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Needs Assessment: A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Ohio

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Coastal Resources Management Training Needs Assessment: A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Northern Ohio

February 2003
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A series of seven focus groups were conducted in various locations throughout northern Ohio to identify and assess coastal resources management training needs across the Ohio Great Lakes basin. The focus groups were comprised of a cross-section of professionals who make decisions affecting watershed areas or Lake Erie coastal areas. Six of the focus groups included decision-makers considered previous and potential users of coastal resources management training (non-providers). A seventh focus group included decision-makers who provide training in coastal resources management (providers).

Discussions within the seven focus groups centered on responses to questions concerning core knowledge needs and training needs. Core knowledge included topics focused on desired training content and information desired to improve work performance. The discussions concerning training needs included types of training, quality of the training environment, and the structure of training.

Several common themes emerged from the discussions within the six non-provider focus groups. With regard to core knowledge, one theme among the non-provider groups was the desire to understand the economic impact and value of coastal and watershed protection. A second recurring topic of discussion was the need to establish a central clearinghouse for the initiation, exchange, retrieval, and dispersal of information. A third discussion topic prevalent among the non-provider groups was the need to educate the general public on basic watershed impact issues.

From the discussions centering on the training environment, the non-provider groups expressed a strong interest in training that was locally focused and applicable to their own needs. A second recurrent discussion topic was the need for assistance in locating funding resources to conduct training programs. The non-provider groups often cited a need for problem-solving and communications skills training. There were certain aspects of the training settings – distance to/from location, duration of training, expenses – that were also recurring topics of discussion. The non-provider groups also expressed disappointment when training experiences did not deliver what was marketed or advertised.

Common themes also evolved from the discussions within the provider group session. When discussing issues relevant to core knowledge, the provider group stated that a basic understanding of scientific concepts was essential. The need for knowledge of communications and problem-solving techniques to and with audiences was also
The provider group also expressed the need for a central clearinghouse to disseminate information and direct inquiries.

Relative to issues centering on the training environment, the provider group stated the need for a data collection, management, and distribution system to more effectively and efficiently relay information to their audiences. The provider group expressed the need for an integrated understanding of the Lake Erie basin and watershed as an entire ecosystem. Leadership and stewardship responsibilities and accountability for these responsibilities was also a prevalent theme within the provider group session.

**Focus Group Participant Profile**

The majority of the non-provider and provider group participants were employees of public organizations. More than half of the participants of the non-provider groups were elected/appointed officials or directors. The majority of the provider group participants considered themselves technical professionals. Participants in both the non-provider and provider groups primarily had more than 10 years of experience in their current profession. Both non-provider and provider group professionals had obtained college degrees, with the majority of the non-providers having attained bachelor’s degrees and the majority of providers having attained master’s degrees.

Individuals participating in the non-provider and provider groups completed a questionnaire rating their level of agreement on coastal resources management knowledge priorities and whether or not additional information was desired on certain topics. Both groups were asked about two broad types of knowledge – Resource-oriented Knowledge and Management-oriented Knowledge – with subcategories of environmental issues organized under each knowledge heading.

With regard to Resource-oriented Knowledge, the non-provider groups considered Lake/Water Resources issues and Land Use/Infrastructure issues as priorities. The provider group also rated these issues as priorities. Both the non-provider and provider groups indicated that they would like additional information, as well as formal training in, the issues of Lake/Water Resources and Land Use/Infrastructure.

Relative to Management-oriented Knowledge, the non-provider groups indicated that the issues of Laws and Regulations, and Best Management Practices were top priorities. With the provider group, the issue of Public Outreach/Education was rated a top priority. The non-provider groups indicated their desire for further information on the issues of Funding Sources, Best Management Practices, and Laws and Regulations.
The provider group, however, indicated a collective interest in receiving information on all issues – Best Management Practices, Laws and Regulations, Funding Sources, Public Outreach/Education, Partnership Opportunities, and Use of New Communications Technologies.

The non-provider groups expressed an interest in receiving Management-oriented Knowledge training on Laws and Regulations, Best Management Practices, and Funding Sources. The provider group indicated an interest in receiving training on the Use of New Communications Technologies and Partnership Opportunities. Other areas of interest noted by both the non-provider and provider groups were Private Property Rights, Pollutant Discharge, and Lakefront Erosion.

Key Findings

Several key findings were identified from a synthesis of information from the focus group discussions and the questionnaire results. These findings are the result of the collective discussions and needs identified across the non-provider and provider focus groups, which centered on core knowledge needs (knowledge development) and how training venues should be established and managed (training program design). The key results begin to address the asserted interests and needs of both non-providers and training providers.

With regard to Knowledge Development, both the non-provider and provider groups emphasized a need for more consistent quality, better-organized, and territorially targeted training programs that would integrate knowledge across topics. The non-providers and providers also affirmed that the training programs should be more relevant to their regional resource issues and management problems.

Both the non-provider and provider groups communicated the need for enhanced information and knowledge about the economic aspects of coastal resources management and protection. Both groups expressed a need for knowledge on incorporating data analysis and collection, assigning economic value to various land uses, and defining benefits and costs to particular land/water management practices.

The non-provider groups desired a mix of resource-oriented and management-oriented knowledge. Information on funding, laws and regulations, regulatory mandates and authority, planning and zoning techniques, and best management practices was desired in these areas.

The results of the provider group questionnaire rankings and responses indicate
a desire for formal training in specific areas, which suggests a potential opportunity among providers concerning their program priorities. This indicates the possibility for the coastal training partners to provide “train the trainer” programs to the providers, which they can then impart to their trainees in order to improve their delivery.

Both non-providers and providers expressed a need for relevant information to be organized in a more useful manner. The non-providers and providers were consistent across focus groups on the need to access information more readily and to locate information specifically relevant to a particular situation or issue in their locality.

The non-provider and provider groups both perceived a disorganized status of information sources concerning coastal and watershed resource and management issues. This suggests a role for an information clearinghouse as a way to improve the general access, relay, and exchange of information about watershed function and management.

Both the non-provider and provider groups emphasized the continued importance of enhancing the ecological literacy of the general public and its relevance to the work of coastal resources managers. The non-provider and provider groups indicated that a general public well-educated on coastal and environmental issues could provide key support for programs delivered by the decision-makers and managers.

Relevant to Training Program Design, the non-provider and provider groups expressed concern over lengthy training sessions that deprive them of their routine responsibilities. Both non-providers and providers affirmed that a fee should be charged for these training sessions because there is a perception that even a nominal fee gains a better audience than no fee.

Both non-provider and provider groups desired training sessions with concrete outcomes rather than sessions that merely relay new information. Those designing training programs should bear specific outcomes in mind when developing training modules.

The non-provider and provider groups each expressed the desire that training sessions deliver what is advertised, and that training topics and materials be more carefully focused. Their experience often was that the topic was so broadly cast in order to accommodate a wide audience that many participants with more specific knowledge found the training to be unhelpful.

It was determined by both the non-provider and provider groups that the use of the term “coastal” was problematic as a reference to Lake Erie watershed or
environmental issues. They suggested removing this term from the literature regarding the Lake Erie basin and watershed areas, and not using the term when titling training programs or initiatives.

Both non-provider and provider groups affirmed that a wealth of information is available, but felt overwhelmed by the lack of resources within their organizations to take advantage of these training opportunities and the lack of a comprehensive approach to coastal resources management. Coordinated training programs would offer the non-providers and providers opportunities to meet their everyday coastal resources management objectives.

The non-provider groups emphasized that training delivery locations should be “closer to home” to facilitate their attendance on a more frequent basis. Training centers could be regionally located to enable easy access for participants.

The non-provider groups also expressed the concern that trainers should have practical, current expertise and should be able to deliver that expertise effectively. New training programs or programs to train the trainers should strive to ensure that speakers/presenters are both engaging and have practical experience in their subject matter.
A Report on Seven Focus Groups
in Northern Ohio
INTRODUCTION

The Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) conducted a series of focus groups as a component of the Coastal Resources Management Training Needs Assessment, the second phase of a project to identify and assess coastal resources management training needs in northern Ohio. The GLEFC was engaged by the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve (OWC) and its partners, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio Sea Grant College Program (OSG).

The focus group report summarizes the issues identified by and the findings resulting from discussions with the focus group participants. Major themes are discussed, as well as recommendations regarding core knowledge and training needs for the northern Ohio region.

The purpose of the focus groups was to provide input into the design and development of a comprehensive coastal resources management training initiative to be implemented by the partners. The OWC, ODNR, and OSG intend to develop a training program for coastal decision-makers that would focus on providing comprehensive, science-based training on managing coastal environmental and policy issues. The coastal training program would be designed to help participants develop the management skills needed to apply new technologies and environmental methodologies.

A series of seven focus groups were conducted in seven northern Ohio locations. The focus group participants included professionals who make decisions regarding coastal and environmental policy issues. Six of the focus groups were comprised of decision-makers who were previous and potential users of coastal resources management training (non-provider groups). A seventh focus group was comprised of decision-makers who provide coastal resources management training (provider group).

