

Lake Erie Awareness Day Set for August 7

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), Ohio Sea Grant, Stone Laboratory, and partners like Lake Erie Foundation will host Lake Erie Awareness Day on August 7, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at five South Bass Island sites, including Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial and the ODNR Aquatic Visitor Center.

This free, family-friendly event invites island residents and visitors to explore South Bass Island, learn about its history and wildlife, and discover efforts to tackle invasive species, plastic pollution, land conservation, aquaculture, and boating safety.

Lake Erie Awareness Day is made possible through a collaboration of local and state partners, with support from Shores & Islands Ohio, the Center for Great Lakes Literacy, and the Put-in-Bay Official Tourism Bureau. More information can be found at: <https://ohioseagrant.osu.edu/news/calendar>

Lake Erie Foundation — Who We Are and What We Do

As summer begins, we're excited to introduce the members of The Crew's Nest and Sandusky Yacht Club, who are LEF Business Sponsors, to the important work of Lake Erie Foundation.

Founded in 2016, Lake Erie Foundation has grown from a grassroots effort into an organization of 400+ members, generous donors, and supportive business sponsors. Our mission is simple: to protect and preserve a healthy Lake Erie for generations to come.

We focus on key issues like harmful algal blooms, wind turbine development, and microplastic pollution — all critical to keeping the lake clean, safe, and thriving.

Whether you love the beaches, boating, fishing, or just the lake itself, we invite you to join us in protecting it. Thank you for caring about Lake Erie's future.

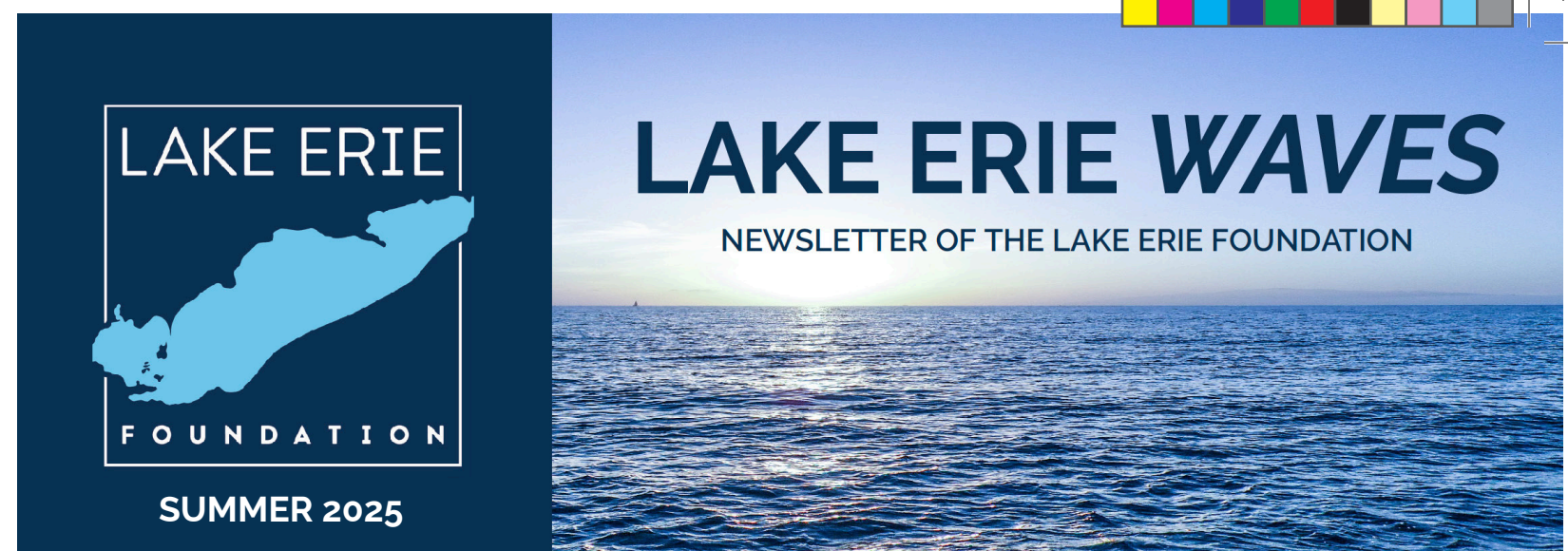
Enjoy this summer edition of our newsletter — and let's keep Lake Erie healthy together!



