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Coastal Training Strategy for the Ohio Lake Erie Basin

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Prepared for:
**Old Woman Creek National Estuarine
Research Reserve**

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Coastal Training Strategy for the Ohio Lake Erie Basin



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INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the market for coastal resources management training in Ohio's Lake Erie basin identified the challenges faced by coastal decision-makers and the disparities currently existing within this market. The primary challenges identified were in the quality of instruction and in the types of training provided. Disparities indicated were with coordination, equipment and logistical factors, external and internal marketing and promotional assistance, funding, personnel and staff assistance, and legislative and regulatory concerns. These disparities are indications of opportunities to establish partnerships and collaborative networks to facilitate coordinated training initiatives; to re-examine and develop course content and locations to better meet the needs and expectations of decision-makers more effectively; and to develop strategies for the dissemination of training information and opportunities effectively and efficiently to decision-makers, policy makers, and training providers.

Further analysis of the market needs of Ohio's coastal decision-makers identified topics relative to lake and water resources and land use and infrastructure as priorities for knowledge and training. The decision-makers revealed a need for access to information regarding the environmental and economic impact of managing Ohio's coastal resources, and the need for a coordinated network for the delivery of training programs – one that would integrate knowledge across topics and focus on regional resource issues and management problems. Also emphasized was the need to cultivate training programs to increase the knowledge base of public officials and guide the development of coastal resources management public policy.

The findings from the market analysis and needs assessment indicate an overall lack of coordination, quality control (inconsistencies in course training techniques, program content, duration, timing, frequency, and comprehensiveness of topics), and geographic dispersal of training opportunities across the Lake Erie basin. The issue of coordination across the coastal resources management training market in the Lake Erie basin is further emphasized with the need to ensure the proper mix and management of topical issues across the basin. This defines the need for the development of a strategy that would focus the private and nonprofit public resources for education of policymakers on coastal resources management issues across the Lake Erie basin.

These findings suggest that the Lake Erie basin coastal resources management training market is not currently performing efficiently. The inconsistency of training techniques, program content, duration and timing of offerings, broadness and comprehensiveness of topical areas, and the

spatial distribution, frequency and number of offerings suggests the need for a stabilized market. The occupational diversity of the training audiences also emphasizes the need for stability through a central coordinating function.

The call for consistency, coordination, course content, and quality by coastal decision-makers underlies a fledgling market that could be nurtured through a strategic coastal training initiative. The Partners of this coastal training initiative (Old Woman Creek, ODNR Coastal Management Program, and Ohio Sea Grant College Program) are poised appropriately to bring stability to the coastal training market by collectively serving as the convener and coordinator in the development of a coastal training strategy for the Lake Erie basin. These partners are currently dispersed across the basin, are currently addressing these issues on a statewide basis, and are generating exposure to training opportunities in the statewide market. The fact that the Partners currently serve as conveners and coordinators in this and other areas implies a natural progression for them to expand this arena.

One method to addressing the training disparities and needs of Ohio's coastal decision-makers is the development of a coastal training strategic plan. A strategic plan for the state's coastal training program would provide a framework for implementing a coordinated and collaborative coastal resources management training service for the state of Ohio, therefore increasing the stability of the market. Motivating the development of the coastal training strategy is the necessity to address the needs defined by coastal decision-makers throughout the market analysis and needs assessment phases of the coastal resources management training project.

STRATEGIC VISION

The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) was engaged by the Partners to serve as facilitators through a series of strategic planning sessions to aid them in defining a strategy for the implementation of a coastal training program. Through these planning sessions, the Partners outlined a framework for the implementation of the coastal training program. Additionally, a focus group representative of coastal decision-makers and training providers from throughout the Lake Erie coastal region was conducted to gain input and advice. Coastal representatives were asked to help prioritize the topical areas for training and to assist in identifying and aligning the roles of the Partners for the new coastal training program. Some of these participants previously participated in early focus group discussions during the needs assessment phase or surveys during the market analysis phase, and they remain committed and engaged in the need for meaningful discussion and action in coastal program management and training.

