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Annual Awards Recognize Outstanding Contributions To Improve Lake Erie

TOLEDO, OH – The 2010 Ohio Lake Erie Awards were presented to Julie Letterhos of Columbus and the Friends of Euclid Creek at the Ohio Lake Erie Commission's quarterly meeting on September 22.

Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Sean Logan, who also serves as chairman of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission, presented this year's awards, which are given annually to an individual and organization that has demonstrated exceptional stewardship of Lake Erie.

"It is an honor to recognize Julie Letterhos and the Friends of Euclid Creek for their long-standing commitment to the stewardship of Ohio's waters," said ODNR Director Sean Logan. "They recognize and embody the extent to which our economic health and the health of our natural resources are connected. They have been great friends to Lake Erie and have supported us as we work to create a state where business, families and nature can prosper."

Julie Letterhos recently retired from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) where she served for 26 years as Ohio EPA's expert on Lake Erie issues. Letterhos has been committed and worked tirelessly to protect and restore our Great Lake. She has played a major role in shaping state policy on Great Lakes and Lake Erie issues with major contributions to Ohio's recent recommendations to reduce phosphorus runoff which fuels the growth of harmful algae. Ohio's development of Remedial Action Plans to restore water quality and fish and wildlife habitat in our most environmentally disturbed areas have developed and evolved with Letterhos' support and guidance. As a direct result of her continuing support, the Black and Ashtabula rivers are nearing the successful completion of long and difficult clean-up projects, while the Cuyahoga and Maumee rivers continue to make significant progress in cleaning up their legacy of contamination.

Friends of Euclid Creek are citizens whose mission includes promoting, educating and encouraging cooperative interaction to improve the Euclid Creek watershed. A series of local events, such as a photography contest, stream monitoring program, rain barrel workshops, invasive plant pulls and other activities, have led to a wider understanding of the existence and importance of the watershed. All of their events encouraged further local awareness and involvement, leading to tangible projects, such as the Lower Euclid Creek Greenway project, East Branch dam removal project, rain garden implementation project and purchase of conservation easements for important riparian and wetland habitat. This citizen-led organization is making a difference by improving the lives of those in the Euclid Creek watershed and the surrounding Lake Erie region.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission and its members are proud to present the 2010 Ohio Lake Erie Awards to both these acclaimed leaders for their outstanding contributions to Ohio's Great Lake.

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.

The Commission also oversees the Ohio Lake Erie Protection Fund, which is the source of grant money for projects that benefit the lake's watershed economically and environmentally. The 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.