknowledged that their work help tells Ohio's story. Shared update on DOD - tagline "empowering communities to succeed" which they do through 90 different programs that affect individuals, businesses, and communities. If there's something in your community or area, put it on his radar to connect with the most appropriate person.

Public Comment

Sandy Bihn, Lake Erie Waterkeeper submitted written comments she would like included in the record. (included on next page (pg 12))

Adjourn Business Meeting

Motion to adjourn by Bill Wolf, and Diane Miller seconded the motion.
The motion carried on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 am

Signature of Secretary: _____

Mary Mertz

Date: 12/21/2023

Signature of Chair: _____

Anne M Vogel

Date: 12/27/2023