

### **Meeting Minutes**

June 8, 2022 – 10:00AM

Visitors Aquatic Center – 360 W. Shore Blvd, Put-In-Bay, OH 43456

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

Laurie Stevenson, Director of Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA)  
Dorothy Pelanda, Director of Ohio Department of Agriculture  
Jack Marchbanks, Director of Ohio Department of Transportation  
Mindy Bankey, Director Designee, Ohio Department of Natural Resources  
Matthew Maclaren, Director Designee, Ohio Department of Development  
Gene Phillips, Director Designee, Ohio Department of Health  
Bill Wolf, Commissioner  
Jim Stouffer, Commissioner  
Crystal Davis, Commissioner  
Danielle Giannantonio, Commissioner  
Diane Miller, Commissioner  
Richard Hylant, Commissioner

#### **Staff Present:**

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

**Guests:** 10 observers in the audience

#### **Call to Order and Roll Call – Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA and Commission Chair**

Director Stevenson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m.

(roll call)

#### **Welcome from Aquatic Visitors Center, Dr. Brian Alford**

Director Laurie Stevenson turned over to Assistant Director of Stone Lab, Brian Alford, he welcomed the group, gave introduction of the Aquatic Visitors Center, and offered tour after meeting.

Next order of business to approve March meeting minutes as edited.

**ACTION: Resolution to adopt March 9 minutes.**

Commissioner Diane Miller moved to adopt the March 9 minutes as amended. Commissioner Bill Wolfe seconded. No discussion followed. A roll-call vote was held, and the motion carried.

**ACTION: Resolution of Lake Erie Commission Advisors and how to process in the future with meeting structure.**

Director Mulinex explained that conversation that started 2021 on how best organize the quarterly meeting moving forward. As a result, the commission started a more strategic process to organize meeting agendas and speakers. Director Mulinex thanked members who served on the working group which recommended organizing quarterly meetings around “meeting themes” in efforts for a more concentrated agenda. The commission will dissolve the request for quarterly updates from the organizations previously identified advisors and will seek distinct expertise and guidance based upon the annual agenda for Commission meeting themes to expand and broaden the strategic advice and information on Lake Erie priorities and the mission of the Commission. This allows for the development of an agenda based on these themes throughout the year and allows the commission to invite experts in various fields to speak on specific topics.

Director Stevenson also thanked everyone for their feedback and shared that she thinks the new structure will allow the meeting to be more intentional and create a forum that’s value added and moved to the resolution.

**RESOLVED: The Ohio Lake Erie Commission will establish an annual agenda for its quarterly meeting topics and identify a diverse and holistic list of individuals and organizations who could provide strategic advice to the Commissioners.**

**Be It Further Resolved: The Commission thanks the individuals and organizations that have participated as Advisors at quarterly meeting and will continue to work with those organizations.**

**Be It Further Resolved: The Commission will dissolve the request for quarterly updates from the organizations previously identified advisors and will seek distinct expertise and guidance based upon the annual agenda for Commission meeting themes in order to expand and broaden the strategic advice and information on Lake Erie priorities and the mission of the Commission.**

Richard Hylant moved to approve the resolution, and Director Marchbanks seconded. No discussion followed. A roll-call vote was held, and the motion carried.

**ACTION: Lake Erie Protection Fund SFY22 Grant Award Recommendations**

Director Stevenson introduced Lynn Garrity to speak to the Grant Award Recommendations.

Lynn Garrity gave an overview on the Lake Erie Protection Fund Grant Recommendations for SFY22. The Lake Erie Commission had a request for proposals after the March meeting with a deadline of April 22, 2022. The Commission received a total of seven grant proposals for a total requested amount of \$324,980. \$150,000 in funds was approved in the March meeting. FY22 priorities focused on preparing projects for implantation to protect and restore Lake Erie. The Commission assembles a Grant Review Committee with representatives from all six state Commission agencies, who met on May 12 to review the grants.

The Grants Review Committee recommends three grant proposals to the Commission for approval:

- The Nature Conservancy: Support Edge of Field Conservation with ACPF Toolbox for \$50,000. The application of the Agricultural Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) in 16 watersheds in the Western Lake Erie Basin to identify and implement projects toward nonpoint source pollution reduction.
- Chagrin River Watershed Partners: Implementation Planning to Protect Ohio's Lake Erie Watersheds for \$50,000. Prepare implantation plans for 12 projects in four watershed of the Central Lake Erie Basin that aim to restore 9,370 linear feet of stream, 32 acres of riparian corridor, and 13 acres of wetland.
- City of Defiance: Maumee River Stabilization and Riparian Restoration Phase 2 - \$50,000. Implementation plans for expansion of riparian restoration for an additional 1,400 linear feet of the Maumee River.