Information for the focus groups was sought in a structured yet informal discussion format to identify the types of training courses needed. This information could then lead to an improvement in the quality of those courses in order to best meet the needs of various decision-makers around the state. A single facilitator conducted each of the seven groups. The typical group size was eight to nine, with a total of 57 participants (total for all focus groups).
The report is organized into seven sections, which are described below:

1. **Executive Summary** – The Executive Summary consolidates the overall findings of the project and relates these findings in summary format. This section also reveals research data and findings and recommendations.

2. **Introduction** – The Introduction explains the context of the report and outlines its contents.

3. **Focus Group Themes** – This section of the report details the findings and outcomes of the focus groups and describes the themes derived from the focus group dialogue.

4. **Focus Group Participant Profile** – The Focus Group Participant Profile section of the report relates the results of the questionnaire completed by participants prior to each focus group session.

5. **Key Findings** – This section of the report discusses the outcomes of the focus groups and offers suggestions for addressing core knowledge and training design needs.

6. **Focus Group Methodology** – The Focus Group Methodology section describes the approaches and processes applied toward identifying and developing the focus groups, as well as an explanation of the design of the research instruments.

7. **Appendices** – The report contains eight appendices that detail the development and facilitation of the focus group process. This section also contains a map geographically depicts the focus group regions.
FOCUS GROUP THEMES

The coastal decision-makers who were recommended and contacted for participation in the focus groups were previous and potential users of coastal resources management training. For the purposes of the focus group population, a coastal decision-maker was broadly defined as “anyone in the local realm making decisions that directly or indirectly affect watershed areas or Lake Erie coastal areas; and anyone in the natural resource management profession having a coastal, river, or other watershed aspect to their work.” A decision-maker may be an elected official, a working professional, or an active volunteer.

A total of six non-training provider groups were formed and an additional group of training providers was also included. Table 1 details the dates and locations of the focus group sessions.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region #1</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 8, 2002</td>
<td>Lake County Soil &amp; Water Conservation District, Painesville, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region #2</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 9, 2002</td>
<td>Maxine Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University, Cleveland, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region #3</td>
<td>Thursday, October 10, 2002</td>
<td>Ohio State University Extension, Medina County, Medina, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region #4</td>
<td>Wednesday, October 30, 2002</td>
<td>Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, Huron, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region #5</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 22, 2002</td>
<td>Ohio State University Extension, Allen County, Lima, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region #6</td>
<td>Thursday, October 24, 2002</td>
<td>Ohio EPA Northwest District Office, Bowling Green, OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider Group</td>
<td>Monday, October 28, 2002</td>
<td>Ohio State University Extension, Ashland County, Ashland, OH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a broad spectrum of professional experience across both the non-provider and provider focus groups. The non-provider focus groups were comprised of a cross-section of professionals with work experience ranging from one year to more than 16 years in their field. Non-provider careers were in such areas as risk management, planning, engineering, water quality, real estate and development, zoning, economic development, tourism, soil and water conservation, local government politics, nonprofit
management, public health, and federal and state environmental issues. The professionals comprising the provider focus group were engaged in careers in land use, soil and water conservation, geology, water quality, watershed management, environmental regulations, and local government politics. The majority of the provider focus group participants had more than 10 years experience in their field.

Information for the focus groups was sought in a structured yet informal discussion format to identify the types of training courses needed. This format provides information that would lead to an improvement in the quality of those courses in order to best meet the needs of various decision-makers around the state. A single facilitator conducted each of the seven groups. The typical group size was eight to nine, with a total of 57 participants (total for all focus groups). Two types of data were collected during the focus groups – experiential information relayed by the participants, and a brief questionnaire administered prior to the beginning of the session upon their arrival. The results of the questionnaire are discussed in the section of the report entitled Focus Group Participant Profile.

The major findings of the focus groups are separated into themes presented by the six non-provider groups and the provider group.

**Major Themes: Non-Provider Groups**

Non-provider focus group participants were asked questions that would elicit information on core knowledge needs and training specifics. Core knowledge comprised discussion topics that centered on the content of training that was desired and the types of information participants wanted to improve in their work performances. Training specifics are any topic that arose in the discussion about the type of training, the quality of the training environment, and the structure of training.

Several major themes arose from the discussion of coastal resources management (CRM) training. The following themes or common topics of discussion were clearly prevalent throughout all non-provider focus groups and are separated into two categories, Core Knowledge and Training. Table 2 outlines the themes of the non-provider focus groups discussed under each category in this section of the report.
Core Knowledge is defined as those topics or issues that the non-provider focus groups agreed they all needed and/or desired to properly function in their roles as decision-makers and policy advocates. The following themes emerged:

**Theme #1: Coastal and Watershed Protection:** Participants generally described the need to understand the economic impact and value of coastal and watershed protection. This includes such sub-topics as the value of protecting coastal vistas, zoning impacts and the use of effective zoning as a tool for protection, and the effects of non-point source pollution. Non-provider focus group participants felt a need to provide an economic, value-oriented approach (defense or justification) to pursue effective protection and management policies, and desired a "numbers-oriented" way to appeal to landowners, developers, and elected officials in addressing coastal protection issues.

**Theme #2: Information Clearinghouse:** Participants cited the need for an information clearinghouse to facilitate efforts to locate information specific to enforcement authorities. Participants felt great frustration, especially at the local level, in determining which agencies were responsible for various levels of regulatory enforcement. They suggested a "one-stop shop" or "information czar" approach to determine who to contact with various regulatory questions or concerns and, most importantly, to determine final authority for decision-making and conflict resolution. An example of this dilemma is in the area of direct Lake Erie coastline/erosion protection that may involve several agencies including the municipal health department, the state EPA, federal EPA, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Theme #3: Public Education:** Many non-provider focus groups cited the need for overall public education on ecosystem impacts and interactions as a component to core knowledge needs, but cited this as desirable for the general public, not necessarily for
themselves. This stems from a common perception among the participants that their jobs would be easier if the general public were better informed about basic watershed impact issues of protection and conservation and environmental issues more generally.

**Training**

Training is defined for non-provider focus groups to include formal workshop or “classroom training,” as well as conferences, annual meetings, and committee participation. The non-provider groups considered many informal venues as opportunities for information, and indicated that they are more often engaged in these types of activities.

**Theme #1: Local Training Focus:** Participants were animated about their desire to have training that was both local in focus and applicable to their own needs. Due to time constraints and inability to travel (as well as to focus on those topics that could produce a near term benefit), participants seek to have coastal resources management training that meets their local needs – whether it be a legislative update, case studies that directly relate to local issues, or an information exchange meeting. It is important to note that the non-provider focus groups did not cite a lack of technical knowledge in terms of science, but focused more on the nature of the training environment itself. Having professional, enthusiastic speakers with applicable experience was often cited as a need in the conference or workshop setting. The non-provider focus groups pointed to the ability to share experiences and network within the topical setting, again focusing on the need for an emphasis on problem-solving, out of which they could gain concrete ideas for their own decision-making needs.

**Theme #2: Funding Resources:** Many non-provider group participants cited a need for training in locating sources of funding for conservation, preservation, and enforcement efforts. This topic relates to the need for updated information on legislation and regulation, as often both funding and regulatory compliance are tied together as part of the same topic. A recent example of this is the new federal Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act, which provides both updates to liability laws as well as major funding opportunities. It is, however, not enough to quote the law and availability of funds; participants desire a way to determine how to apply funding opportunities to their own local issues and make a particular grant application competitive. Elected officials within the non-provider groups especially cited the need for a direct outcome from their training to be applicable to a local policy decision. Elected officials are especially concerned with serving their constituents, and training to that end is most desirable.
**Theme #3: Communications and Problem-Solving:** Problem-solving, consensus-building, and communication skills training were often cited as a need by the non-provider groups, particularly in regard to their desire to effectuate change in coastal protection by working with a variety of public groups, such as developers, landowners, and regulatory agencies. Case studies and how other areas are handling similar problems were often identified as models for guidance to local decision-making and problem-solving.

**Theme #4: Nature of the Training Setting:** Many non-provider group participants cited Columbus as an ineffective and cumbersome location for meetings, although they are willing to participate and travel if the information is particularly applicable to their local needs. Optimal time away from the office is one day, depending upon the topic. Elected officials in the non-provider groups cited their need to justify educational travel or conferences to their constituency to avoid the perception of “wasting taxpayer funds” or “going on a junket.”

**Theme #5: “False Advertising”:** A majority of non-provider focus group participants noted a sense of “false advertising” when actual sessions did not match the promised topic. There is clearly frustration at having wasted time by attending a training venue that did not match what was promised either in the agenda topics (or related written materials) or in the speakers’ delivery.

**Major Themes: Provider Group**

The common themes identified by the provider focus group are discussed by category in this section and outlined in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP THEMES</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core Knowledge</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme #1: Core knowledge of science</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme #2: Communications and problem-solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme #3: Information clearinghouse</td>
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</table>

**Core Knowledge**

Core knowledge is defined for the provider group as the basic knowledge they believe all decision-makers should have to affect policy decisions on coastal resources management. The provider group echoed many of the same types of information as
stated by the non-provider groups, but added a more holistic tone to the discussion.

**Theme #1: Core Knowledge of Science:** The provider group identified the need for a basic understanding of the science of conservation. Wetlands, coastal waterways, fisheries, and scientific concepts of remediation were all cited as examples of core science needed by coastal decision-makers. Particular discussion centered on an understanding of what community-based watershed management is – an evolving practice into leveraging partnerships and community building. To establish a level playing field in community-building, the participants believed that a basic understanding of the science was needed as a foundation.