The coastal training program is being developed to serve Ohio's coastal decision-makers across the Lake Erie basin. The Lake Erie basin (for purposes of the coastal training project) is considered to be 34 Ohio counties, with an additional buffer zone of 50 miles to encompass urban areas, universities, and community colleges. The seven coastal counties of Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Huron, Lake, Lorain, Ottawa, and Sandusky will initially serve as primary target areas for CTP implementation. The 34 Ohio counties are:

- Allen County
- Ashland County
- **Ashtabula County**
- Auglaize County
- Crawford County
- **Cuyahoga County**
- Defiance County
- Erie County
- Franklin County
- Fulton County
- Geauga County
- Hancock County
- Hardin County
- Henry County
- **Huron County**
- **Lake County**
- **Lorain County**
- Lucas County
- Marion County
- Medina County
- Mercer County
- **Ottawa County**
- Paulding County
- Portage County
- Putnam County
- Richland County
- **Sandusky County**
- Seneca County
- Summit County
- Trumbull County
- Van Wert County
- Williams County
- Wood County
- Wyandot County

The implementation of the coastal training program will begin in Fall 2004 with the hiring of a staff coordinator, who will additionally be responsible for the development and implementation of the marketing segment of the coastal training initiative. The immediate plan of action by the Partners is to:

- (1) Hire a coastal training program coordinator in October 2004 to commence the implementation of the coastal training program;
- (2) Work with the coastal training program coordinator to begin to establish a clearinghouse of training information and programs;
- (3) Initiate the CTP Advisory Council by inviting and securing membership to the Council; and
- (4) Work with the coastal training program coordinator to develop the marketing strategy for the coastal training program.

Program Mission

The mission of the coastal training program is to provide the best coordinated training and information available to Lake Erie basin coastal management decision-makers. The Partners have defined a strategic framework to guide them in fulfilling their mission through the implementation of a coastal training program over the next three years. The strategy includes program goals and objectives, identified roles for the Partners relative to the program, training topics, target audiences for training participation, methods for evaluating the progress of the program, and additional partnerships that could be explored.

This strategy is to be applied and implemented by the coastal training program coordinator, with oversight and administration by the Partners. This strategy was also reviewed and confirmed by a concluding focus group representative of coastal decision-makers and providers held April 26, 2004 as a final comment on the vision for the program.

Components of the Strategy

Guiding Principles

The strategic plan sets forth the goals and objectives of the Partners to initiate a comprehensive and well-coordinated training strategy for coastal decision-makers over the next three years. Review and evaluation of the strategy will occur every three years, with the strategic plan being updated accordingly. The Partners are committed to undertaking the administration of the coastal training program, guided by the following six self-defined principles:

1. Each training activity of the Coastal Training Program will be designed to meet at least one need identified in the Needs Assessment; however, all identified needs will be considered when developing training content.
2. Each training opportunity developed for the Coastal Training Program will emphasize the importance of the Lake Erie ecosystem.
3. Each training opportunity developed for the Coastal Training Program will have an identified target audience.
4. The Coastal Training Program training information provided to audiences will be timely and science-based.
5. The Coastal Training Program will seek to coordinate and collaborate on training opportunities with partners wherever possible.
6. The Coastal Training Program will include an evaluation component in every training opportunity.

Objectives

The objectives for each of the coastal training program guiding principles are categorized as near term, medium term, or long term goals. The near term goals are those anticipated to be reached within 12 months; medium term goals are those anticipated to be realized within one to three years; and long term goals are those anticipated to be reached within three to five years. The guiding principles and objectives for the coastal training program are as follows:

- 1. Each training activity of the Coastal Training Program will be designed to meet at least one need identified in the Needs Assessment; however, all identified needs will be considered when developing training content.**

‣ *Objective: Hire a program coordinator no later than October 1, 2004.*

The program coordinator will be responsible for the implementation of the coastal training program and will begin by creating a clearinghouse for coastal training issues. This is the first step toward addressing the needs of the decision-makers.