Bill Wolf moved to accept the recommendations for Lake Erie Protection Fund grant awards, and Jim Stouffer seconded the motion. A roll call vote was called, and the motion carried.

### **Special Reports**

- Lake Erie Fisheries, Travis Hartman, Lake Erie Fisheries Program Administrator ODNR
- Lake Erie Boating, Michelle Burke, President of Lake Erie Marine Trades Association
- Engaging Communities to Reconnect with Nature, Kim Woodford, Journey on Yonder "Joy"

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

Director Stevenson asked Director Mulinex for the Commission Office Report. Director Mulinex requested agencies to follow the Commission on social channels to stay up-to-date with Commission efforts and events. If anyone is interest in latest federal Great Lakes/Lake Erie reports over the spring, please reach out to the Commission. Mulinex reported on the Water Resource Development Act and the Brandon Road Lock and

Dam Project. Mulinex reminded the commissioners to complete the Ethics Forms. Mulinex provided a budget report and then asked Dr. Sandra Kosek-Sills for her updates.

Sandra Kosek-Sills spoke on the Lake Erie Quality Index. Kosek-Sills mentioned that the LEQI has been sent out to six agencies and hopes to complete the report by the end of the summer.

Lynn Garrity spoke on the Ohio Areas of Concern Program and continued movement on BUI's. The removal of the restrictions of Navigational Dredging BUI in the Black River AOC recently happened, and the Black River has just five more BUI's to remove. Garrity mentioned that recently the Ohio AOC's celebrated milestone events for the Sandhill Crane Wetland (TNC) project in the Maumee AOC and Penn 7 project (GLC, City of Toledo, NOAA). Garrity reported on the number of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative projects coming into Ohio and the estimated Grant Awards for in-state agencies and local implementors. The Commission continues to work on FFY 2023 priorities with federal partners and US EPA.

- FFY 2021, 59 projects, \$57.5 M grant awards
- FFY 2022, 28 projects, \$23 M (pending) grant awards
- FFY 2023, pending – TBD, pending TBD

Garrity finished her report with an update on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest. Entries due to July 21, 2022 with prizes that offer Lake Erie experiences including: Sawmill Creek, Maumee Bay Lodge, Miller Ferry, Jet Express, Kayak the Bay. The winners will be announced at the September meeting.

As part of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, the Commission viewed the second video to highlight the Lake Erie Commission and work the Commission does to protect Life on Lake Erie.

### **Commissioner Reports**

#### **Gene Philips – Ohio Department of Health**

Philips spoke to the 2022 Fish Consumption Advisory Report, which will be coming out soon. Beach season is in full swing, beach monitoring and contractors assisting and local agencies collecting water sample. Working on submitting grant to US EPA.

#### **Richard Hylant--Commissioner**

Hylant mentioned the Great Lakes Protection Fund is in the mist of project funding. The team is working hard to leverage capital in different ways using federal funds and other agency in the research area that bring partners in and help think outside the box. Encourage group to look at Great Lakes Protection Fund website to review projects that currently being funded which are funded based on endowment.

**Bill Wolf – Commissioner**

A couple of weeks ago Bill saw a lawncare company applying fertilizer on lawns and noticed that it was a high phosphate fertilizer. 11 states have banned phosphate fertilizer, Ohio has not. You can still buy in big box stores. 2012 surrounding states have banned this high phosphate. The question posed as to why this hasn't been banned in Ohio. Although it's a small percentage going into the lake, we need to take a leadership role in this issue.

**Dorothy Pelanda – Ohio Department of Agriculture**

H2Ohio continues to grow and change. ODA has had a very wet fall and wet spring – which has prohibited one of the producers that signed up for winter cover crops from being able to apply product. In the coming weeks ODA will introduce a pilot program, which involves 7 of the 24 counties involved in H2Ohio to use drone application for winter cover crops. H2Ohio success relies on producers' voluntary conservation but also their willingness to continue to be innovated. This year a new program will be introduced to producers to engage in the program of two stage ditches. 20 of the two-stage ditches are in the works for this year.

