

# CROSSSECTION



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

<i>A Great Lake.....</i>	1
<i>Oil and Gas Leasing.....</i>	1
<i>Kirtland Timber Harvests.....</i>	2
<i>Got Steelhead?.....</i>	2
<i>2006 Tree Sale Form.....</i>	3-4
<i>EQIP Applications.....</i>	5
<i>Wild School Site Grants.....</i>	5
<i>Lake Erie Bag Limits.....</i>	5
<i>Who Wants to be a</i>	
<i>Conservationist?.....</i>	6

## Special Points of Interest:

- Lake Erie water quality issues
- Landowner rights and responsibilities for natural resource uses
- Steelhead Survey to establish and protect habitat
- EQIP 2006 sign-up deadline
- School Land Lab grant opportunity
- Lake Erie fishing regulation changes

## A GREAT LAKE: LOOKING AT LAKE ERIE

Lake Erie is the smallest of the Great Lakes in terms of total volume. It is very shallow compared to the other lakes, causing it to warm quickly in the summer. According to the Great Lakes Atlas, a joint publication of the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and Environment Canada, it is also most impacted by urbanization and agriculture. How did this unique body of water get to where it is today, and what does the future hold?

Early settlement patterns followed Lake Erie and its tributaries; the waterways defined where people could live. Overland trails were narrow and rugged, limiting what could be transported along them, but canoes, rafts and barges could carry large amounts of goods with relative ease. Lake Erie also served another important purpose; it absorbed our wastes. As

industrialization proceeded throughout Ohio and the nation, we continued to assign these two uses, transportation and waste removal, to our surface waters. Factories were located near water so they could draw what they needed for production and ship their products to other parts of the US and throughout the world. Byproducts often found their way into the wastewater stream and were released into the lake.

As Ohioans were increasing their reliance on the Lake Erie watershed, they were also taking the time to enjoy it. Affluent Clevelanders used the electric Cleveland Painesville & Eastern Railroad to head out of town for the hot, humid summers. They often owned or rented houses near the lakeshore, and took advantage of the lake breezes and the

(Continued on page 2)

## CONSIDERING AN OIL & GAS WELL? WE CAN HELP

Ohio's oil and gas industry is beginning to increase operations again in Lake County and will likely continue this trend into the future. Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Mineral Resources (ODNR-DMRM) 2004 Annual Report listed Lake County as the 6<sup>th</sup> most active county in Ohio for new oil and gas wells with 29 wells completed. The average depth of Lake County wells drilled in 2004 was 3,328 feet, most reaching the Clinton Sandstone Formation.

Several oil and gas companies are actively pursuing leases for the right to establish well sites on private and public lands within the county. Landowners should give careful consideration to all aspects of these types of operations. It is important to know your rights, understand all lease language that is offered before agreeing to a lease, and also to be aware of the potential impacts a well site may have on your land, your surrounding natural resources and the resources of your neighbors. Lake SWCD offers technical assistance to any landowner or public entity wishing to ensure that the proper best management practices are employed by the well operators on their land in

order to protect natural resources. Assistance includes site plan review, pre-construction meetings, and construction monitoring for erosion control.

The ODNR-DMRM is the regulatory authority for oil and gas well drilling in Ohio. The Division requires specific best management practices be employed by the well operators, both during and after installation of the well. These practices control soil erosion, manage water runoff and abate pollution from brine production or accidental spills. The Division also requires the monitoring and protection of water wells adjacent to a new drill site. Many of the best management practices are similar to local erosion and sediment control rules and soil and water management techniques used by the timber harvesting industry.

If you have questions or concerns regarding a proposed or active well site, please contact the District for assistance. ODNR-DMRM's website: [www.dnr.ohio.gov/mineral/oil/index.html](http://www.dnr.ohio.gov/mineral/oil/index.html) contains excellent information regarding the industry and a complete 'Landowners Guide to Oil & Gas Leasing'.