**Theme #2: Communications and Problem-Solving:** Problem-solving and communication were also discussed by the provider group in the context of knowing and reaching an audience, and when one can influence decision-making processes, such as with land use issues and in permitting processes. This perspective is notable given that the majority of the provider group participants spend most of their time on consensus building to affect coastal management and watershed protection, not necessarily in formal training.

**Theme #3: Information Clearinghouse:** The need for an information clearinghouse was discussed in order to provide people with the right tools and contacts on a variety of watershed management topics. Providers seek a way to direct information requests on the most common topics, particularly what a current topic is in the media. For example, the Lake Erie “dead zone” was mentioned several times as a topic that was presented simplistically by major print media, yet has been a complex issue for some time in the coastal resources management professional community and may require more detailed information to the public. A clearinghouse of information to which providers could refer the general public was cited as a way to ease the burden posed by the providers’ limited resources.

**Training**

The provider group defines training issues as those issues that are most important for future training needs. The providers again identified many topics that were more global or holistic in their approach to coastal resources management, rather than specific topics identified by the non-training provider groups. Many providers identified issues pressed upon them by the media as issues that will emerge again over time as coastal and environmental “stewardship” needs.

**Theme #1: Data Collection:** The provider group identified the need for a system of data collection, management, and distribution that would help them to deliver more
A Report on Seven Focus Groups
in Northern Ohio

effective information to decision-makers over the long term. The type of data includes best management practices, long-term species monitoring, economic and cultural data (such as the economic benefits and costs of various land uses), and impact analyses of past coastal resources management programs.

**Theme #2: Integrated Knowledge:** The provider group identified the need for an integrated understanding of the Lake Erie basin and watershed as an entire ecosystem and as a training need for the future. Providers perceive their audience’s understanding of the watershed in fragments, at one point in time, only as they focus on individual needs and problems. There is a need to provide ongoing education in a holistic manner.

**Theme #3: Stewardship:** Stewardship of the watershed and decision-makers’ responsibilities for their leadership was a theme that emerged in the provider group discussions. The need to identify costs to the environment of decisions (economic and quality impacts of development and conservation) was discussed as a way to make coastal resources management decision-makers more “accountable” to the public for their stewardship of land. Land preservation was the focus of this need.
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Prior to each focus group session, the non-provider and provider focus groups were asked to complete a questionnaire indicating and rating whether certain coastal issues were priorities for them and whether or not they would like more information or formal training on various coastal topics. The rationale for this instrument was to confirm the organization and position of the participant and to serve as a second source of information about the knowledge, information, and training needs related to their professional and volunteer activities. While the total number of respondents was not large (57) and is therefore not subject to rigorous statistical analysis, a summary of frequencies does provide a snapshot of the relative importance participants attached to knowledge, information, and training concerning a range of topics. The sheet also asked for contact information, job classification, years in their profession or public service, and educational background. These data were used to establish a profile of the focus group participants.

The non-provider and provider focus groups were asked to rate their level of agreement using a three-point Lickert scale concerning whether a particular type of coastal resources management knowledge was a priority and whether the participant desired more information and training on the knowledge topic. Both non-provider and provider groups were asked about two broad types of knowledge – “Resource-Oriented” and “Management-Oriented” – each divided into several subcategories (Appendix H).

“Resource-Oriented Knowledge” is that concerned with natural and cultural resources that exist in the coastal or watershed area; knowledge of how these resources function, their value, and the problems associated with their condition. Resource-oriented Knowledge subcategories included Lake/Water Resources, Economic Development, Public Health, Cultural Resources, and Land Use and Infrastructure. Participants were given examples of each of these subcategories on the questionnaire (for example, the Lake/Water Resources category examples included erosion, siltation, wetlands, water quality, and shoreline changes).

“Management-Oriented Knowledge” is that concerned with the management or intervention actions to mitigate resource-based problems or improve or sustain the resource. The Management-oriented Knowledge subcategories included Laws and Regulations/Best Management Practices, Funding Sources, Partnership Opportunities, Public Outreach/Education, and Use of New Communication Technologies.
The subcategories of knowledge were derived from those used in the first phase of the project – the market analysis of training opportunities. The questionnaire also included space for focus group participants to insert “other” knowledge topics as they deemed appropriate.

The results from this questionnaire would be compared with the general responses given during the non-provider and provider groups. When synthesized, these data can be compared with the results of the market analysis in terms of the congruence between existing training opportunities and the perceived knowledge needs of potential training users.

This section of the report details the background information provided, describes the responses of the non-provider and provider groups to these particular issues, and offers a brief discussion on the issues that were seemingly the highest priorities for the focus group participants. The findings from the provider group are discussed in an analysis separate from that of the six non-provider groups.

**Questionnaire: Participant Background (Non-Provider Groups)**

**Organization Background**

The vast majority of participants in the non-provider focus groups were from public organizations. Ninety-five percent of the group participants identified themselves as employees of public organizations (see Figure 1).

![Organization Background: Non-Provider Group Participants](image)

5% Private

95% Public
**Job Classification**

More than half of the participants in the non-provider focus groups were elected/appointed officials (31 percent) or directors (28 percent). Job categories for other participants in these groups included managerial (15 percent), technical (13 percent), and supervisory (4 percent). Figure 2 graphically depicts the results.

![Figure 2: Job Classification: Non-Provider Group Participants](image)

**Length of Professional Experience**

Slightly more than half of the participants in the non-provider focus groups (58 percent) had more than 10 years of experience in their current profession. Another 20 percent indicated they had 6-10 years of experience within their profession, while 22 percent said they had between one and five years of experience (see Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Length of Professional Experience: Non-Provider Group Participants](image)
**Educational Background**

Nearly three-fourths (74 percent) of the non-provider group participants had a college degree, with bachelor's (46 percent) and master's degrees (24 percent) being the most frequently mentioned educational levels. Other responses included associate’s degrees (4 percent) and professional certification (2 percent), while approximately 20 percent of non-providers reported high school as their respective level of educational attainment (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**
Participant Background (Provider Group)

Organization Background

Nearly all of the participants in the provider group came from public organizations, with 90 percent of the participants reporting that they were employed by public organizations. Figure 5 graphically depicts the results.

Figure 5

![Organization Background: Provider Group Participants]

Job Classification

Job category classifications of the provider group participants were reported as the following: technical (36 percent), managerial (18 percent), CEO/owner (10 percent), and director (9 percent). Twenty-seven percent of the provider group participants reported their job descriptions as a type other than those mentioned above (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

![Job Classification: Provider Group Participants]
Length of Professional Experience

Sixty-four percent of the provider group participants reported that they had more than 10 years of experience within their present profession. Included within this group were 55 percent who indicated they each had more than 20 years of career experience (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of Professional Experience: Provider Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 10 Years: 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 10 Years: 64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Background

With regard to education level, 91 percent of the provider group participants indicated that they had obtained a college degree, of which 55 percent reported a master’s degree and 27 percent a bachelor’s degree. Figure 8 graphically depicts the results.

Figure 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Background: Provider Group Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School: 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's Degree: 27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master's Degree: 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph.D.: 9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issue Ratings

Resource-Oriented Knowledge (Non-Provider Groups)

The respective issues and topics that the non-provider group participants were asked to consider were organized under two main headings, Resource-Oriented Knowledge and Management-Oriented Knowledge. This section describes those issues organized under the heading Resource-Oriented Knowledge, which includes the subcategories of Lake/Water Resources, Economic Development, Public Health, Cultural Resources, and Land Use and Infrastructure.

Lake/Water Resources are those natural resources and resource issues related to Lake Erie, its shoreline, and its tributary watersheds, including shoreline changes, siltation, and wetlands. Economic Development includes those resources related to economic activity and commerce, including tourism, ports, shipping, and fishing. The subcategory Public Health includes those aspects of natural resources in the Lake Erie basin that pose threats to public health, including beach pollution, boating safety, and fish consumption advisories. The Cultural Resources subcategory includes those aspects of the landscape in the Lake Erie basin that demonstrate the historic and cultural aspects of development, such as historic landmarks, significant natural features, and shipwrecks. The subcategory Land Use and Infrastructure considers those aspects related to the use of land and the built environment, including parks and open space, brownfields, stormwater systems, and sprawl.

Non-provider group participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with three particular statements about each of these issues. These statements were: “This is a priority for me,” “I would like more information about this,” and “I would like formal training on this topic.” A three-point scale with the following designations was utilized: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree. A summary of the issue ratings is depicted in Table 4, page 31.

In order to gauge the collective responses of the non-provider focus groups to these specific issues, the “mean” (or average) agreement rating scores for each of these statements were tabulated to determine the general level of agreement expressed by focus group participants on each issue. With the aforementioned scale that was utilized, higher agreement ratings (in particular, those well above the neutral mark of 3.00) indicate that focus group participants consistently expressed agreement to those particular items (responses of 4 or 5 on the scale). At the other end, if mean agreement ratings are closer to the neutral mark of 3.00 (or even below it), the mean
rating suggests that focus group participants were typically more neutral in response to this issue, or had expressed some overall disagreement (as a group) to the item.

