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## **Meeting Minutes**

September 21, 2022 – 10:00AM

NEORSD Environmental Services & Maintenance Center

### **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 Chair

Mindy Bankey, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR)

Tracy Intihar, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA)

Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT)

Gene Phillips, Director Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH)

Bill Wolf, Commissioner

Jim Stouffer, Commissioner

Crystal Davis, Commissioner

Danielle Giannantonio, Commissioner

Diane Miller, Commissioner

#### **Staff Present**

Joy Mulinex, OLEC

Sandra Kosek-Sills, OLEC

Nicole Mieske Knab, OLEC

Hannah Boesinger, OLEC

### **Welcome and Agenda Overview: Laurie Stevenson, Director, Ohio EPA**

Director Stevenson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and welcomed everyone. She asked for roll call.

(roll call)

Director Stevenson thanked Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, Commissioner Giannantonio and the team at North Ohio Regional Sewer District for hosting the September Commission Meeting. She turned the meeting over to Kyle Dreyfuss-Wells, who has been the CEO of NEORSD since 2017 and sits on numerous boards including US EPA Great Lakes Advisory Board. Kyle gave a welcome to the commissioners and public present.

### **ACTION: Approval of June 2022 Meeting Minutes**

Motion to approve by Tim Hill, second the motion Bill Wolf.

Director Stevenson spoke about the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest and went on to announce the 2022 Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest Winners. The 2022 Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest Winners include:

Top Overall Winner: "Grandkids At Main Street Beach" by Teri Cassell

"Birds Eye View" by Michelle Wittensoldner

"Hope on the Eventide" by Kevin Dudley

"Lighthouse Wave" by Doug Tayek

"Frozen Beauty" by Hari Gopalkrishnan

"Crack in the Sky" by Daryl Mummey

"Old Woman Creek" by Scott Dommin

"Perkins Sunrise" by Kevin Dudley

"Sandusky Sunset" by Stephanie Goeden

"Toledo Harbor Lighthouse at Sunset" by Kathy Jex

**ACTION: Resolution to Approve the Life on Lake Erie Photo Contest Winners**

Motion to approve by Jim Stouffer, and Bill Wolf second the motion.

Director Stevenson introduced Jerry Rouch, Deputy Director for Infrastructure Funding.

**Special Presentation – Jerry Rouch, Deputy Director for Infrastructure Funding, OH EPA**

**Q&A:**

Commissioner Bill Wolf asked how demands are assessed given various areas. Jerry responded that there are numerous ways, but one specific way is that they solicit nominations around the state, to learn more about what projects they have. They then evaluate the projects and put them through a type of scoring process that help assess one projects will have the biggest impact on public health and water equality.

Commissioner Crystal Davis asked about what technical assistance will be offered to communities. Jerry informed Crystal that funding available now and is a focus. US EPA is strongly encouraging states to invest in technical assistance. It's a work in progress, and they partner Rural Community Assistance Program (RCAP) to help identify smaller local governments and bridge gap between the two to get connected to resources. They are looking for opportunities to offer technical assistance in urban areas.

**ACTION: Resolution on the Lake Erie Water Infrastructure**

Motion to approve by Director Stevenson, and Crystal Davis seconded the motion.

**Special Report:**

Infrastructure to Protect and Restore Lake Erie

Kyle Dreyfus-Wells and Frank Greenland, NEORSD

Q&A: Jim Stouffer asked if there is a sharing going on with Lake Erie region for large infrastructure improvements/technologies to work together to bring together lake issues to fruition? There are systems in place, Frank personally works with Lakewood officials. There is also a state origination, Association of Ohio Metro Waste Policies, that happens within that group. Jim recognized that the effluent levels are at historically low levels in terms of contamination and have made incredible headway over the past several decades. Frank noted that the treatment plants are at a gold and platinum level.

## **Special Report**

SeMia Bray, Cray Consulting Group

### **Joy Mulinex, OLEC, Ohio Lake Erie Commission Office Report**

Director Mulinex introduced OLEC new staff member, Hannah Boesinger. She formally came from the NEOSD and is moving into the Areas of Concern (AOC) program as an Environmental Specialist.

OLEC will be participating next week in the International Great Lakes Public Forum, opportunity for conversations to be had regarding the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and lends a good opportunity to connect with fellow partners, states, federal partners, and Canada on the 10 Annexes that make up the Water Quality Agreement.

Working on Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), the Corps of Engineers' authorization bill that gets passed every two years. There are both a House and Senate bill, and we track provisions that relate to the Great Lakes/Lake Erie including the Brandon Road Lock and Dam Construction, a project designed to keep invasive carp out of the Great Lakes. States and Governors are supportive of the Brandon Road project, however, the cost share component is concerning. Traditionally 35% non-federal match, local partner typically takes on long-term and maintenance expense. In the case of the Brandon Road Lock and Dam, congressional members were successful in both the House and Senate bills in lowering the cost share match down to 10%. The project is close to a billion dollars.

In 2021, the Commission passed a resolution in support of the Great Lakes Winter Commerce Act which is still pending.

December Meeting will highlight 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a reception at Riffe Gallery on December 7<sup>th</sup> following the Quarterly Commission Meeting. The meeting will happen from 1-3pm, and the reception will begin at 3:30 p.m.

The new grant program, Ohio EPA receives GLRI funding to work on AOCs and lake-wide management planning. Ohio EPA passes along some of the funding to OLEC. US EPA has increased the amounts they're giving to the states for additional efforts in disadvantaged communities and improving coastal resilience and climate efforts. The Commission will be taking the funding and turning it into a new grant.

Sandra provided an overview of the State of the Lake Report and is waiting for final approval from agencies and the governor's office. The report includes six sections, each one dedicated to an agency.