## KIRTLAND TIMBER HARVESTING

In 2002, the City of Kirtland continued their lead in the protection of their community's natural resources. The City adopted a riparian setback ordinance to protect small streams and major rivers from unnecessary flood plain and stream bank erosion impacts or encroachment, and for the protection of the community's water quality. The riparian ordinance applies to new construction, as well as forestry operations. Minimum setbacks have been established along streams to preserve the existing corridor vegetation. Any landowner who wishes to harvest trees near streams or cross streams to complete a harvest will likely be required to apply for a conditional use permit from the City of Kirtland Planning Commission. The Lake County SWCD assists landowners with this process of planning, reviewing, and monitoring a proposed harvest to ensure that the landowner's goals for timber management are met as well as the City's objective of continued protection of the community's water resources.

Additional programs for forestry management are available through the Lake SWCD and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Please call (440)350-2031 to schedule a site visit. The Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Forestry (440) 632-5299 also provide assistances to landowners wishing to develop a forest management plan or pursue a timber harvest.

## GOT STEELHEAD?

### STEELHEAD TROUT MIGRATION SURVEY

One of the unique advantages of living in Lake County is the proximity to Lake Erie and the mouths of four exceptional waterways that flow into it. The Grand and Chagrin Rivers are both designated "Scenic" and/or "Wild" Rivers while the Mentor Marsh and the Arcola Creek Estuary attract bird watchers, fisherman, and naturalists from all over the region. Because these waterways flow directly into Lake Erie, they experience seasonal migration of many species of spawning fish including the steelhead trout.

Fishermen love the steelhead trout for their beauty, size, and legendary fighting ability. Steelhead are also known for their ability to navigate up the smallest streams and in some cases ditches in search of gravel beds on which to lay their eggs. These fish have actually become so popular with fisherman, it is not uncommon to see professional fishing guides from Pennsylvania and New York coming to Northeast Ohio with their clients to share the experience and support our local economy.

Land development and stormwater management projects need to be mindful of steelhead runs. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Ohio EPA have 'use designations' on many streams and rivers throughout the state. These designations help agencies decide to what extent new roads, development projects, and wastewater treatment facilities can impact streams and rivers. One of these use designations is "Seasonal Salmonid Habitat" which is for those streams that display a seasonal steelhead trout or salmon migration. Often, however, the state is not aware of exactly which local streams have steelhead and how far they travel inland from Lake Erie.

In order to better understand the extent of the Lake County steelhead migration, the Lake SWCD is conducting a survey to see which streams the steelhead actually migrate through during their seasonal runs. In addition to this article, the District also plans to survey members of local conservation organizations, fishing clubs, and post flyers at bait and tackle shops. We realize that many of these streams will be very small but it is important for us to verify and document them so they can be appropriately recognized on the state and federal levels.

If you have a stream or river in your backyard that sees a seasonal steelhead trout or salmon run, or know of a small stream with steelhead in it, please let us know. We are interested in determining how far upstream they actually travel from Lake Erie so we can to provide an accurate description to state and federal agencies. Please contact Brett at the Lake SWCD office at (440) 350 2092 or at [brodstrom@lakecountyohio.gov](mailto:brodstrom@lakecountyohio.gov) to contribute steelhead trout information.

## LAKE ERIE *(Continued from page 1)*

recreation opportunities of Lake Erie. Eventually, these communities evolved from summer resorts to year-round towns.

Urbanization brought with it a set of water quality problems. By the 1970's it was obvious that Lake Erie had a problem. Floating rafts of dead fish and algae mats were washing ashore. High phosphorous levels from sewage and agricultural runoff were causing the algae to grow and deplete the water of available oxygen, suffocating the fish. Lake Erie and Cleveland were attracting national attention for their 'dead' lake and burning river. The US EPA and Environment Canada began efforts to limit phosphorous and other pollutants going into the Lake Erie watershed. They also began monitoring the 'dead zone,' the area of Lake Erie that became depleted of oxygen each summer.