236 Walnut Ave
Lakeside, Ohio 43440

Join LEF Today

Become a member of Lake Erie Foundation (LEF) and help us restore and protect Lake Erie for generations to come. Your tax-deductible contribution will help LEF work to ensure that Lake Erie's waters are safe for drinking, fishing and swimming. Your support makes our efforts for advocating, educating, supporting innovative technology development, and legal defense a possibility. For more information regarding membership, visit LEF's website at www.LakeErieFoundation.org or call 419-301-3743.



From the President

After a slow start, summer has finally arrived—and with it, the lakeshore has come alive. It's heartening to see so many people out enjoying the beauty and recreational opportunities that Lake Erie provides. At Lake Erie Foundation (LEF), we remain dedicated to educating the public about the lake's challenges and inviting everyone to take part in preserving its future.

We began 2025 by participating in the Progressive Cleveland Boat Show and the Catawba Island Boat Show. Many thanks to the Ohio Marine Trades Association for organizing these events. This year, our spotlight was on the growing threat of microplastic pollution. To encourage eco-friendly alternatives, we distributed biodegradable straws and cutlery—reminders that even small, everyday choices can have a lasting and positive impact.

In this issue, we're sharing updates on several important developments, including a proposed floating wind farm from Maryland-based Mighty Waves Energy. You may remember that LEF played a key role in halting the original Icebreaker project, which aimed to begin with six turbines off Cleveland's shoreline and could have expanded to more than 1,500 turbines across a 75-square-mile area of Lake Erie. While we support the pursuit of clean energy, we remain vigilant and are closely monitoring this new proposal and its potential environmental impacts on our lake.

On June 26, 2025, NOAA and its research partners issued a forecast predicting a mild to moderate harmful algal bloom (HAB) in Western Lake Erie this summer. This year's bloom is expected to reach a severity index of 3, with a possible range between 2 and 4. The HAB severity index reflects the bloom's biomass—the total amount of algae—during the peak 30 days of the season. A moderate bloom is defined by an index of 3–5, while a score above 5 indicates a more severe bloom.

We are very disappointed that both the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate voted to reduce the 2026-2027 H2Ohio budget by 39%. (Fiscal year 2026 starts July 1, 2025). We are still waiting to find out more specifics, but farmers in 14 of the counties that have streams and rivers that drain into the Maumee River are going to experience a reduction in H2Ohio support from 2024 to 2026. Lake Erie Foundation is still working to at least maintain the Ohio Department of Agriculture's NW Ohio budget and we will let you know if we are successful. These practices have already helped reduce the likelihood of severe algal blooms and continued investment is essential to protect Lake Erie for future generations.

We're gratified to share news of a \$500,000 grant we received from the Ohio General Assembly last July. These funds will support the installation of prototype phosphorus filters along high-phosphorus farm fields near Defiance and Napoleon—an important measure to reduce agricultural runoff and help prevent harmful algal blooms. LEF Vice President Matt Fisher is leading the initiative, with filter installation set to begin in early August.

As always, we are deeply thankful for our members, donors, and partners. Your continued support powers everything we do. We're committed to being transparent and responsible stewards of your generosity. We also welcome your input—please don't hesitate to reach out at info@LakeErieFoundation.org.

Sincerely,
Jim Stouffer



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Lake Erie Foundation
236 Walnut Ave
Lakeside, Ohio 43440
419-301-3743
www.lakeeriefoundation.org

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Targeting High-Phosphorus Fields to Protect Lake Erie

To more effectively reduce phosphorus runoff from agricultural fields—runoff that contributes significantly to Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in Lake Erie each late summer—Lake Erie Foundation has consistently advocated for greater focus on high-phosphorus fields. These are fields where phosphorus levels exceed 100 parts per million (ppm), far above the agronomic rate of less than 40 ppm typically required for healthy crop growth.

Research shows that roughly 13% of high-phosphorus fields in Northwest Ohio contribute to approximately 45% of the phosphorus that reaches the mouth of the Maumee River. Addressing these specific fields could yield major improvements in water quality.

In July of last year, the Ohio General Assembly awarded Lake Erie Foundation a \$500,000 grant from the One-Time Strategic Community Improvement Fund. The grant supports the installation of six to eight phosphorus filters at the edge of high-phosphorus fields. Implementation began in November, focusing on sites in Northwest Ohio near Defiance and Napoleon.

We are fortunate to be working with an exceptional team that includes Flint Engineering, USDA-ARS scientist Chad Penn, Clint Nestor of Nestor LLC, and local environmental advocate Jen English from Defiance.

