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**For Immediate Release**

September 7, 2006

**OHIO LAKE ERIE COMMISSION DETAILS PLANS TO PROTECT THE LAKE**

ELYRIA, OH – The Lake Erie Commission today released its Ohio Lake Erie Action List and a progress report on its Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan. The documents were presented as part of the commission's 2006 Lake Erie Conference, being held at Lorain County Community College in Elyria.

The Ohio Lake Erie Action List details the actions that the State of Ohio will take during 2006 and 2007 to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes (<http://www.glrc.us/strategy.html>). During 2005, fifteen hundred people representing all levels of government: tribes; academia; business, agricultural and environmental groups; and private citizens throughout the Great Lakes region worked cooperatively on the development of the collaboration strategy.

"The collaboration participants did an amazing job of defining the problems facing the Great Lakes and recommending solutions," said Ohio EPA Director Joe Koncelik, who chaired one of the teams that authored the strategy. "But the true test will be implementation. In Ohio, Governor Taft made it clear that we need to get to work, and not let the strategy become just another plan on the shelf. While we need additional federal funding to fully restore the Great Lakes, we can't sit back and do nothing in the meantime. The Ohio Lake Erie Action List is our commitment to move forward, and our challenge to the other collaboration participants to do the same."

Koncelik said Ohio is the first state to develop a specific list of its actions to protect and restore the Great Lakes in conjunction with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy. Senator Mike DeWine has introduced the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Implementation Act of 2006 to provide significant federal resources for Great Lakes restoration, but the bill remains pending in the U.S. Senate. Governor Taft was instrumental in the creation of the collaboration; as chair of the Great Lakes Council of Governors, he led the development of nine priorities for Great Lakes restoration and then urged President Bush to support them by issuing an executive order creating the collaboration.

The Lake Erie Commission also released its third and final progress report on the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan. Originally released by Governor Taft in 2000, the plan was precedent-setting in establishing objectives for Lake Erie restoration and listing 84 specific action steps to reach them. "Five years before the collaboration's region-wide strategy, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission evaluated the state of Lake Erie, identified areas for improvement, and developed a specific action plan," noted Ohio Department of Natural Resources Director Sam Speck, chair of the commission. "I'm pleased to report that most of the 84 action items in that plan are complete, or ongoing as part of established state programs."

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Speck said that the Ohio Lake Erie Action List is the next logical step, and that the actions it identifies are consistent with the overall goals of the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan. “While the collaboration strategy is a tremendous accomplishment, it looks at all the Great Lakes at a macro level. We need to get down to specifics, just as we did in the Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan. There is great cohesiveness between Ohio’s existing plan for Lake Erie and the next generation action list. Moving beyond 2007, we’ll be evaluating changing conditions in the lake to determine what additional actions will be required.”

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