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Ohio, Michigan, U.S. EPA Officials Cooperating on Lake Erie Improvements

Nearly 100 citizens gathered at Maumee Bay State Park Lodge in Oregon today to hear from Ohio, Michigan and U.S. EPA environmental decision makers as they discussed cooperative efforts between the agencies for the common goal of protecting and improving water quality in Lake Erie's western basin.

Directors and senior staff from Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and U.S. EPA Region 5 discussed the benefits of working together on common issues concerning Lake Erie water quality.

"In Ohio, we've formed a partnership with Ohio EPA, Ohio Department of Natural Resources and Ohio Department of Agriculture to address issues in Lake Erie and we want to create the same kind of partnership with Michigan and at the federal level to work together to protect this important resource," Ohio EPA Director Scott Nally said.

"We appreciate Ohio's leadership in expanding our conversation about how to protect the western Lake Erie basin," said Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Director Dan Wyant. "Our residents share the fishing, drinking water and recreational opportunities afforded by this environmental gem. We also share responsibility for improving and maintaining its water quality. My hope is that this partnership allows us to share successful strategies to produce a healthier watershed."

Susan Hedman, regional administrator for U.S. EPA Region 5, echoed the importance of multistate and multiagency cooperation and U.S. EPA's role in supporting states' efforts to restore the Great Lakes.

"This is the beginning of something very, very important. It's great to have multiple states and agencies that don't often talk to each other get together and talk about what they are doing for Lake Erie. We are pleased about the productive ideas we've heard today," Hedman said. "We have taken an expanded role to take on restoration of the Great Lakes at a level not seen in decades."

The citizens who attended the meeting asked questions about agency roles to improve water quality in Lake Erie and what is being done to address harmful algal blooms and reduce phosphorus levels in the lake's watershed.

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