**Priorities**

Lake/Water Resources (4.52) and Land Use and Infrastructure (4.35) were the two issues rated highest when non-provider groups were asked if the respective issues were priorities for them. Public Health (3.91), Economic Development (3.76), and Cultural Resources (3.63) were issues that were rated as somewhat lesser priorities (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

![Resource-Oriented Knowledge, Non-Provider Groups: "This is a priority for me"

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree

- Lake / Water Resources
- Land Use / Infrastructure
- Public Health
- Economic Development
- Cultural Resources

More Information

When the non-provider groups were asked to indicate for which issues they would like more information, once again Lake/Water Resources (3.89) received the highest overall rating. Land Use and Infrastructure (3.72), Public Health (3.61), Economic Development (3.52), and Cultural Resources (3.46) were issues that appeared to be in lower demand for more information (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

Resource-Oriented Knowledge, Non-Provider Groups: "I would like more information about this"

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree

- Lake / Water Resources: 3.89
- Land Use / Infrastructure: 3.72
- Public Health: 3.61
- Economic Development: 3.52
- Cultural Resources: 3.46
Formal Training

Collectively, non-provider groups agreement ratings for the “I would like formal training on this topic” statement were not as high as the ratings for the other statements (“I would like more information about this”, or “This is a priority for me”). When asked to indicate for which issues they would like to have formal training, the non-provider groups gave the highest ratings to Land Use and Infrastructure (3.28) and Economic Development (3.26). The issues of Lake/Water Resources (3.00), Public Health (2.98), and Cultural Resources (2.89) all received collective ratings near the “neutral” mark of the scale, indicating that demand for formal training on these topics may not be as strong as it is for other topics or issues (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

To summarize the results of the survey data for the non-provider groups, the ranking of non-provider resource-oriented and management-oriented needs is significant. The average rating in terms of knowledge priorities were highest for Lake/Water Resources (4.52) and Land Use and Infrastructure (4.35). Other topics averaged less than four. These two topics also ranked first and second in terms of a need for more information. However, when ranking the desire for formal training, Lake/Water Resources fell to a third rank. Here Land Use and Infrastructure received
the highest average ranking (3.28), with Economic Development coming in second (3.26). These results indicate that while the non-provider groups focused on Lake/Water Resources, they did not feel a strong need for additional training on this topic. Rather, they seek information to update their knowledge base for two other issues. For Land Use and Infrastructure, they desire both additional information and formal training. For Economic Development, it appears that more information is not as critical to their needs as formal training, perhaps because it is relatively less familiar to them as an area of practice (Summary Table 4).

Summary Table of Issue Ratings
(Non-provider Groups: Total # of participants: n=46)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESOURCE-ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE (Non-Provider Focus Groups)</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource-Oriented Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;This is a priority for me&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I would like more information about this&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;I would like formal training on this topic&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>2.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issue Ratings

Management-Oriented Knowledge (Non-Provider Groups)

This section describes non-provider focus group responses to those issues organized under the heading of Management-Oriented Knowledge, which includes subcategories of Laws and Regulations, Best Management Practices, Funding Sources, Partnership Opportunities, Public Outreach/Education, and Use of New Communication Technologies. Laws and Regulations includes legal and administrative rules used in the Lake Erie coastal areas employed by local, state, and federal agencies, such as zoning, coastal zone regulations, permit processes, and federal and state regulations regarding stormwater, clean water, and wetlands modification.

The subcategory Best Management Practices includes a body of techniques developed to assist managers and decision-makers with effective land management and infrastructure design, such as stormwater detention basins, low impact development, and pollution filtration systems. Funding Sources refers to organizations and programs from which decision-making bodies can seek monetary assistance for projects and programs. Partnership Opportunities refers to processes and methods to form inter-organizational relationships to assist in the achievement of decision-making and program objectives.

The Public Outreach/Education subcategory includes processes and techniques for communication and education of the general public about coastal resources issues. Use of New Communication Technologies refers to the adoption of high-speed electronic communication technologies such as the Internet and electronic analytical tools, and geographic information systems to improve communication and decision-making concerning coastal resources issues.

The particular statements that each non-provider group rated for each of these issues remain the same as those utilized for the issues under Resource-Oriented Knowledge (“This is a priority for me,” “I would like more information about this,” and “I would like formal training on this topic”). The scale used to assess participants’ agreement/disagreement with the statements is also unchanged (1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree). A summary of the issue ratings is shown in Table 5, page 36.
Priorities

Regarding the statement “This is a priority for me,” non-provider groups gave the highest agreement ratings to Laws and Regulations (4.17) and Best Management Practices (4.09). In descending order, collective ratings for the other issues were as follows: Funding Sources (3.85), Use of New Communication Technologies (3.76), Public Outreach/Education (3.67), and Partnership Opportunities (3.67) (refer to Figure 12).

Figure 12

Management-Oriented Knowledge, Non-Provider Groups: “This is a priority for me”

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree

- Laws & Regulations
- Best Management Practices
- Funding Sources
- Use of New Communication Technologies
- Partnership Opportunities
- Public Outreach / Education
More Information

When asked about issues for which they would like to have more information, non-provider groups gave the highest ratings to Funding Sources (3.91), Best Management Practices (3.74), and Laws and Regulations (3.72). Ratings for the other issues were slightly lower – Public Outreach/Education (3.61), Partnership Opportunities (3.50), and Use of New Communication Technologies (3.43) (see Figure 13).

Figure 13
Formal Training

Similar to the issues in the Resource-Oriented Knowledge group, there did not appear to be strong interest in formal training by the non-provider groups for the issues included in the Management-Oriented Knowledge group. The strongest agreement ratings for “I would like formal training on this topic” were for Laws and Regulations (3.33), Best Management Practices (3.33), and Funding Sources (3.26). Use of New Communication Technologies (3.17), Partnership Opportunities (3.09), and Public Outreach/Education (3.02) were fourth, fifth, and sixth, respectively (see Figure 14).

Figure 14
Across all management-related topics, Laws and Regulations, Best Management Practices, and Funding Sources ranked as the first, second, or third items across questions about priorities, need for more information, and need for formal training (Summary Table 5).

Summary Table of Issue Ratings
(Non-provider Groups: Total # of participants: n=46)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT-ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE (Non-Provider Groups)</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management-Oriented Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is a priority for me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws and Regulations</td>
<td>4.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Management Practices</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>3.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
<td>3.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like more information about this”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Management Practices</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws and Regulations</td>
<td>3.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like formal training on this topic”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws and Regulations</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Management Practices</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
<td>3.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issue Ratings

Resource-Oriented Knowledge (Provider Group)

In addition to the six focus groups that were conducted among non-providers, a seventh focus group was also conducted for individuals who provide such training. A total of 11 participants took part in this group. The respective issues that the provider group was asked to rate were identical to those utilized in the non-provider groups. This particular section describes provider group responses to those issues listed under Resource-Oriented Knowledge (Lake/Water Resources, Economic Development, Public Health, Cultural Resources, and Land Use and Infrastructure). The specific statements that were used to evaluate each topic (“This is a priority for me,” “I would like more information about this,” and “I would like formal training on this topic”) remained unchanged, as does the rating scale used (1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree). A summary of the issue ratings is depicted in Table 6, page 40.

Priorities

Lake/Water Resources (4.45) and Land Use and Infrastructure (4.09) received the strongest agreement ratings among providers responding to the “This is a priority for me” item. Public Health (3.36), Economic Development (3.27), and Cultural Resources (3.27) were rated as lesser priorities (see Figure 15).
More Information

Regarding the statement "I would like more information about this", the provider group gave the highest agreement ratings to Lake/Water Resources (4.18) and Land Use and Infrastructure (3.82). Agreement ratings for the other issues were as follows: Cultural Resources (3.64), Public Health (3.55), and Economic Development (3.36) (see Figure 16).

Figure 16

![Bar chart showing agreement ratings for different issues related to resource-oriented knowledge. The chart indicates the level of agreement on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) for Lake/Water Resources (4.18), Land Use/Infrastructure (3.82), Cultural Resources (3.64), Public Health (3.55), and Economic Development (3.36).]
Formal Training

Collective agreement ratings for “I would like formal training on this topic” were once again somewhat lower than those observed for the other two items (“This is a priority for me” and “I would like more information about this”). Land Use and Infrastructure (3.45) and Lake/Water Resources (3.27) received the highest agreement ratings, followed by Cultural Resources (3.09). Interest in formal training for Economic Development (2.82) and Public Health (2.73) did not appear to be as strong (refer to Figure 17).