Over the last few decades, Lake Erie has bounced back. Water quality has been slowly improving and people have been returning to the lake shore for recreation and enjoyment. If we were writing a novel, this would be the place for the happy ending. Unfortunately, Lake Erie still faces risks. There are 12 million Canadian and US citizens living in the Lake Erie watershed. Runoff from urban areas is a major source of water pollution. Invasive species have been introduced to Lake Erie, changing the balance of the aquatic ecosystem. New species have been carried throughout the Great Lakes by the shipping industry and pleasure boats, benefiting some species, but destroying others. Native sport fish populations have been affected by over fishing and illegal poaching, causing populations to fall or remain low. Some sport fish in Lake Erie are exposed to hazardous chemicals, and carry potentially dangerous amounts in their flesh. Ohio EPA suggests that channel catfish over 16" in length caught in Lake Erie not be eaten at all, due to PCB contamination. Most other sport fish caught in Lake Erie should only be eaten once per month.

Many years of increasing vigilance have made a difference. While Lake Erie will never be a pristine water body surrounded by old-growth forest, it has potential for being a front yard showpiece rather than a backyard secret.

For more detailed information on fish consumption advisories, visit <http://www.epa.state.oh.us/dsw/fishadvisory/map/index.html>. For more information on Lake Erie water quality issues, visit <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/erie.html>.

## EQIP APPLICATION DEADLINE SET AS MARCH 1ST

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program available to agricultural producers interested in promoting environmental quality as well as production. The program offers financial and technical assistance to landowners interested in improving the conservation practices of their operation, with an emphasis being placed on the development of comprehensive nutrient management plans and grazing plans.

Applications are accepted throughout the calendar year, with this year's first collection period ending on March 1st. All applications are evaluated using accepted state and local criteria. Applications that best encourage the use of cost-effective conservation practices, and optimize environmental benefits are chosen.

EQIP may pay 50-75 percent of the costs of certain conservation practices important to improving and protecting the health of natural resources in the local area. Limited resource farmers may be eligible for a higher percent of the cost of certain conservation practices. Practices eligible under EQIP include fencing, waste storage structures, all weather paddocks, stream crossings and many more. Forestlands are also eligible that are managed or wish to be managed for timber production. Practices eligible under EQIP for forest management include grapevine control, crop tree release and tree planting. Landowners must have or develop a forest management plan approved by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry to be eligible for cost-share assistance.

For a complete list of eligible EQIP practices or to make an appointment to meet with your local NRCS representative to discuss the application process, call (440)437-5888 or (440)350-2730 to speak with SWCD staff.

**Remember, to be eligible under the current sign-up period, your application must be filed before the March 1st deadline.**

**DEADLINE FOR TREE SALE ORDERS  
IS FEBRUARY 24, 2006.**

## GRANTS TO DEVELOP "WILD SCHOOL SITES" AVAILABLE THROUGH ODNR

COLUMBUS, OH - Ohio teachers who have successfully used Project WILD in their classrooms can now provide students additional hands-on learning about wildlife and habitat through grants available from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

Grants totaling \$500 each will be awarded on a competitive basis to 20 schools currently participating in Project WILD, a supplemental environmental education curriculum for grades K-12.

Project WILD uses wildlife and wildlife management techniques to teach traditional school subjects such as math, science, and language arts. Teachers can use the new grant money for materials, equipment and activities to develop "WILD School Sites" on their campuses.

"A 'WILD School Site' project allows teachers to take lesson plans outdoors, bringing environmental education concepts to life in a real way for students," said Jen Dennison, wildlife education coordinator for the Division of Wildlife. "An added benefit is the improvement of schoolyard habitat for wildlife and people, making for better outdoor learning experiences."

The grants are awarded to applicants that best meet the WILD School Site criteria. That criteria includes feasibility of the project, benefit to students in understanding the needs of wildlife in Ohio, and participation of students, teachers, staff and the community at large in the development and upkeep of the site.