**Mindy Bankey—Ohio Department of Natural Resources**

H2Ohio wetlands progress continues to happen. The Director has been involved in ribbon cuttings in Ashtabula, and others are scheduled for this summer. Went on to mention the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Marblehead Lighthouse and encourage attendees to visit Marblehead and attend some of the events happening over the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Free fishing weekend coming up June 18-19 – get out and explore the fishing opportunities. The Director attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at East Harbor State Park for one of the Nature Centers. ODNR has a lot going on that ties in water quality with nature centers and trails.

**Jim Stouffer--Commissioner**

The Lake Erie Foundation is focused plastics and working with water treatment plants to get the conversation going on how microplastics play a role in Lake Erie. Stouffer thanked ODNR for the facilities, which are well maintained, and offer a first-class experience for many people. He is optimistic about tourism this year and mentioned that people are recognizing that Lake Erie is an economical and efficient place to bring your family to get the whole spectrum of enjoyment between Cedar Point, Islands, etc. Jobs Ohio is working with them to recognize what we have and what we need to build for the future.

**Danielle Giannantonio – Commissioner**

Giannantonio shared her excitement about the infrastructure money through the government. NEORSD plans to apply for grants to help impact local infrastructure.

**Matthew Maclaren – TourismOhio**

The Commissions newest Commission member, Maclaren mentioned this is his fifth year as the TourismOhio State Director. Tourism is doing well, especially in the state of

Ohio. There was 47 billion dollars of visitor spending in 2021, the second highest number ever, coming back quicker than other states. He attributes this to state parks, outdoor activities available, wine country, Lake Erie, and Shores & Island efforts. Maclaren predicts 2022 will be even better with the NBA all-star game, 100k+ people that came in for America's Biggest Week in Birding, state fair, and other events that will be happening for the first time in a couple of years.

### **Jack Marchbanks – Ohio Department of Transportation**

ODOT is working with the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers maritime initiative on their five-year action plan for the waterway. The maritime initiative will be having a meeting in September. ODOT is partnering with City of Sandusky to install roundabout US 6 and Cedar Point Drive, turn lanes to US 6 and other infrastructure on US 6. This is a \$4.6 million project design to limit impacts to high-quality wetlands in the area. The project goes into construction in 2023.

### **Diane Miler - Commissioner**

Miller talked about the Strike Team Boats funded by Great Lakes Fishery Commission and ODNR. There are five teams working on this initiative. The team does four 10 hours days a week on the Sandusky River and Maumee looking for grass carp. They're capturing grass carp less than 10% of the time. Miller mentioned this is great, but it is more than previous years. There are efforts to capture them early in the season before they start laying eggs.

### **Crystal Davis - Commissioner**

Davis supported the efforts of JOY and recognized that representation is extremely important. Davis stressed the importance of addressing the breadth of people impacted by the lake in various conversations surrounding the lake, policy, and funding conversations – and stressed the importance of equitable stakeholder engagement. Davis' number one priority for the year is making sure that both the urban and rural community are part of the decisions made about the lake that impact their everyday lives. Davis went on to discuss water affordability and mentioned the millions of people that are struggling to pay their water bills in the current climate. They recently launched a case study at GreatLakes.org, where they used publicly available data to determine that it costs a family of five located in Toledo, an extra \$100 a year to pay for harmful algae bloom mitigation.

### **Laurie Stevenson – Ohio EPA**

Stevenson reported that Ohio EPA will be working over the next year assisting in the distribution of the federal infrastructure money. The opportunity involves doing effective outreach and communication in talking to communities about the availability of funding and help them meet the challenges they have. Since the last commission meeting, they released an announcement of mini grants to support smaller communities to map out lead lines.

## Public Comments

Peter Houston: He has lived on the island for 17 years and serves on the boards of the Lake Erie Shores & Islands and Lake Erie Foundation. Houston is part of the Great Lakes Island Alliance which includes 32,000 islands in the Great Lakes. Of that, 30 have year-round populations. The goal is to give the island residents a voice. He stressed the opportunities for of healthcare, workforce housing, growth and capacity plan, trash, employees – which are magnified, as you don't have the resources when you live on an island.

Commissioner Stevenson asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:28pm. Commissioner Wolf made a motion to adjourn, and Jim Stouffer seconded the motion. A roll-call vote followed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Signature of Secretary:



Date:

October 12, 2022

Signature of Chair:



Date:

October 14, 2022