Figure 17

To summarize the results of the survey data for the provider group, the ranking of provider resource-oriented and management-oriented needs are significant. For resource-oriented knowledge, the rating for Lake/Water Resources and Land Use and Infrastructure averaged as first and second priorities, desiring more information, and desiring additional formal training. However, the desire for formal training on these was significantly lower than the other two categories. Information and formal training on Cultural Resources ranked third in terms of desiring more information and formal training, although it was rated as the lowest priority by the providers. The rating on Cultural Resources might suggest an expected shift or potential opportunity among providers concerning their program priorities (see Table 6).
Summary Table of Issue Ratings
(Provider Group: Total # of participants: n=11)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 5 = Strongly Agree

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource-Oriented Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is a priority for me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like more information about this”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
<td>4.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Resources</td>
<td>3.64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>3.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>3.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would like formal training on this topic”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Use &amp; Infrastructure</td>
<td>3.45</td>
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<td>Lake/Water Resources</td>
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<td>Cultural Resources</td>
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<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>2.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Issue Ratings

Management-Oriented Knowledge (Provider Group)

The following section describes responses from the provider group to those issues organized under the heading Management-Oriented Knowledge, which includes Laws and Regulations, Best Management Practices, Funding Sources, Partnership Opportunities, Public Outreach/Education, and Use of New Communication Technologies. Once again, the particular statements rated for each of these issues remain the same as those utilized for the issues under Resource-Oriented Knowledge ("This is a priority for me," "I would like more information about this," and "I would like formal training on this topic"). The scale used to assess the provider group’s agreement/disagreement with the statements is also unchanged (1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree). A summary of the issue ratings is shown in Table 7, page 44.

Priorities

There was strong collective agreement in the provider group that Public Outreach/Education (4.45) was a top priority. In response to "This is a priority for me," the respective agreement ratings for the other issues were as follows: Partnership Opportunities (4.09), Use of New Communication Technologies (4.09), Best Management Practices (4.00), Laws and Regulations (3.82), and Funding Sources (3.82) (see Figure 18).

Figure 18
More Information

The provider group responses suggest that there is some degree of interest in obtaining more information about each of the respective topics/issues. Collective agreement ratings were as follows: Best Management Practices (4.09), Laws and Regulations (4.09), Funding Sources (4.00), Public Outreach/Education (4.00), Partnership Opportunities (4.00), and Use of New Communication Technologies (4.00) (see Figure 19).

Figure 19

Management-Oriented Knowledge, Provider Group: "I would like more information about this"

Scale: 1=strongly disagree, 3=neutral, 5=strongly agree

- Best Management Practices
- Laws & Regulations
- Funding Sources
- Public Outreach / Education
- Partnership Opportunities
- Use of New Communication Technologies
Formal Training

Compared to the issues categorized under Resource-Oriented Knowledge, participants in the provider group expressed stronger interest in receiving formal training on some of the issues listed under Management-Oriented Knowledge, specifically for Use of New Communication Technologies (3.91) and Partnership Opportunities (3.82). In response to "I would like formal training on this topic," agreement ratings for the other issues/topics were as follows: Laws and Regulations (3.55), Public Outreach/Education (3.55), Best Management Practices (3.45), and Funding Sources (3.45) (see Figure 20).

![Management-Oriented Knowledge, Provider Group: "I would like formal training on this topic"

Figure 20

Regarding management-oriented knowledge, the provider group not surprisingly considered Public Outreach/Education as its top priority (here it is assumed they refer to their training and educational activities toward decision-makers). The Use of New Communication Technologies was highly rated by providers, either as a priority for their work (4.09 average), desiring more information (4.0,) or designing formal training (3.91) – the highest rated item in the training category. Partnership Opportunities also were rated high by the provider group, receiving an average rating of 4.09 as a priority (the second highest), 4.0 for more information, and 3.82 in the formal training area (the second highest rating average). Regardless of the knowledge category, the provider group rated “more information” more highly overall than formal training. Information
about Best Management Practices and Laws and Regulations were rated the same (4.09) by the providers (see Table 7).

### Summary Table of Issue Ratings
(Provider Group: Total # of participants: n=11)
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 5 = Strongly Agree

#### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MANAGEMENT-ORIENTED KNOWLEDGE (Provider Group)</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issue</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Management-Oriented Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is a priority for me”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
<td>4.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Management Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laws and Regulations</td>
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<td>Funding Sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Laws and Regulations</td>
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<td>Funding Sources</td>
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<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
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<td>Partnership Opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of New Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>Public Outreach/Education</td>
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<td>Best Management Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Sources</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some Footnotes to the Coastal Training Market Focus Groups

It should be duly noted that the overall number of individuals in the non-provider focus groups (n=46) was substantially greater than the overall number of provider participants (n=11). In particular, the smaller number of providers could conceivably have a greater impact upon the variation in the collective ratings from this group for the items for which they responded.

Also, both non-provider and provider groups were offered the opportunity to list other topics that they perceived as priorities, that they perceived were issues for which they would like more information, or perhaps desired formal training. Responses to the “other” category were provided by three individuals from the non-provider groups; their responses included the topics of “Private Property Rights,” “Pollutant Discharge,” and “Lakefront Erosion” as issues that were priorities for them. These few individuals also expressed some interest in receiving more information and/or perhaps formal training in these areas.
KEY FINDINGS

The GLEFC team has identified the following key results and provides a preliminary set of assessments as to possible programmatic responses based upon the discussion provided by the non-provider and provider groups and the results of the questionnaire. These results and preliminary recommendations are grouped into two major categories, Knowledge Development and Training Program Design.

The focus groups provide a snapshot of the training needs of coastal resources management decision-makers. While this was a one-moment-in-time view, the key results suggest several programmatic priorities for the coastal training partners to consider so that they may effectively enhance coastal resources training in the Lake Erie basin.

Knowledge Development

“Knowledge development” responds to the core knowledge needs identified across the focus groups and their collective discussions. Such knowledge development suggests program topics to meet the needs of both non-providers and providers. The focus groups identified many of the same topical needs, but expressed them from different perspectives. These key results begin to address the asserted interests and needs of both trainees and training providers.

- **The non-provider and provider group participants asserted a need for more consistent quality, better-organized, and territorially targeted training programs that would integrate knowledge across topics and be more relevant to their regional resource issues and management problems.** This need was reflected in their comments about knowledge delivered through training that was not specific enough to help them address their problems and in comments about the uneven quality of the information delivered. From the market study we know that a wide variety of organizations provide training on related topics. Some of these organizations operate basin- or statewide, while others operate more locally as within a watershed or several counties. It might be that these latter organizations focus more on area specific topics, but there is also concern as to the scientific or technical qualifications of presenters and the curriculum content delivered.

There is clearly a need for the coastal training partners to investigate the curriculum content of key knowledge topics identified by the focus groups to
ensure their quality and effective delivery. The partners should also consider a regional framework to rationalize and gain efficiency in their efforts to coordinate training programs and opportunities.

One preliminary suggestion for addressing these two concerns is to develop a coalition of resource and management specialists as a core training group that would be committed over a long period of time to providing more consistent training and information. This coalition or network of professionals could be identified via several agencies and be facilitated by an outside institution, such as a university or a recognized specialist organization. The coalition could operate on a regional basis, working with training providers from the public, nonprofit, and private sectors to increase the overall quality of core knowledge provided through training and the efficiency of core knowledge delivery.

- **Both non-provider and provider groups communicated the need for enhanced information and knowledge about the economic aspects of coastal resources management and protection.** The focus groups also indicated the need for knowledge on how to incorporate data analysis and collection, assign economic value to various land uses (including redeveloped, preserved, and restored areas), and define the benefits and costs to particular management practices at the land/water interface. This perceived need suggests an opportunity to develop a training curriculum and information regarding the ecosystem services provided by resource protection and best management practices, as well as assessing the economic costs associated with adverse conditions and management practices.

- **The non-provider participants desired a mix of resource-oriented and management knowledge.** Concerning Resource-oriented Knowledge, many non-provider participants focused on the need for training and information about sources of funding to address resource problems, relevant laws and policies, confusion about regulatory mandates and authority, and the use of land planning and zoning techniques for resource protection. Knowledge about Land Use/Infrastructure and Economic Development were the two highest ranked for the need for formal training on the questionnaire (see Figure 11).

Across all management-related topics, Laws and Regulations, Best Management Practices and Funding Sources ranked as the first, second, or third items across questions about priorities, need for more information, and need for formal training (see summary Table 5). These topics should become high priorities for the partners in efforts to develop new curricula and partner with existing trainers.
The results of the provider group questionnaire rankings and responses indicate a desire for formal training in some areas. For Resource-Oriented Knowledge, Lake/Water Resources and Land Use/Infrastructure were rated high as priorities for providers but low in terms of need for formal training. Information and formal training on Cultural Resources ranked third in terms of need for more information and formal training, although the group rated it as the lowest priority. The rating on Cultural Resources suggests a potential opportunity among providers concerning their program priorities.

Regarding provider Management-Oriented Knowledge, the subcategory of Use of New Communication Technologies was rated high by this group as a priority for their work, indicating the need for more information and formal training. It was the highest rated item in the training category. The category of Partnership Opportunities was also highly rated by the providers. These two results bode well for the coastal training partners in terms of their efforts to consolidate or coordinate training programs and adopt more efficient delivery mechanisms such as web-based resources. Regardless of the knowledge category, providers rated “more information” more highly overall than formal training. This potentially indicates a role for the coastal training partners in “train the trainer” programs to provide training providers with information that can be delivered to trainees in order to improve their delivery. Providers also rated the need for information about Best Management Practices and Laws and Regulations equally in their ratings, which converges with the stated needs of the decision-makers and strengthens the need for coastal training partner efforts in this area.

Both non-providers and providers desire relevant information to be organized in a more useful way. It appears that for most of the core knowledge topics, the non-provider and provider groups felt they possessed sufficient scientific or technical knowledge, but needed an efficient way to update that knowledge outside formal training environments. The non-providers and providers were consistent across focus groups on the need to access information more readily and to find information specifically relevant to a particular situation or issue in their locality.

