2019 was a highly productive year for Lake Erie Foundation (LEF). From outreach events, to advocacy, to spreading our mission and adding to our membership, LEF is making a noticeable impact in preserving and protecting Lake Erie.

LEF Board members have been involved in and in many cases led meetings that promote the collaborative strategy that will help resolve issues affecting Lake Erie. Board members delivered impactful presentations on the need for an Environmental Impact Study for the Icebreaker Wind Turbine project and initiated a drive gathering 6,000 signatures to voice concern regarding the project. Board members had a presence at the annual HOW (Healing our Waters) conference, and at numerous yacht club, service club, and other meetings to promote LEF’s mission.

LEF firmly believes there can be a clean Lake Erie while still allowing for profitable farming.
We continue to communicate with key players discussing the importance of addressing the management of manure on Ohio’s animal farms. LEF has consistently stated that all nutrients whether from commercial fertilizer or manure, should be applied at the agronomic rate, which is the amount of fertilizer needed to grow a crop. We realize this is potentially more difficult and costly for livestock farmers, but we want to utilize funds and resources to determine what it will take to help these animal farms transport or manage their manure. In early August LEF Board members participated in a key meeting with Governor DeWine and other major stakeholders to discuss what practices and initiatives are supported by the agriculture community in reducing nutrient runoff.

LEF promotes the reduction of single use plastics and in 2019 partnered with [**ABSOLUT®VODKA**](https://www.absolut.com/us/absolutplanet/) for their “Skip the Straw” campaign. We thank them for their financial contribution to LEF and for making this commitment to a healthier lake.

In July LEF Board members visited the Blanchard Demonstration Farms between Upper Sandusky and Findley to continue building the relationship with the Ohio Farm Bureau. LEF has promoted the idea of learning from the practices that have shown success at these demonstration farms and expanding those management practices to a sub-watershed. Farmers in that watershed would then be given assistance to implement those practices. After a year or two, the water downstream would be monitored to determine if the practices were making a difference. If successful, there could be accurate estimates on extending these practices throughout Northwest Ohio and ultimately the entire state.

LEF was a title sponsor for this past September’s “State of Science” meeting in Toledo with over 300 attendees. One of the day’s key sessions was a roundtable with the Ohio Directors of Agriculture, EPA, ODNR, and Lake Erie Commission.

We had a presence at many events throughout 2019 including the Cleveland Boat Show, Catawba Island Boat Show, Lakeside Boat Show, Sandusky Pride event, the Biggest Week in American Birding. Our events committee is developing the plan for 2020 events.

Multiple mailings to several organizations increased our membership and awareness of LEF and more mailings are planned for this year. We also added two new advisors to the LEF Board: Peter Huston, Director of the Put-in-Bay Chamber of Commerce, and Dr. Tim Davis, Professor of Biological Sciences from Bowling Green State University.