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**Izaak Walton League of America - Ohio Division – Lake Erie Charter Boat Association –  
National Wildlife Federation – Ohio Environmental Council – Western Lake Erie Association**

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## **Conservation Groups Sue Ohio EPA to Protect Lake Erie**

**Destructive practice harms water quality, fishery and recreation**

**ANN ARBOR, MICH. (May 25, 2010)**—In an effort to protect Lake Erie and its fishery, conservation groups are trying to halt the dumping of hundreds of thousands of tons of dredged sediments into the lake—a destructive practice that harms water quality, fish and aquatic habitat.

The groups are challenging a certification that allows the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dump up to 800,000 cubic yards of sediment into the Western Basin of Lake Erie. The practice, so-called “open-lake dumping,” harms fish, damages their habitat and exacerbates harmful algal blooms—which lead to costs on cities, businesses and people stemming from environmental damage and impacts to fishing, boating, water recreation, and drinking water supplies.

“Open-lake dumping harms the environment and the economy. It should not go forward,” **said Neil Kagan, senior attorney for the National Wildlife Federation**, which filed the challenge with Ohio’s Environmental Review Appeals Commission. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needs to go back to the drawing board and come up with a solution that keeps the Port of Toledo open, while protecting Lake Erie and the millions of people who depend on it for drinking water, fishing, recreation, and their way of life. We can do better than this.”

The action by conservation groups comes after both the Ohio EPA and Department of Natural Resources voiced opposition to open-lake dumping. In an April 15 letter to the Army Corps, **Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski and Ohio DNR Director Sean Logan wrote:** “We cannot state our belief any more clearly: Open lake disposal of these huge quantities of dredged sediment in the Western Basin of Lake Erie is not environmentally acceptable to the State of Ohio and needs to be discontinued.”

“We’re past the point where it is acceptable to treat Lake Erie as a receptacle for our waste,” said **Sandy Bihn, Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper Association.** “We can maintain Toledo harbor and protect the health of Lake Erie at the same time—but not under the current proposal. It’s time to put forward solutions that support maritime commerce and maintain this freshwater resource.”

The health of Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes has become a national priority under President Obama and the current U.S. Congress. The nation’s investment to restore the Lakes is jeopardized by practices like open-lake dumping.

“[R]e-entrainment of dredged material seems to directly contradict every soil conservation program, non-point source pollution prevention program, nutrient loading prevention program, and stormwater pollution prevention program that exists today,” wrote the directors of Ohio EPA and Ohio Department of Natural Resources in the April 15 letter to the Corps of Engineers.

“We are working to restore and protect the Great Lakes,” said **Rick Graham, president of the Ohio division of the Izaak Walton League of America – Ohio Division.** “The practice of ‘open lake dumping’ while solving one problem creates too many other problems creating serious impairments that put sport fishery, tourism industry, and public health at risk.”

Lake Erie is the Great Lakes’ warmest, shallowest, and most productive lake. Lake Erie provides drinking water for 11 million people; provides fish; and provides waters for boating and recreation. Lake Erie produces more consumable fish than all the other Great Lakes combined. Lake Erie attracts fishermen and recreational tourists from all over the world, creating and sustaining thousands of jobs.

“This is not only an environmental issue, this is an issue about jobs and all of the people who earn their living on the Lake,” said **Rick Unger, president of the Lake Erie Charter Boat Association.** “Large-scale dumping threatens people’s livelihoods and that is not acceptable. We urge the state of Ohio to pursue another option that protects Lake Erie, its fishery, and fishing opportunities and jobs for people.”

The groups filed the challenge last week. The case will be heard by Ohio’s Environmental Review Appeals Commission, which has scheduled a prehearing conference for June 10.

“Ohio should stop burying its head in tons of dirty dredging,” said **Kristy Meyer, OEC director of Agricultural and Clean Water Programs.** “Instead, Ohio needs to safely dispose of this material on land—not throw it overboard in our Great Lake.”

The Brookings Institution found that restoring Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes will bring \$2 in economic benefit for every \$1 investment.

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