

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lake Erie License Plates fund research projects along Lake Erie Coast

TOLEDO, OH – The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) administers Ohio’s Lake Erie Protection Fund which is supported by the sale of Lake Erie (Marblehead and Toledo Harbor Lighthouse) license plates. The Commission awards small grants for a variety of projects which directly benefit Lake Erie and its tributary watersheds in Ohio.

On March 10, Commission members awarded a small grant project to **Cleveland State University**, which will receive \$14,707 for their project entitled, “*Protecting mussel habitat on Lake Erie’s coast.*” This project will help to protect and restore native mussels, an important native fauna. Researchers will quantitatively assess shoreline structures along Lake Erie, recording data such as substrate type and water chemistry where mussels are found. The data will expand our understanding of the presence of native mussels, which were heavily impacted by the introduction of invasive species, such as zebra and quagga mussels.

Grant projects, like the mussel study and other completed studies, give scientists an opportunity to learn more about Ohio’s diverse coastal ecosystems and provide recommendations on how to protect and preserve them. The following grants were recently finalized—all studies are available online at <http://lakeerie.ohio.gov>

The Lake Erie Islands: Nature-based Field Guide and Survey was completed by Lake Erie Coastal Ohio, Inc. in conjunction with a number of partners including The Nature Conservancy and Ohio Sea Grant College Program. Grant funding supported the development of a Lake Erie Islands guidebook which highlights the islands’ unique natural and historical features.

Predicting E coli using turbidity at Cuyahoga Valley National Park is a U.S. Geological Survey study which looked at how often recreational use of the Cuyahoga River is impacted by elevated concentrations of bacteria. Several models were used to predict periods of elevated bacteria during recreational seasons from 2004-2007. A separate, but related grant, **Turbidity Model at Cuyahoga Valley National Park**, enabled the U.S. Geological Survey to investigate the ability of a turbidity model to predict the recreational water quality of the Cuyahoga River.

The **Soil Phosphorus Stratification with Reduced Tillage** grant project focused on the concerns regarding the increasing dissolved reactive phosphorus levels in tributaries to Lake Erie. Phosphorus stratification may be one cause, while other factors, including the management of commercial and manure fertilizers, likely also play a role.

The **Winter Assessment of Lake Erie Microbiology** project, conducted by Bowling Green State University (BGSU), studied aquatic organisms, such as phytoplankton, during the

winter months over a two-year period. Study findings support the existence of a physiologically healthy assemblage of diatoms in Lake Erie, which contribute to carbon cycling. The project provided a rare opportunity to collect winter data on Lake Erie because of a partnership between BGSU and a Canadian ice breaker.

The **Bioswale Effectiveness Monitoring** project was conducted by the Chagrin River Watershed Partners, Inc. to demonstrate the effectiveness of low impact development (LID) stormwater best management practices in Northeast Ohio. Data analysis over 18 months showed that even when adjusted for seasonal variations, bioswales are effectively removing pollutants associated with sediments and particulate matter. A bioswale uses natural means, including vegetation and soil, to treat stormwater by filtering out contaminants being conveyed in the water.

Grant funding supported the installation of a **Floating Access Ramp and Dock** by the Ashtabula Lighthouse Society. The project allowed for safe access by volunteers who are working on preservation and restoration projects at the lighthouse.

The Ohio Nowcast provides the public with real-time beach advisories based on predictive models. The **Turbidity and PAR Data for Refining Nowcast** study was conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey to improve the methods for determining the probability that the single-sample bathing water standard for E. coli will be exceeded. The project refined the models, based on a variety of variables, being used at Huntington and Edgewater beaches. This prediction model can provide information to beach managers in real-time, rather than 24 hours after a water sample is taken, which is the current standard.

The Lake Erie Protection Fund was established to help finance research and implementation of projects aimed at protecting and preserving Lake Erie and its watershed. The fund is supported by Ohioans each time they purchase a Lake Erie license plate displaying the Marblehead Lighthouse or renew the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse plate as designed by noted Lake Erie artist Ben Richmond. During the past 16 years, Ohioans have contributed more than \$9 million to the fund, which has supported more than 300 projects.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission was established for the purpose of preserving Lake Erie's natural resources, protecting the quality of its waters and ecosystem, and promoting economic development in the region. The director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources serves as the commission's chairman. Additional members include the directors of the state departments of Transportation, Health, Development, Agriculture and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

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