



[UNLEASHING THE POWER OF GREEN]



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Ohio Department of Natural Resources Delivers Holiday Gift to the Governor and General Assembly

Environmental- conservation groups urge sound science to balance needs of people and nature

Columbus, OH—Environmental and conservation organizations across Ohio today applauded the timely delivery of the final task force recommendations for the implementation of the Great Lakes Compact (Compact) in Ohio.

The Compact, a historic achievement, protects the Great Lakes, rivers and groundwater from new large water withdrawals. It was created through the collective legislative action of its eight US member states and later adopted by Congress. The Compact went into effect December 8, 2008 and requires each Great Lakes state to develop and implement conservation and water management programs.

Members of Ohio's environmental-conservation community participated in months of negotiations and discussion with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, utility companies, agricultural interests, manufacturers, and others as part of the Great Lakes Compact Advisory Board.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources submitted the recommendations to the Governor and Ohio General Assembly for review. While the final recommendations state that there was agreement on many issues, the environmental-conservation community acknowledges that the most critical issues are still outstanding and much work will need to be done during next year's General Assembly. Specifically, the report did not include recommendations on how to implement the water management program.

The environmental-conservation community believes that the Advisory Board's recommendations should reflect Ohio's strong commitment under the Compact to protect the Lake Erie basin water resources from significant individual or cumulative adverse impacts. Today's submission is a critical first step toward preserving one of Ohio's greatest natural resources.

"All streams should be awarded protections based on size, quality, and sound science," stated Kristy Meyer, director of agricultural & clean water programs for the Ohio Environmental Council. "They provide local jobs from recreation and tourism, home for wildlife, and enhance the local quality of life."

The Nature Conservancy, along with the Midwest Biodiversity Institute, developed a water withdrawal tool that would enable the State to easily determine the impact of a specific water withdrawal on a

nearby river or stream. This tool is based on the U.S. Geological Service's flow data and more than 20 years of data that the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has been collecting, which links the amount of water withdrawn to a percentage of flow-sensitive species lost within a particular river watershed.

"Streams within larger watersheds are able to supply more water for human use than streams within small watersheds," said John Stark, director of freshwater conservation at The Nature Conservancy. "In addition, streams with exceptional use designations support the most sensitive aquatic species and therefore are more vulnerable to water withdrawals."

"The Ohio Stream Withdrawal Evaluation Tool would provide businesses and industry with the certainty they seek when siting a new facility or looking to expand their use of water within a particular watershed," said Meyer. "Industry has stated all along they want certainty. This tool would provide the type of certainty that water users could easily embrace."

The thresholds proposed by industry during task force discussions exceed all other 7 Great Lakes states' thresholds for protecting all water users' interests, including wildlife, and could possibly require municipalities in the Ohio Lake Erie basin to scale back their pollution loading to allow for more water withdrawals. The more water withdrawn also could exacerbate the harmful algal blooms that Ohio became all too familiar with this past summer.

"These recommendations are only the first step towards fulfilling Ohio's commitment to implementing the Great Lakes Compact," said Marc Smith, senior policy manager with National Wildlife Federation. "We look forward to working with the legislature and Governor-elect Kasich to ensure that Ohio's water and wildlife, and our way of life, are protected for generations to come."

Lake Erie supplies the state of Ohio with \$10.1 billion in economic revenue each year and more than a quarter of a million jobs as a result of recreational and commercial fishing, wildlife watching, tourism and travel.

Before provisions of the Compact can be implemented in Ohio the General Assembly must pass legislation.

The purpose of the Compact is to promote the orderly, integrated, and comprehensive development, use, and conservation of the water resources of the Great Lakes Basin. Through the Compact, a proper balance can be achieved among industrial, commercial, agricultural, water supply, residential, recreational, and other legitimate uses of the water resources of the Basin.

In addition to Ohio, Compact member states include Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.