Both non-provider and provider focus groups perceived information sources concerning coastal and watershed resource and management issues to be disorganized. Non-providers tended to focus on the need for information regarding management (see above), as did the provider group. The latter focused on improving general access to information about watershed function and management, both as a way to serve their constituents more effectively and as a way to deliver their programs more efficiently by using
information technologies to lessen the burden imposed by resource constraints. These stated needs suggest a role for the coastal training partners in providing a web-based information clearinghouse and perhaps an “information czar” who could respond to decision-maker questions. The key aspect of these services, however, should be to organize and respond to the information needs of the decision-makers on a regional basis and across resource and management topics. The non-providers and providers stated their need for information collected from multiple state and federal programs regarding a particular resource, management, or compliance issue so that they might ascertain the range of information available and get answers to their questions more readily. The web-based or personnel source should provide information on both regional-specific and basin-wide scientific, technical, and management training opportunities as well.

- Participants of both non-provider and provider groups emphasized the continued importance of enhancing the ecological literacy of the general public and its relevance to the work of coastal resources managers. The non-providers and providers believe that a more ecologically literate public could better provide key support for programs delivered by the decision-makers and managers. The coastal training partners might consider a partnership with existing organizations that focus on education and outreach to the general public. Curricula for this purpose currently exist, but are probably not accessed by local and regional decision-makers. The partners could play a facilitating role to connect those that provide training for decision-makers with those that provide more general education training to adults and young adults in environmental literacy. The partners should carefully consider their efficiencies in pursuing activities in education and training for the general public.

Training Program Design

“Training program design” refers to how the training venues should be established and managed, based upon the needs identified by the focus groups.

- The non-provider groups consistently stated the need for training delivery locations “close to home” to facilitate their attendance on a more frequent basis. This suggests a need for regionally located training centers or venues to make access easy to local decision-makers.

- Both non-provider and provider groups expressed concern over lengthy training sessions that would take time away from their routine
responsibilities. This suggests that the optimal length for trainings should be a half-day to one day. A fee for these training sessions should be charged because there is a perception from the focus groups that even a nominal fee gains a better audience rather than no fee.

- **Non-provider groups expressed a concern that trainers needed to have practical, current expertise and needed to know how to deliver that expertise effectively.** Any new training programs or programs to train trainers should strive to ensure that speakers/presenters are both dynamic and have practical experience with their subject matter. There is a distinct perception against speakers who lack direct practical experience in the topic area.

- **Both non-provider and provider groups expressed a concern that training sessions deliver what is advertised, and that there is a need to target or focus training topics and materials more carefully.** Their experience often was that the topic was so broadly cast in order to accommodate a wide audience that many with more specific knowledge found the training to be a waste of time.

- **The non-provider and provider groups desired real, concrete outcomes to training sessions, rather than merely receiving new information.** This suggests an opportunity to develop training modes such as a workshop with a specific outcome (e.g., a grant application outline for a specific funding source of the student’s choice).

- **Both non-provider and provider groups suggested that the term “coastal” was problematic.** Very few of the focus groups understood the rationale or relevance of the term as it applied to them, even though their decision-making roles could be expected to have an affect on Lake Erie water resources. They directly suggested removing the term “coastal” from literature regarding the Lake Erie basin and watershed areas. We would suggest a more appropriate term to use would be “watershed,” “river basin,” “lake basin,” or “lakeshore” based on their comments.

- **The non-provider and provider groups acknowledged that there is a wealth of information and knowledge available, but felt overwhelmed by the lack of resources in their organizations to take advantage of these training opportunities and the lack of a comprehensive approach to coastal resources management.** Training in a coordinated manner can go a long way toward helping to ease their burden while still allowing providers and non-providers alike the opportunity to meet their everyday coastal resources management objectives.
A Report on Seven Focus Groups
in Northern Ohio
FOCUS GROUP METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the coastal resources management training analysis was a market study revealing in-depth information on coastal training providers located within the state of Ohio. Training providers were surveyed, from which original data were gathered for the second phase of the project – an assessment of perceptible needs by those who enroll in coastal training courses.

The GLEFC conducted focus group sessions comprised of a targeted cohort of professionals designated by OWC and its partners in an effort to measure the needs, wants, and perceptions of coastal decision-makers. A separate focus group session comprised solely of training providers was also conducted. The objective of the focus group sessions was to convene a forum of coastal decision-makers to measure their perceptions and input as to the types of scientific and technical information they needed to enhance their ability to make decisions that affect coastal areas and watersheds and how they wanted that information delivered. The focus groups were comprised of a small number of individuals and convened in seven separate locations throughout northern Ohio. The focus groups were conducted using the nominal group technique to engage decision-makers in a guided discussion of the topic.

Approach to Data Collection

The sites of the focus group sessions were identified from within the geographic scope of the study area. The geographic study area was determined during the first phase of the project (coastal training market study) and includes the Ohio Lake Erie basin. This region is defined as including the following 34 counties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allen County</th>
<th>Hardin County</th>
<th>Putnam County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashland County</td>
<td>Henry County</td>
<td>Richland County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashtabula County</td>
<td>Huron County</td>
<td>Sandusky County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auglaize County</td>
<td>Lake County</td>
<td>Seneca County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford County</td>
<td>Lorain County</td>
<td>Summit County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga County</td>
<td>Lucas County</td>
<td>Trumbull County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defiance County</td>
<td>Marion County</td>
<td>Van Wert County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erie County</td>
<td>Medina County</td>
<td>Williams County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin County</td>
<td>Mercer County</td>
<td>Wood County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulton County</td>
<td>Ottawa County</td>
<td>Wyandot County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geauga County</td>
<td>Paulding County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock County</td>
<td>Portage County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Northern Ohio

The Ohio Lake Erie basin region was segregated into six geographic zones encompassing multiple counties, based on a mixture of shoreline and inland watershed areas. The overall approach was to ensure that each of the focus group zones was approximately proportionate to the others in the number of actual coastal resources management decision-makers present within each zone. Since (to our knowledge) no comprehensive list of coastal decision-makers exists, the number of coastal resources management decision-makers was determined by constructing a list based upon a variety of resources – city, county, and state information, nonprofit organization databases, website data, and other pertinent research tools.

The targeted focus group audience was identified as professionals who make decisions regarding coastal and environmental policy issues. These decision-makers consist of local elected and appointed officials from cities, townships, counties, port authorities, water/sewer districts, metropolitan planning organizations, marinas, tourism agencies/organizations, development agencies/organizations, health departments, and Remedial Action Plan (RAP) groups. Local elected and appointed officials were identified as mayors, trustees, planners, commissioners, city managers and executives, council members, agency/administrative directors, engineers, and economic development professionals. Congressional and Ohio legislators were omitted since these individuals are presumed to have a minimal role as coastal resources management decision-makers given their extensive docket of national and statewide activities.

GIS Methodology for Geographic Distribution of Decision-makers

The population of each county located within the geographic study area was identified, and then grouped into equal population distributions. The coastal decision-makers (the identified target audience) were then identified by county. The estimated number of coastal decision-makers was calculated by county for each of the 34 counties. Using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software, the aggregate number for each county was plotted. In cases where the study area cut across a county line, the number of decision-makers for that county was divided by one-third, one-half, or two-thirds, depending upon the associated spatial distribution.

The counties were grouped together based on the number of decision-makers. These configurations were then grouped into regions or zones. Since segregating the zones into equal segments was impossible given the mixed number of decision-makers across the counties, a uniform representation was approximated under a variety of scenarios. The number of decision-makers was examined by per county and population and by rural, urban, suburban, inland, coastal, north/south, and east/west.
characteristics to arrive at a cross-section of professionals. By applying this methodology, the GLEFC team identified a total of six focus group regions or zones (see Appendix A). The mean number of decision-makers for each of the six areas was computed to be 1,313 people. The decision was made to conduct one focus group session in Cuyahoga County alone because this county contained the greatest number of decision-makers. The final scenario (Table 8) identifies the focus group zones (also refer to focus group map in Appendix A):

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone #</th>
<th>Estimated # Decision-makers</th>
<th>Counties Included in Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>Ashtabula, Trumbull, Lake, Geauga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,014</td>
<td>Cuyahoga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,339</td>
<td>Portage, Stark, Summit, Medina, Ashland, Richland, Crawford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>Lorain, Erie, Huron, Ottawa, Sandusky, Seneca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>Wyandot, Marion, Hardin, Putnam, Allen, Auglaize, Paulding, Van Wert, Mercer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>Lucas, Wood, Hancock, Fulton, Henry, Williams, Defiance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A seventh focus group was added and restricted to only training providers. This session was conducted in a location in close proximity to where the majority of the providers were located.

Overview of Focus Group Design

Each focus group session was designed to have a cross-section of between 8 and 14 participants in each zone, identified in Table 8. A group of this size is large enough to include a cross-section of participants from the cohort identified by OWC and its partners. The feedback generated from this diverse setting provided a more comprehensive and accurate outlook of the macro-training environment, rather than just a segment of it.

