

For Immediate Release:

Friday, July 30, 2010

Strickland, State Directors Announce Action Plan for Grand Lake St. Marys

Celina, OH – Ohio Governor Ted Strickland today, joined by several state agency directors, announced both short- and long-term action plans to help restore Grand Lake St. Marys, Ohio's largest inland lake.

The governor announced the State's latest efforts to assist the area from the Wright State University Lake Campus, and he and the directors emphasized the action plan can only be implemented thanks to the good partnerships the State has developed with the local community and the federal government.

"We know that our businesses and families have struggled with the loss of activity at the lake this summer. This crisis has been generations in the making, and it will take all of us working together to try to restore this lake to health and prosperity," Strickland said. "This action plan provides a clear direction forward, and I want to thank this community for working with us as we all search for ways to bring this lake back to health."

The State's action plan focuses on the two main issues negatively impacting the water quality of Grand Lake St. Marys -- internal and external loading. Grand Lake St. Marys contains an excessive amount of reactive phosphorus which is continually recycled (internal loading). Cyanobacteria (also known as blue-green algae) absorb the phosphorus as they grow, which contributes to the growth (or blooms) of cyanobacteria. External loading is the continual addition of phosphorus to the lake from external sources in the watershed. Addressing both these issues is critical to efforts to restore the lake.

"Less than one month ago Director Logan and I visited the community and listened to the concerns of the local residents. We emphasized the State would not be idle, and today's release of the action plan represents our continued commitment to the community and the improvement of the lake," said Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski.

The action plan includes two kinds of in-lake treatment demonstration projects focused on the internal loading issue. The first, called "alum treatment," will be performed in a discrete area of the lake, approximately 20-40 acres in size. Ohio EPA will supply the necessary funding (approximately \$250,000) to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources through the 319 subgrant program. The demonstration sites will be chosen during August 2010 with actual treatment targeted to begin in September 2010. Whole lake application will only be considered following the completion of the demonstration projects. Also, the plan recommends reviewing the current small-scale algae flipping pilot project currently underway to determine if a larger-scale project is possible. If feasible, the larger-scale project (approximately \$25,000) will be funded by the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

"The department understands the seriousness of this problem and stands ready to help the local community in any way possible," said Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. "We are hopeful that the algae pilot project, funded by the department, will provide positive impacts to the region."

The action plan also includes many items focused on addressing the external loading issues. Action items include promoting improvements to manure hauling practices, limiting phosphorus discharges from Wastewater Treatment plants within the watershed, and educating local homeowners on septic systems and lawn management practices.

Also, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources will seek legislative support for additional state regulatory authority which would restrict manure application during the winter and the requirement for farms with more than 350 tons of manure annually to develop a nutrient management plan.

“Grand Lake St. Marys is a shared resource with shared responsibilities for its health,” said ODNR Director Sean Logan. “We look forward to working with legislators, federal and local agencies, individual landowners, and citizen groups to implement these actions to improve the lake’s water quality and the community’s economic prospects.”

Also included is a continued focus on protecting human health with weekly sampling by Ohio EPA and the posting of those results for the public. Also, Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Health will request that the federal government develop national standards for the additional toxins which have been found in Grand Lake St. Marys, such as anatoxin-a, cylindrospermopsin and saxitoxin.

“These recommendations will go a long way in protecting the health of the public and in restoring a safe and healthy lake for families to enjoy for years to come,” said ODH Director Alvin D. Jackson, M.D.

Grand Lake St. Marys straddles the Auglaize-Mercer County line and covers nearly 13,500 acres. Constructed in the mid-1800’s to store water for the Miami-Erie Canal, the lake was established as one of the first state parks in 1949. Over the years, Great Lake St. Marys has been a popular recreational lake for boating, fishing and swimming. It is also the drinking water supply for the city of Celina, which has a population of approximately 10,000. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources maintains a campground, three public beaches and several picnic areas at a state park along the lake.

For additional information on the action plan, go to:
www.epa.ohio.gov/portals/47/citizen/GLSMactionplan.pdf

Media Contacts:

Governor’s Office

Amanda Wurst, 614 644-0957/614 832-7512
Amanda.Wurst@governor.ohio.gov

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency:

Heather Lauer, (614) 644-2160

Ohio Department of Natural Resources:

Mike Shelton, (614) 265-6891

Ohio Department of Agriculture:

Kaleigh Frazier, (614) 728-6211

Ohio Department of Health:

Jen House, (614) 644-8562