Timing: Near term.

- *Objective: Create a clearinghouse to coordinate training offerings, speakers, and information.*

Coastal decision-makers and training providers identified through the needs assessment the need for coordinated coastal training efforts, as well as a network for the dissemination of training information. The establishment of the clearinghouse is one of the preliminary steps toward meeting the identified needs.

Timing: Near term, Medium term, and Long term.

2. Each training opportunity developed for the Coastal Training Program will emphasize the importance of the Lake Erie ecosystem.

- *Objective: Change the behavior of the general public with regard to improving Lake Erie.*

The Partners envision the coastal training program as an educational and skills training venue that will result in a better educated general public, resulting in improvements to the coastal habitat and more thoughtful environmental care of Lake Erie.

Timing: Long term.

3. Each training opportunity developed for the Coastal Training Program will have an identified target audience.

- *Objective: Establish a system for the coordinated marketing of training opportunities.*

One of the responsibilities of the coastal training program coordinator will be to work with the Partners to initiate the development and implementation of the marketing strategy. The marketing strategy will ensure the targeted marketing of course offerings to specific audiences.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

4. The Coastal Training Program training information provided to audiences will be timely and science-based.

- *Objective: Establish a menu of core courses meeting quality standards.*

The results of the market analysis and needs assessment were utilized to develop the training issues defined within this strategic plan, that begin to address the identified needs of coastal decision-makers for science-based training from qualified instructors.

Timing: Near term.

- *Objective: Provide relevant and timely scientific information to target audiences.*

The needs assessment revealed that coastal training decision-makers want training and information that is timely, up-to-date, and based on scientific knowledge. The Partners will work with the coastal training program coordinator to develop training activities that meet these needs and are appropriate to the target audience.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

- *Objective: Take advantage of available new training technologies.*

The Partners will explore opportunities for the access and transmittal of coastal training courses through distance learning and web-based activities. Such a strategy will be included within the marketing plan.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

5. The Coastal Training Program will seek to coordinate and collaborate on training opportunities with partners wherever possible.

- *Objective: Coordinate the current coastal training efforts of the Partners with the current training market.*

The Partners want more opportunities to collaborate and want to coordinate their existing and future training activities across their websites. The Partners could also be utilized as “vehicles” to market coastal training opportunities.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

- *Objective: Develop a memorandum of understanding between the Partners.*

The Partners will work to further define their administrative oversight of the CTP, and will draft a memorandum of understanding as testimony of their commitment to the coastal training concept. The memorandum of understanding will better affirm the participation of the Partners in the coastal training program, yet the Partners want to further coordinate training, information, and activities among their organizations. They will work to identify and collaborate efforts that will enable them to better communicate offerings among agencies.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

- *Objective: Utilize the Ohio coastal training program as a national model.*

A Sea Grant Program and a Coastal Management Program exists in every coastal and Great Lakes state (except Illinois), and there are 26 NERRs throughout the country. Within this network, coastal training programs should be collaborative. The partnership for Ohio's coastal training is unique in that the three partnering entities – Sea Grant, Coastal Management Program, and NERR – have historically collaborated on training, resources, research, and other opportunities. The coastal training initiative set forth by NOAA can also be marketed as a model throughout the United States to coastal and environmental organizations, governments and municipalities, and educational institutions. The Partners intend to communicate the coastal training concept during professional opportunities, and will work with the coastal training program coordinator to develop national marketing opportunities for the program.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

- *Objective: Satisfy our funders, sponsors, and elected officials.*

One way the Partners feel they can accomplish this goal is by delivering a coastal training program that is thoughtful and responsive to the needs of coastal decision-makers, as well as to the program funders, sponsors, and elected officials who may have a direct or indirect impact upon the program.

