



Meeting Minutes

Quarterly Meeting, June 14, 2023
Mylander Pavilion, Sandusky, Ohio

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

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order at 10:11 a.m.

Commission Members Present:

Anne Vogel, Director, Ohio EPA, OLEC Chairman
Mary Mertz, Director, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)
Brian Baldrige, Director, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)
Jack Marchbanks, Director, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)
Scott Ryan, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Development (ODA)
Mary Schaffer, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)
Bill Wolf, Commissioner
Jim Stouffer, Commissioner
Danielle Giannantonio, Commissioner
Diane Miller, Commissioner
Kate Bartter, Commissioner

Commission Members Absent:

Crystal Davis, Commissioner
Richard Hylant, Commissioner

Staff Present:

Joy Mulinex, OLEC
Lynn Garrity, OLEC
Hannah Boesinger, OLEC

Welcome and Agenda Overview: Anne Vogel, Director, OEPA

Welcome from Meeting Host: John Orzech, Interim City Manager, Sandusky, Ohio

Mr. Orzech welcomed the Commission and guests. He stated that the city of Sandusky recognizes the potential the Lake Erie Waterfront holds for the economic growth and enjoyment of our residents. Mr. Orzech outlined the improvement projects recently completed or underway including the Jackson Street Pier, the reconstruction of Shoreline Drive and the Sandusky Bay Pathway, Battery Park .

Commissioner Wolf moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the meeting minutes from March 8, 2023. Commissioner Miller seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Marchbanks moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission approves the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan. Commissioner Giannantonio seconded the motion.

Lynn Garrity explained that the Commission is required by code to develop a plan every two years, and 2023 was an opportunity to update the plan. OLEC coordinated with state agencies that form the Commission. Two draft plan webinars were held, and public comments were received. The Plan outlines goals, activities, and accomplishments of the previous plan.

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

Commissioner Stouffer moved the following resolution:

Resolved, that the Commission supports the designation of the week of May 5 through May 14, 2023, as “National American Birding Week.” Commissioner Wolf seconded the motion.

Director Mertz shared that the Department of Natural Resources is very excited about improvements made at Magee Marsh in coordination with the Black Swamp Bird Observatory. These improvements and the week in birding supports area recreation and the economy. Commissioner Stouffer requested that Kim Kaufman with the BSBO be recognized for her leadership in birding.

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

Special Report: GLRI Habitat and Dredge Material Management-Cedar Point Causeway, Scudder Mackey, Chief, Office of Coastal Management (OCM), ODNR.

Chief Mackey discussed coastal and climate resiliency, beneficial use of dredge material, the Sandusky Bay Initiative, and infrastructure investments. He said Ohio needs to encourage the use of protection and restoration techniques along Ohio's Lake Erie Coast including nature-based shorelines which are innovative designs that incorporate natural materials in ways that mimic natural coastal and ecological functions.

The purpose of the framework for resilient GLRI investments is to engage a Federal/State collaboration that will identify the expected range of future Great Lakes water levels, wave heights, and ice conditions. The framework will prepare guidance materials and checklists to assist with planning, design, and the implantation of resilient and sustainable projects along Great Lakes Coasts.

The USACE Great Lakes Resiliency Study is a collaborative five-year study that is cost-shared with the Great Lakes states. The overall objective is to protect the long-term economic, environmental, and social value of the Great Lakes Coast through proactive planning. The project will invest \$14.4M over five years.

The Cedar Point Causeway Project is a 32-acre wetland created with 140,000 cubic yards of dredged material. The wetland will increase fish and wildlife habitat and improve water quality. This is an example of a nature-based retaining structure and is a GLRI-funded dredge material placement project.

The Sandusky Bay Initiative started in 2015. It is a very broad restoration effort in Sandusky Bay. Water flows west to east into the central basin of Lake Erie. As water moves left to right it becomes progressively cleaner—a treatment train. Director Mertz added that significant funding was provided to The Nature Conservancy (TNC) for planning, engineering, and design for the last three years on a number of Sandusky Bay projects. Chief Mackey emphasized that we have continual monitoring since 2015 which has helped create a model which has informed projects.

Special Report: Lake Erie Community and Coastal Resiliency Grant Highlights from Port Clinton and Oak Harbor (Recipients of Grant Funding).

Mayor Michael Snider with the City of Port Clinton provided updates on Lakeshore Drive revetment improvements. The goal is to revitalize the revetment to address wave action and move utility poles to opposite side of road. The project will be led by ODOT. A city-wide utility charge will help fund the project. The mayor listed additional improvements to Port Clinton that have added to a downtown revitalization.

Mayor Babcock, with the Village of Oak Harbor discussed the OLEC grant-funded project for their Community Action and Coastal Resiliency Plan. The project goal is to create a community action and coastal resiliency plan to embrace one comprehensive planning approach. The focus of the regional study was to complete comprehensive planning and convene a Portage River stakeholder group. They plan to integrate Lake Erie action plans in all areas of planning and include action plan goals within the scope of comprehensive needs. Results of a community survey showed top responses involved community parks and recreation and access to river.

Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report

Joy Mulinex, Executive Director, has been testifying in FY 24-25 budget hearings. Funding for OLEC remained the same as Governor's budget proposal. Director Mulinex participated in a GLRI Coordination Meeting in Chicago, a Great Lakes Executive Committee Meeting, and GLWQA Annex Meetings. She presented on the FY-23 OLEC budget.

Sandra Kosek-Sills was absent so Director Mulinex provided her updates. She explained the timeline for updating Ohio's Domestic Action Plan. Also, the H2Ohio Modeling project is expected to finish in December 2023.

Lynn Garrity highlighted the AOC program including the work towards the removal of three BUIs in the coming months and completion of a management action in the Cuyahoga AOC with Sowinski Park coordinated through NEORSD and Doan Brook Watershed Partners. With respect to the Lake Erie Protection Fund—no closed grants occurred in Q4.

Agency/Commissioner Reports

Commissioners provided short updates on Lake Erie-related activities.

Public Comment:

Jim Rose, Board Member, Lake Erie Waterkeeper-Mr. Rose provided written comments to the Commission. He thanked the Commission for being able to speak.

Larry Fletcher, Executive Director, Lake Erie Shores and Island-discussed the impact of tourism on the coastal economy. He offered assistance to the agencies attending the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.


Signature of Chair:



9/28/2023

Date:

Signature of Secretary:



Date:

09/27/2023