Phosphorus filters are cement tanks installed at the edge of agricultural fields, where runoff drains into nearby ditches, creeks, or rivers. These filters treat the water as it flows through, removing a significant portion of the phosphorus—often over 80%—before it reaches larger waterways.

Our team has assessed several hundred high-phosphorus fields, with valuable assistance from Clint Nestor, a highly respected crop consultant in the Napoleon area. Thanks to his expertise, we've narrowed our focus to about 15 priority fields and are now finalizing those most likely to deliver impactful results.

We plan to have three filters installed by mid-August and an additional three by October 1. Our goal is not only to demonstrate the effectiveness of these filters but also to share all findings with the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). The ODA is planning a similar initiative scheduled to launch by the end of 2026.

By sharing real-world successes and challenges, we hope to guide ODA—and the broader H2Ohio program—toward concentrating efforts on the fields that contribute most to phosphorus runoff. This targeted approach can significantly improve water quality in Lake Erie and beyond.

Lake Erie Foundation Thanks Sweetums Signatures for Ongoing Support

The Lake Erie Foundation (LEF) extends its sincere appreciation to Sweetums Signatures for their generous support of LEF's mission to protect and preserve Lake Erie.



Based in Attica, Ohio, Sweetums Signatures is a locally owned small business that specializes in custom-designed apparel and decals, helping customers add a personal touch to their wardrobe and home décor. What started in 2007 as a small venture in founder Danette Martin's basement has since grown into a successful and creative enterprise employing a dedicated team that shares her passion.

Since early 2024, Sweetums has partnered with Shores & Islands Ohio, donating a portion of sales from merchandise featuring the Shores & Islands Ohio and Lake Erie Love logos to LEF. Thanks to this collaboration, Sweetums contributed over \$1,100 to the foundation in 2024.

Danette's support of LEF reflects her and her family's deep appreciation for Lake Erie and their commitment to protecting the lake and its connected waterways. "The partnership with Shores & Islands Ohio in making one-of-a-kind Lake Erie Love products has allowed us to meet so many amazing people who love our lake as much as we do," Danette shared.

To explore the Lake Erie Love product line and learn more about Sweetums Signatures, visit: SweetumsSignatures.com.

Renewed Push to Build Wind Turbines in Lake Erie Raises Environmental and Economic Concerns

A Maryland-based company, Mighty Waves Energy, is leading a new initiative to construct an industrial wind farm in Lake Erie. In late 2024, the company acquired the assets of the Icebreaker Wind project from Fred Olsen Renewables, a Norwegian firm. Their current proposal involves installing six floating wind turbines roughly eight miles off the coast of Cleveland.



However, significant questions remain about the environmental impact of placing wind turbines in the Great Lakes. Leading environmental organizations, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy, advise against building wind energy structures in or within three miles of any Great Lake. Their primary concern is the potential threat these turbines pose to millions of migratory birds that rely on these critical flyways.

The Black Swamp Bird Observatory, a nonprofit dedicated to bird conservation, strongly opposes the project. Their concern centers on the proposed location, which lies within a region designated by the Audubon Society as a Globally Important Bird Area. The area sees vast numbers of migratory birds each year, and the turbines pose a direct risk to their survival. Additionally, bald eagles that nest and hunt along the shoreline would face increased danger from turbine blade collisions.

Beyond environmental risks, the project could have significant economic repercussions. Ohio's eight Lake Erie-bordering counties generate around \$20 billion annually in tourism-related spending, support 131,500 jobs, and contribute \$2.6 billion in tax revenue. A 2016 study by North Carolina State University found that offshore wind turbines could deter vacationers. According to study co-author Laura Taylor, people tend to avoid renting vacation homes with views of turbines, often opting for destinations with unobstructed natural vistas.

Lake Erie Foundation, which advocates for the lake's health and sustainable use, believes more thorough environmental scrutiny is needed. The organization calls for a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), rather than relying on the less comprehensive Environmental Assessment previously completed by Icebreaker Wind.

While the Foundation supports clean energy and initiatives to combat climate change, it argues that this particular project carries more harm than benefit. The potential environmental degradation, loss of tourism revenue, impact on local jobs, waterfront property values, and tax income appear to outweigh the limited amount of power and number of jobs the wind farm would create. For these reasons, the Lake Erie Foundation opposes the proposal by Mighty Waves Energy to build wind turbines in Lake Erie.