Timing: Near term, Long term.

6. The Coastal Training Program will include an evaluation component in every training opportunity.

- *Objective: Develop and implement evaluation strategies for all training activities.*

Methods of program evaluation are identified for the commencement of the coastal training program. Further methods for long-term evaluation will be identified through the Estuarine Reserve Division (ERD) CTP performance monitoring guidance and the marketing strategy that will be developed by the coastal training program coordinator.

Timing: Near term.

Role(s) of the Partners

One of the strongest components to the coastal training program initiative is the existing collaborative partnership between Old Woman Creek NERR, ODNR Coastal Management Program, and the Ohio Sea Grant College Program. The three organizations together represent academic, scientific, research, and regulatory attributes critical to the establishment of the coastal training program. The Partners have a credible training history and a great deal of expertise in many topical areas. The three organizations have established a reputable rapport with elected and legislative officials, and have resources for or access to funding for the implementation of the coastal training program. The Partners have bricks and mortar facilities with which to conduct training, spanning the entire Ohio Lake Erie shoreline that allows for diverse coverage and training delivery.

A primary factor contributing to the success of the coastal training initiative is that the collaboration of these agencies did not begin with this project – the Partners have historically worked together prior to this project on several venues. The three organizations offer reciprocal support and counsel for grants, speaking and presentation opportunities, board representation, fiscal and intellectual resources, and other professional expertise. The Partners are also eager to share their best practices and lessons learned through this process with other Research Reserves, state environmental agencies and coastal management programs, and Sea Grant programs.

Keeping in mind the outcomes of the market analysis and needs assessment, the Partners identified what they felt to be their roles and responsibilities for the coastal training program:

- Provide marketing assistance to training providers
- Administer a coordinating function by serving as a clearinghouse for services and information
- Coordinate a training consortium that will provide instructors for training, coordinate access to training facilities and equipment, and coordinate train the trainer programs for improved product delivery
- Facilitate the creation and development of training program content to address key regional issues and management strategies. Coordinate the review and expansion of training across the watershed.

In addition to the roles determined by the Partners, the focus group participants requested that the following be incorporated into the management of the coastal training program:

- Incorporate the Ohio EPA as a partner in the coastal training program
- Seek to insure that seasoned professionals with high levels of experience serve as training instructors
- Seek additional assistance from constituents, when needed
- Through its clearinghouse function, create a directory of newsletters from all organizations as an archival resources for decision-makers and providers; offer a consolidated archive of media articles on information relevant to training at one location for easier research; and utilize the Realtors' newsletter as well as the newsletters of other organizations as a tool to disseminate information

Training Issues

The programmatic issues resulting from the needs assessment are considered by the Partners as possible areas for training in the coastal training program. These topics will be reviewed upon the implementation of the CTP. The CTP Advisory Council will help to refine these topics and guide the development of training to address these issues. The training issues are:

‣ *Lake and Water Resources*

Relates to Lake Erie, its shoreline, tributary watersheds, and includes shoreline changes, siltation, and wetlands. The needs to be addressed through these topics are the economic aspects of coastal resources management and protection/valuation; funding sources; best management practices, and laws and regulations.

‣ *Economic Development*

Includes economic activity and valuation, and commerce, tourism, ports, shipping, and fishing. The needs to be addressed through these topics are partnership opportunities and public outreach/education.

‣ ***Public Health***

Those aspects of natural resources of the Lake Erie basin that pose threats to public health, including beach pollution, boating safety, and fish consumption advisories. Areas to be addressed are the use of new communication technologies and information, a clearinghouse for information, public outreach/education, and laws and regulations.

‣ ***Cultural Resources***

Includes historic landmarks of the Lake Erie basin, significant natural features, and shipwrecks. Needs to be addressed are biological sciences/ecosystem, and a clearinghouse for information.

