
Contact: Ed Hammett, Executive Director at (419) 245-2514

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Lake Erie License Plate Funding Improves Water Quality

TOLEDO, OH – Yesterday, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) approved two new Lake Erie Protection Fund grant awards, which will help improve water quality and provide a direct benefit to Lake Erie and its tributary watersheds in Ohio.

The Lake Erie Protection Fund is supported by Ohioans through the purchase of the “Erie...Our Great Lake” license plates, which display either the Marblehead Lighthouse or the Toledo Harbor Lighthouse plate, as designed by noted Lake Erie artist Ben Richmond. Fifteen dollars from the sale or renewal of each plate is invested in the Lake Erie Protection Fund grant program.

Ohioans have donated more than \$9.3 million to the Lake Erie Protection Fund by purchasing or renewing a Lake Erie license plate each year. Lake Erie license plates displayed on vehicles give Ohio's citizens the opportunity to personally help preserve and protect Lake Erie, according to Ed Hammett, executive director of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

The Bowling Green State University (BGSU) will receive \$11,770 to train U.S. Coast Guard personnel to perform water quality monitoring while conducting routine activities, particularly in the winter when other sampling programs are limited by weather conditions. Coast Guard personnel will be offered data collection training by BGSU to ensure that data meets “credible data standards” for the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency's water quality repository. The project is an opportunity to engage Coast Guard crew in scientific research and take advantage of financially efficient means of collecting samples on Lake Erie.

Lake County General Health District will receive \$15,000 for a project entitled “Pharmaceutical Drug Collection and Disposal Program.” Both prescription and non-prescription drugs are being found in the nation's waterways causing associated environmental concerns. Freestanding receptacles will be placed in Lake County law enforcement reception areas to collect prescription and non-prescription drugs that might otherwise be flushed into the wastewater stream or otherwise improperly disposed. Continuous collection locations will help reduce the contamination of surface waters, while providing convenient and secure collection sites for residents. The program will include an education and promotion plan to inform the public of the benefits of participating.

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 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.