The focus group sessions were approximately 90 minutes in length. A member of the GLEFC staff facilitated each focus group to ensure an equitable level of participation among all focus group attendees. The comments of the focus group participants were captured on flip charts and other written notes to serve as a summary of the event. The flip chart comments were used to assemble the data and information from the sessions,
and serve as a basis for this report. Each session was also tape-recorded to aid in the clarification of data and information. The GLEFC team devised a script of questions to serve as protocol for each of the focus group sessions (see Appendix F). A separate script of questions was compiled for the training provider group (see Appendix G).

**Process for Selection of Focus Group Participants (Non-Providers)**

The GLEFC team identified trade and/or interest groups representing the targeted coastal decision-maker audience. The trade/interest groups were contacted by telephone to solicit their assistance in identifying representation for the non-training provider focus groups (see Appendix B). Correspondence by electronic mail (see Appendix C) confirmed the telephone requests. The following is a list of the trade/interest groups contacted:

- Akron Metro Area Transportation Study
- Allen County Regional Planning Commission
- American Water Works Association
- Ashtabula River RAP
- Black River RAP
- Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority
- County Commissioners Association of Ohio
- County Engineers Association of Ohio
- Cuyahoga County Mayors and City Managers Association
- Cuyahoga River RAP
- Eastgate Development and Transportation Agency
- Maumee River RAP
- Mayors Association of Ohio
- Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency
- Ohio Association of Realtors
- Ohio Chamber of Commerce
- Ohio City/County Management Association
- Ohio Department of Health
- Ohio Homebuilders Association
- Ohio Municipal League
- Ohio Planning Conference
- Ohio Rural Water Association
- Ohio Township Association
- Ohio Travel Association
- Richland County Regional Planning Commission
- Rural Community Assistance Program
- Stark County Regional Planning Commission
- Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority
- Toledo-Metro Area Council of Governments

A database was compiled of the 643 coastal decision-makers recommended by the trade/interest groups as possible focus group participants. Coastal decision-makers listed within the database were segregated by focus group zone based upon the geographic location they represented through their employment or as an elected/appointed official. The 643 recommended coastal decision-makers were
A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Northern Ohio

segregated as follows: Focus Group Region (or zone) I, 86 possible participants; Focus Group Region II, 103 possible participants; Focus Group Region III, 143 possible participants; Focus Group Region IV, 94 possible participants; Focus Group Region V, 102 possible participants; and Focus Group Region VI, 115 possible participants.

Due to the high number of possible participants recommended and the limited capacity of the focus groups (14 individuals maximum), a method was devised to select groups of 14 individuals to be contacted from each region. The groups were representative of the designated target audience. The first group of 14 individuals was contacted by telephone to solicit their interest as to whether or not they would participate in the focus group process (see Appendix D). The individuals from the first group of 14 who declined to participate were replaced with individuals in the corresponding profession from the second group of 14. Those declining from the second group of 14 were replaced with corresponding individuals from the third group of 14, and so forth. Those responding with a “yes” or a “maybe” were sent a letter of invitation to participate in the focus group process (see Appendix E). A total of 20 possible participants per zone was envisioned as an adequate number to serve as a resource pool of possible focus group participants.

A separate focus group session (Focus Group Region VII) was conducted for the 50 northern Ohio coastal resources management training providers. These training providers were identified during the coastal training market analysis phase (first phase) of this project. All 50 training providers were contacted by telephone and mailed a letter of invitation to participate in the focus group session.
A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Northern Ohio

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Coastal Resource Training Needs Assessment Decision-Maker Focus Group Zones (map)

Appendix B: Phone Script for Calls to Trade/Interest Groups to Obtain Focus Group Participants

Appendix C: Email Correspondence with Trade/Interest Groups to Obtain Focus Group Participants

Appendix D: Phone Script for Calls to Focus Group Invitees

Appendix E: Letter of Invitation to Participate in Focus Groups

Appendix F: Focus Group Protocol for Participant Groups (non-providers)

Appendix G: Focus Group Protocol for Participant Group (providers)

Appendix H: Information Sheet for Focus Group Participants
APPENDIX A:

Coastal Resource Training Needs Assessment Decision Maker Focus Group Zones

Ohio
APPENDIX B:

Phone Script for Calls to Trade/Interest Groups to Obtain Focus Group Participants

My name is ___ and I am with the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center, a research center that is a part of the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University.

I am contacting you because we are working on a coastal resources management research project for the Old Woman Creek Research Reserve, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Ohio Sea Grant College Program. We are working with them to identify strategies for strengthening coastal management training resources in the Lake Erie Basin.

We are interested in engaging decision-makers in the Ohio Lake Erie basin [county commissioners, mayors etc.] involved in these issues. In October, we will be conducting focus groups in six areas of the state. We are currently putting together an invitation list, and we’d like to ask for your help.

Would you be able to provide us with a list of [county commissioners, mayors, etc.] when we could contact to invite these representatives to be a part of our focus groups?

We are specifically looking for recommendations and contact information of individuals who are leaders in their communities. We will be conducting focus groups in six regions of the state, and are looking for 5 to 10 representatives from each of our six areas. I am happy to fax you a map defining the six regions. The individuals you recommend should reside or work within the region for which they are being recommended.

We would appreciate receiving your recommendation as soon as conveniently possible by September 3rd. I can be contacted by phone at _____, by fax at 216/687-9291, or by email at _____ to receive your recommendation.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation.
A Report on Seven Focus Groups
in Northern Ohio
APPENDIX C:

Email Correspondence with Trade/Interest Groups to Obtain Focus Group Participants

As per our telephone conversation today, the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) of the Levin College of Urban Affairs at Cleveland State University is working on a coastal resources management research project for the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and the Ohio Sea Grant College Program.

The GLEFC is working to identify strategies for strengthening coastal management training resources in the Ohio Lake Erie basin. We are interested in engaging decision-makers – (list the constituency of the trade/interest group) – involved in these issues to participate in a focus group process. In October, we will be conducting focus groups in seven regions of the state. The document detailing the seven regions is attached. We are currently putting together an invitation list and would like your help. Would you be able to provide us with a list of city and county managers, council members, commissioners, and mayors involved with the (name of trade/interest group) that we could invite to be part of our focus groups? We are specifically looking for recommendations and contact information (name, title, organization/company, address, phone, fax, email) of individuals who are active in their communities, preferably 5 to 10 representatives from each of the seven regions. The individuals you recommend should reside or work within the region for which they are being recommended.

We would appreciate receiving your recommendations as soon as conveniently possible, preferably no later than (date). I can be contacted by telephone at (number), by fax at (number), or by email at (address) to receive your recommendations. If this information is available in electronic format, it is greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me.
APPENDIX D:

Phone Script for Calls to Focus Group Invitees

I am [your name] with the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center at Cleveland State University. I am contacting you because we are working on a coastal resources management research project for Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Ohio Sea Grant College Program. We are working with them to identify strategies for strengthening coastal management training in the Lake Erie Basin.

In October, we will be conducting focus groups in six multi-county areas that are a part of the Lake Erie basin. We'd like to ask you to be a part of our focus groups this fall. We are interested in contacting decision-makers [county commissioners, mayors etc.] actively involved in these issues. We received your name from [interest group].

The purpose of the focus groups is to help us evaluate what coastal management resources exist, what is needed, and how these resources can be strengthened. The focus group sessions will last for 90 minutes. You will have an opportunity to be a part of a broad group of elected and appointed officials from a multi-county area and to help shape a cutting-edge public policy issue in the Lake Erie Basin.

Would you be available to participate in the focus group that will be held on [date] in [location]? We would like to confirm your attendance. We will be sending a formal letter of evaluation in the mail within one week. Thank you for your time.
APPENDIX E:

Letter of Invitation to Participate in Focus Groups

«date»

«FirstName» «LastName»
«Title»
«Company»
«Address1»
«City», «State» «PostalCode»

Dear «Salutation» «LastName»:

It is with excitement and anticipation that the Old Woman Creek National Estuarine Research Reserve and partners, the Ohio Coastal Management Program and the Ohio Sea Grant College Program, have initiated a comprehensive training program on coastal resources management. As part of this initiative, we have engaged the Great Lakes Environmental Finance Center (GLEFC) at Cleveland State University to assist us in conducting focus groups that will help identify the training needs and skill requirements of coastal decision-makers in the Lake Erie coastal region. Your participation in this effort would be greatly appreciated.

Coastal decision-makers, for the purposes of the project, include those in a professional, volunteer, or way-of-life capacity who make decisions that may directly or indirectly affect Lake Erie coastal or watershed areas. They may include appointed and/or elected officials, local and state environmental agencies, land managers, business representatives, nonprofit organizations, consultants, and other stakeholders.

Based upon research conducted earlier this year, we know that more than 100
different courses on coastal resources management topics were offered around the state and attended by a variety of public, nonprofit, and private officials. With emerging opportunities, new funding, advanced technologies, and new resource management techniques, effective training for coastal management will become more important than ever before to decision-makers like you and to your communities.

We are seeking your individual input in a focus group that will help us improve coastal resources management training across the Lake Erie basin. We would like to obtain information on existing knowledge and skills, as well as the motivations, formats, and delivery methods that will maximize the use of coastal resources management information, training products, and services. Your perspective and ideas are particularly important to us.

The GLEFC will be conducting several focus groups at various locations, and we are asking for your participation as a coastal resources management decision-maker. The focus group for your region of the state will be conducted on «date1» at «location». The address is «plocation» The focus group will convene at 11:30 a.m. and conclude at 1:00 p.m. Registration begins at 11:00 a.m. Lunch will be served.