Sandra highlighted the progress being made at AOCs including the removal of Fish & Wildlife Consumption BUI in Maumee AOC, first Cuyahoga AOC Management action complete at Cascade Valley Project, and Cuyahoga River Old Channel GLLA Remedial Design Agreement Established.

The Commission is developing the Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan and will be reaching out to state agency partners to update goals and priorities to be completed by July 2023.

The Commission announced the new 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Life on Lake Erie license plate design. This would mark the fourth design for The Commission. Sandra encouraged signatures for the new license plate to produce via BMV.

Nicole spoke to the work being done to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lake Erie Commission including the #lifeonlakeerie photo contest, 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary license plate, upcoming 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception on December 7<sup>th</sup>, and video campaigns highlighting the history and accomplishments of the Commission over the past 30 years.

#### **Commissioner Reports:**

**Danielle Giannantonio, Commissioner:** Spoke to the upcoming events in October (Cleveland and Parma), if anyone is interested in affordability programs, please reach out. The Sewer District recently had their annual Clean Water Festival – over 70 people from the public participated.

**Crystal Davis, Commissioner:** Alliance of the Great Lakes has partnered with River Network, Policy Link and Environmental Policy and Innovation Center to create a National SRF (State Revolving Fund) that is aimed at making sure there's a unified voice and that communities that have the greatest need are getting the state revolving funds. This is a national conversation. They just presented at One Water Summit in Milwaukee and are meeting with SRF Administrators throughout the region to make sure they're advancing policies that will create more resilience to climate change.

**Jim Stouffer, Commissioner:** His role as President of Lake Erie Foundation is to continue to make headway on various Lake Erie issues, and he noted the many people who attended the GLRI event in Sandusky. The Foundation attended the State of Science in Toledo, and he noted strong leadership coming out of Covid. As the Chairman of the Shores and Islands Executive Board, he noted that tourism is strong in the islands. Lake Erie has never been more important to so many people, communities, and the state and noted his excitement to be included in the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the improvements happening throughout the years.

**Gene Phillips, Director Designee, Ohio Department of Health (ODH):** They've received all of the data from the Beach Monitoring System over the last recreation season. They are filing data which will be available to US EPA by end of the calendar year.

**Bill Wolf, Commissioner:** Bill thanked Director Mulinex and Sandra for discussions on nutrients in turf and lawncare businesses. He's been speaking with a turf researcher at Penn State about how you measure phosphate in turf/lawncare. Pennsylvania, like Ohio, has not banned phosphates from lawn products, but they are going to. The researcher said it's difficult as it's all under stormwater management work. Typically storm water measurements are for total suspended solids. Lucas County Engineering Office will be purchasing nitrogen and phosphate testing equipment and will begin testing next year. This will give a baseline for what exactly is coming off stormwater, and then interpret where that is coming from lawn/turf etc. If it's successful, other counties that have tributaries that feed into the lake will do the same.

**Tim Hill, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT):** ODOT has partnered with Lake County Metroparks to build Lake County Bike Path. The path is ½ mile long along the shoreline. The project will go into construction next spring. Phase two extension would happen the following year. The Ottawa County Water Park Walkway Project is close to wrapping up. The project is fixing the causeway and installing a walkway along the eastern edge of waterworks park. The walkway will connect the Port Clinton downtown area to the park, beach, and Lake Erie. Construction started last August and will be wrapped up in the fall.

**Mindy Bankey, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR):** Two ribbon cuttings in Hancock County happened recently. The Cedar Point Causeway Wetland Project is getting positive feedback. This is a Beneficial Use of Dredge Material Project being done in partnership with state, federal, and local governments. Over the summer ODNR hosted two large meeting events in their facilities on Lake Erie: the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program and the States Organization for Boating Access. Both meetings had great turnout, brought in states and agencies, and highlighted the programs we're doing in Ohio that will have positive impacts on the economy and the environment.

**Tracy Intihar, Director's Designee, Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA):** Tracy updated the group on the two-stage ditch H2Ohio practice rolled out in the summer. They created a \$5 million grant program for this new Best Management Practice. The conservation practice modifies the existing drainage ditch, creating a vegetation bench that captures nutrients and slows down water flow. This will be rolled out in the 24 counties in the Western Lake Erie Basin. After months of working with ODNR and USDA, they are finalizing CREP agreements. They've added saturated buffer practice to the Lake Erie CREP and hope that it becomes part of the Scioto River CREP in the future.

## Public Comments

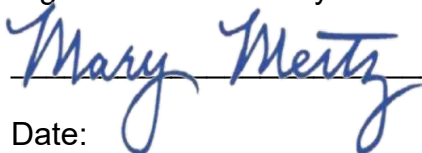
Zoe Johnson

Speaking on behalf of Sandy Bihn, Executive Director of Lake Erie Water Keepers. Zoe read a document, with subject line of "When CAFO Manure came to the Maumee watershed with harmful algae."

The letter spoke to the increased levels of phosphorus and harmful algae increases when manure was applied to the fields in the Maumee Watershed. Zoe went on to address that the increase in untreated land application of manure from CAFOs coincides with when the harmful algae blooms came back to Lake Erie. Zoe asked that the CAFO Manure runoff be addressed by the Governor and Ohio legislators. CAFO manure be treated as human sewage, the number of animals be limited in the watershed, and that Ohio should ban new and expanding CAFOs as impaired watershed.

Director Stevens asked for a motion to adjourn. Tim Hill made the motion, and Mindy Bankey seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.

Signature of Secretary:



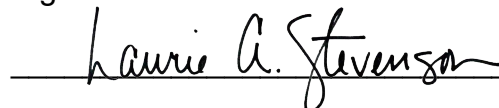
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Date:

December 19, 2022

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Signature of Chair:



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Date:

December 20, 2022

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