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**For Immediate Release**

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**OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION TO SPONSOR CONFERENCE ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, IN ELYRIA**

TOLEDO, OH – The Ohio Lake Erie Commission (LEC) will sponsor an all-day conference, outlining both progress and challenges in protecting Lake Erie, on Thursday, September 7, at Lorain County Community College, 1005 Abbe Road North, Elyria. Registration deadline is August 31.

Lake Erie Protection & Restoration: Our Achievements – Our Challenges will include sessions with Lake Erie experts discussing invasive species, toxic algae, fishery and beach issues, recreation and tourism, habitat protection and restoration, as well as updates from project leaders on the Lake Erie Balanced Growth Initiative.

A major highlight will be the release of the new Lake Erie Action List consisting of Ohio's near-term actions to implement the recommendations for the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Protect and Restore the Great Lakes. The Collaboration Strategy is the result of a year-long effort by 1,500 stakeholders to develop the most important steps necessary to restore the Great Lakes. In addition, the commission will release a progress report on its own Lake Erie Protection & Restoration Plan, a long-term strategy for accomplishing the environmental, recreational and economic goals necessary to restore and sustain the lake and its watershed as Ohio's most valuable natural resource. Governor Bob Taft unveiled the plan in 2000.

Poster sessions and display tables will offer the opportunity to talk with more Lake Erie experts. This is an opportunity to learn what is new concerning Lake Erie. During the noon luncheon, the 2006 Lake Erie Awards will be presented to an individual and group that have made exceptional contributions to Lake Erie stewardship.

The registration fee for Lake Erie Protection & Restoration: Our Achievements – Our Challenges is \$30 per person and includes a continental breakfast, lunch, break refreshments, conference materials and parking.

Overnight accommodations are available at area hotels: Holiday Inn, 1825 Lorain Boulevard ; Country Inn & Suites, 645 Griswold Rd. ; Marriott Courtyard , 25050 Sperry Drive.

In conjunction with this conference, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission will hold its quarterly meeting, beginning at 2 p.m. on Wednesday, September 6, at the Lorain County Community College. All meetings of the commission are open to the public.

*The Lake Erie Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer*

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The Ohio Lake Erie Commission is comprised of the directors of the Ohio DNR and Ohio EPA, as well as the departments of Transportation, Development, Health and Agriculture. It 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 commission also oversees the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund, which is the source of grant money for projects that benefit the Lake Erie watershed economically and environmentally. This fund is supported by Ohioans who purchase a Lake Erie license plate displaying the Marblehead Lighthouse or Toledo Harbor Lighthouse designed by Ohio Artist Ben Richmond.

During the last 13 years, the commission has raised more than \$8 million through the sale of Lake Erie license plates. The money has gone to a wide range of efforts to preserve and enhance life along Lake Erie.

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