Please confirm your participation to the GLEFC at robey65@urban.csuohio.edu or by calling (216) 687-2188 no later than «rsvpdate». You can refer to our web site at www.glefc.org to review information about this project and the primary results of our Market Analysis on coastal resources management training.

If you have any questions about the Focus Groups, please contact Linda Feix, Old Woman Creek, at (419) 433-4601, or via email at Linda.feix@noaa.gov. You may also contact Kevin O'Brien, GLEFC, at (216) 687-2188, or via email at KOBRLC@ix.netcom.com.

Linda Feix
Old Woman Creek
National Estuarine
Research Reserve

Jeffrey Reutter
Ohio Sea Grant
College Program,
The Ohio State
University

Kevin O'Brien
Great Lakes
Environmental
Finance Center,
Cleveland State
University
APPENDIX F:

Focus Group Protocol for Participant Groups (non-providers)

Facilitator: Thank you for participating today. The purpose of this focus group is to determine the type of training that coastal decision-makers (like you) need in order to best do your jobs. We will explore various types of training requested, the content, how the training should be provided, and other preferences you may have about various aspects of learning for coastal decision-makers.

The focus group will last no more than one-and-a-half hours, and I am counting on everyone’s participation. …. You were asked to join this group as a coastal decision maker; let’s define what that means. A coastal decision-maker, for our purposes, is anyone in the local realm: [which includes] public and elected officials who are making decisions that may directly or indirectly affect watershed areas or Lake Erie coastal areas; and, anyone who is in the natural resources management professions that also has a coastal, river or other watershed aspect to their work. This would include both working professionals as well as active volunteers.

Let’s begin by briefly discussing your position, and if coastal or related water issues are a major area of your work, or a secondary function in your role…. [round-robin each participant]

Assessment Categories: Current State of Knowledge & Training Participation

1. How may of you have attended any type of training session in the past year? How did you learn about the training session, and why did you attend? [such as for acquiring new skills, CEU credits, general info, etc.] For those that may have not attended any training, what barriers are there in attending training sessions-time, frequency, location, cost?

2. What are the types of training sessions that you have attended in the past year, specifically, the topics?: [List all on flipchart, and identify how many participants attended each kind of training. Group into Resource-oriented and Management-oriented. Identify those who have not attended and call on them to discuss why they have not attended.]

3. Would you say that that training experience was necessary to your job, as in ongoing training necessary to your specific job responsibilities? Describe for me
the reason you attended and if you felt the training was useful or not. Were you required to? Did you ask to attend a specific session, and for what reason? What outcomes did you receive from attending training: continuing education credit, certification, academic degree, professional development, personal development...?
(Pre-select some individual and call on them to get discussion started.)

4. If the training was not helpful, expand upon why not. What were the factors that made it not useful to your job. [Significant weaknesses and impediments]

5. If the training was helpful, what were the positive aspects that made it worthwhile to attend? [Significant strengths] Was it the content, the location, the trainer, delivery method? (List these on flip chart to discuss in next questioning.)

6. Discuss each positive aspect: content, and its relevance to your specific job as a coastal decision-maker. Identify the level of science and/or technical difficulty. Who would most benefit from the various contents identified. (Using flipchart.)

Assessment Category: Information/Knowledge Needs

Let’s now discuss those training issues that can make a difference for you in your work:

7. Is there a core base of knowledge that all decision-makers should have? ..... What types (content) of information and/or technical assistance do you feel you need most and why? Has this changed since you started in your profession, and if so, how? [seeking a dialogue of new decision-makers versus experienced. Capture where people are getting their current general coastal mgt. information].

8. Are these needs being met currently; if so, how and by whom? If not, can you identify who should provide the training you need/type of organization that would-should provide training? [goal is to gather perceptions and assess gaps in current and desired knowledge]

9. How could access to information [about training and relevant topics] be improved? For instance, not all public entities have adequate or significant access to the web or email; so, what would be the best ways to receive information- training and/or alternatives

10. What is the best setting for training? Lecture room, local facility, at your office, in the field, electronic? How far are you willing to travel? What is the optimal length
11. How often should training be provided?

12. CLOSING: Would you say your knowledge base [about coastal resources management] has been increased as a result of our discussion today? Thank you for your participation.
APPENDIX G:

Focus Group Protocol for Participant Group (providers)

Facilitator: Thank you for participating today. The purpose of this focus group is to determine the type of training that coastal decision-makers need in order to best do their jobs. We will explore various types of training requested, the content, how the training should be provided, and other preferences you may have about various aspects of learning for coastal decision-makers, based upon your experience as a training provider, gleaning your expertise about your market and their needs.

The focus group will last no more than one-and-a-half hours, and I am counting on everyone’s participation. .... You were asked to join this group as a training provider to coastal decision makers; let’s define what that means. A coastal decision-maker, for our purposes, is anyone in the local realm: [which includes] public and elected officials who are making decisions that may directly or indirectly affect watershed areas or Lake Erie coastal areas; and, anyone who is in the natural resources management professions that also has a coastal, river or other watershed aspect to their work. This would include both working professionals as well as active volunteers.

Let’s begin by briefly discussing your position, and if coastal or related water issues are a major area of your work, or a secondary function in your role…. [round-robin each participant]

Assessment Categories: Current State of Knowledge & Training Participation

1. First of all, how many training sessions have you provided in the last year? Of these, how many (number or percent) affect or are directly marketed to coastal decision-makers?

2. What percentage of your time is devoted to training (versus other duties you may have?)? What other responsibilities do you have besides training? (List on flip chart)

3. Of the trainings you have provided, what was the primary purpose for providing them- e.g.: imparting required knowledge, such as a change in the laws or regulation; providing CEU credits; general information; annual conference session.

4. What are the types of training sessions that you have conducted in the past year, specifically, the topics?: [List on flipchart] What is the typical attendance?
5. How do you select the topics you offer? How often do you offer the same topic?

6. How do you reach your market; what venue to market to them…..web, brochures via mail, word-of-mouth, newspaper?

7. At what price-point does attendance drop off? Is there an optimum price….? 

8. Do you ever change the topics mid-stream as a result of the class make-up? How often has this occurred?

9. How do you decide to alter a topic/subject after holding a class? How do you use class evaluations?

10. What makes a course a success for you and your students [significant strengths]:

11. Conversely, what makes a course/subject a failure or a topic that needs changing: [Significant weaknesses and impediments]:

Assessment Category: Information/Knowledge Needs

Let’s now discuss those knowledge issues that can make a difference for coastal decision-making:

1. Is there a core base of knowledge that all decision-makers should have? What types (content) of information and/or technical assistance do you feel your market needs most and why? Has this changed since you started in your profession, and if so, how? [seeking an idea of the change over time of new decision-makers versus experienced. Capture where people are getting their current general coastal mgt. information].

2. How do you keep informed about advancements and/or changes in your field?

3. Are these needs being met currently; if so, how and by whom? If not, can you identify who should provide the training you need/type of organization that would-should provide training? [goal is to gather perceptions and assess gaps in current and desired knowledge]

4. How could access to information [about training and relevant topics] be improved? For instance, not all public entities have adequate or significant
access to the web or email; so, what would be the best ways to receive information, training and/or alternatives

5. What areas do they perceive will be most vital in providing training in the future? [refer to chart]

6. CLOSING: How do you perceive the level of cooperation between organizations that provide training? Is it highly competitive? Cooperative?
A Report on Seven Focus Groups in Northern Ohio
APPENDIX H:

Information Sheet for Focus Group Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coastal Resources Management Training Needs Assessment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Information Sheet for Focus Group Participants</td>
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Name
Title
Organization

Type of Organization/Business (please check one):
- Public (academic, federal, state, local, governmental, nonprofit)
- Private (private academic, company, nonprofit)

Mailing Address

City, State, Zip
Telephone Fax
Email

Job Classification Category (please check one):
- CEO/Owner
- Director
- Elected/Appointed Official
- Managerial
- Supervisory

# Years in current profession/service:

Educational background (please check one):
- High school
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Ph.D.
- Professional certification
## Resource-oriented Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1 = strongly disagree</th>
<th>3 = neutral</th>
<th>5 = strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lake/water resources (e.g., croaking/siltation, wetlands, water quality, shoreline changes)</td>
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<td>economic development (e.g., tourism, ports, shipping, marinas, fishing)</td>
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<td>public health (e.g., beach pollution, boating safety, boat waste, fish industries)</td>
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<td>cultural resources (e.g., historic landmarks, natural features, shipwrecks)</td>
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<td>land use &amp; infrastructure (e.g., parks and open space, brownfields, sprawl, stormwater)</td>
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<td>other?</td>
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## Management-oriented Knowledge

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<tr>
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<th>5 = strongly agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>laws and regulations (e.g., zoning, coastal zone regulations/permits, water pollution, stormwater regulations, wetlands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>best management practices (e.g., streamway, flood control, erosion control, nonpoint, land use, pollution abatement, etc.)</td>
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<td>funding sources</td>
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<td>partnership opportunities</td>
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<td>public outreach/education</td>
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<td>use of new communication technologies (e.g., Internet, geographic information systems)</td>
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<td>other?</td>
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