‣ ***Land Use and Infrastructure***

Land use and the built environment, parks, open space, brownfields, stormwater systems, and sprawl. The areas that need to be addressed are public outreach/education, funding sources, best management practices, and partnership opportunities.

The focus group participants ranked these training issues by area of importance or of most urgent concern. The rankings are as follows:

| Ranking | Training Issue |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Top Priority</i> | Lake/Water Resources |
| <i>Second</i> | Public Health |
| <i>Third</i> | Land Use |
| <i>Fourth</i> | Economic Development |
| <i>Fifth</i> | Cultural Resources |

The focus group participants further identified the most important aspects of these issues, keeping in mind they were formulated from a broadly represented survey and refined by the Partners. These participants cited issues of most concern that could be used for workshops or topics to incorporate into training content development. These issues are:

- The protection of lake water resources
- Land use – relationships and effects downstream
- Drinking water
- Phase II stormwater
- Public health issues that affect Phase II stormwater and drinking water
- Brownfields and economic development (land use to economic development)
- How we handle our land (finding funding to take care of lake and water resources, public health, land use, economic development, and cultural resources)
- The cost of *not* protecting natural resources as opposed to protecting them
- Funding sources – How can we pay for these programs?
- Economic development – tourism and recreational use
- Laws and regulations (turn foes into allies on shoreline property rights)
- Bacteria impacts on beaches
- Equate watershed to Lake Erie coastline (show the tie between the watershed and the coastline)
- Ports (preserve commerce on Lake Erie; moving from commercial to recreational; communication between industry and recreational uses)
- Best management practices (urban and rural)
- Economic impacts as opposed to economic development

Target Audiences

The Partners identified the range of audiences to be targeted for training over the next three years through the coastal training program. These audiences are:

- Elected officials (mayors, township and city officials, township trustees, commissioners)
- Federal, state, and local economic development professionals
- Federal and state agencies involved within the state and national Department of Natural Resources network
- Watershed and related non-profit groups
- General public
- Schools
- Land owners, developers, realtors
- Scientific community, including university researchers in water issues
- Soil and water conservation districts
- Farmers
- Tourism industry, including hotels and restaurants
- Golf courses

- Media, especially science and outdoor writers
- Regional organizations, such as NOAA, IJC, US EPA, US Army Corps of Engineers

The focus group participants confirmed the above list and added the following audiences into the target groups:

- Chambers of Commerce
- City and county engineers
- City and county sanitary engineers
- Homebuilders and the Homebuilders Associations
- City and county health departments
- Professional advisors, such as law directors, engineers and planners, particularly in the new Phase II (stormwater/drinking water) communities

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

NOAA's Estuarine Reserve Division (ERD) has identified indicators for data collection to monitor progress and track performance for the coastal training program. The Ohio CTP coordinator will comply with ERD CTP guidance and submit performance reports to ERD and the Partners on progress, programs, services, products, and program data according to agreed upon metrics. The coastal training program will also utilize the technical advisory committees of the CTP Advisory Council (or a similar group formed by the Council) to help assess program effectiveness and participant satisfaction.

The coastal training program will utilize the existing ERD evaluation tools, as well as the methods of the Ohio Sea Grant and other organizations. A method to measure the long-term effectiveness of the coastal training program will also be developed.

Current and Anticipated Partnerships

Each of the Partners maintains a steady network of partnerships for training opportunities that they will continue to utilize for the coastal training program. Additional partners to be considered are the Soil and Water Conservation Districts due to their expertise with non-point source pollution and agricultural issues, because they currently have training programs in place, they have a presence in every county, have a feel for local issues and contacts, have training facilities, and have contacts and a presence within the public school system.

The Partners feel the Ohio State University Extension Program would also serve as a partner for the same reasons, and because the Extension Program focuses on combined sewer overflow issues through its contacts with city officials. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are also being considered as partners.