Funding for the "WILD School Site" grant program comes from state income tax check-off donations to the Wildlife Diversity Fund and fees generated from the sale of cardinal license plates.

Interested educators should submit an application between January 1 and May 31 to the ODNR Division of Wildlife, 2045 Morse Road, Bldg. G, Columbus, OH 43229. Complete details of the grant program and an application packet can be found on the Division's web page at [ohiodnr.com/wildlife](http://ohiodnr.com/wildlife)

If you would like to learn more about Project WILD or find out about workshops, contact Beth at the District office, or call the Ohio Department of Natural Resources at 1-800-WILDLIFE

## ODNR INCREASES LAKE ERIE FISHING LIMITS FOR 2006

COLUMBUS, OH - Lake Erie walleye and yellow perch anglers will enjoy an increased bag limit next year as the fishing proposals for 2006 were approved by the Ohio Wildlife Council, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife.

The daily bag limit on walleye will increase from three fish to four between March 1 and April 30, with a six-fish bag limit the remainder of the year. The existing 15-inch size limit will remain.

Council also approved an increase for yellow perch from the current 30-fish daily bag limit to 40. Perch populations, which have been low since the mid-1990s, have rebounded to healthier levels since the bag limit was reduced in 1995.

State wildlife biologists will continue to monitor the walleye and perch populations and work with state and provincial partners to ensure the continued vitality of the Lake Erie fishery.

Additionally, a proposal allowing anglers to keep only one channel catfish larger than 28 inches and one flathead catfish larger than 35 inches in a day was approved.



## WHO WANTS TO BE A CONSERVATIONIST?

Great Lakes Edition - how much do you know about our country's north coast? Answers are below.

- 1) The smallest of the Great Lakes (in terms of total volume) is:
  - A) Erie
  - B) Ontario
  - C) Huron
  - D) Michigan
- 2) The smallest in surface area is:
  - A) Erie
  - B) Ontario
  - C) Huron
  - D) Michigan
- 3) How many Great Lakes are there?
  - A) 4
  - B) 5
  - C) 6
  - D) 7
- 4) This early explorer is generally credited as being the first to see the Great Lakes:
  - A) Hernando de Soto
  - B) Jacques Cartier
  - C) Henry Hudson
  - D) Samuel de Champlain
- 5) Which of the following rivers is NOT in the Lake Erie watershed?
  - A) Fox River
  - B) Saginaw River
  - C) Niagara River
  - D) Spanish River
  - E) Illinois River
- 6) What percentage of the US shoreline of Lake Erie is residential?
  - A) 13%
  - B) 25%
  - C) 45%
  - D) 18%
- 7) What percentage is devoted to recreation?
  - A) 13%
  - B) 25%
  - C) 45%
  - D) 18%

Answers:  
1) A  
2) D  
3) C  
4) B  
5) E  
6) B  
7) B

## LAKE COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

125 E. Erie St., Painesville, OH 44077

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Toll-free •298-3334 ext. 2730 Madison/Perry

•918-2730 Cleveland/Western Lake County

•1-800-899-LAKE outside Lake County only

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 am-4:00 pm

•E-mail: [soil@lakecountyohio.org](mailto:soil@lakecountyohio.org)

•Web site: [www.lakecountyohio.org/soil](http://www.lakecountyohio.org/soil)

PAM BROWN, District Secretary/Treasurer	350-2730
DAN DONALDSON, District Administrator	350-2030
CHAD EDGAR, Urban Stream Specialist	350-2032
BETH LANDERS, Education/Information Coordinator	350-2033
BRETT RODSTROM, Stormwater Specialist	350-2092
MATTHEW SCHARVER, Resource Protection Specialist	350-2031
AL BONNIS, District Conservationist, NRCS	350-2730
JOHN NIEDZIALEK, Western Reserve RC&D Coordinator	350-2034

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### MEMBER OF:

- American Farmland Trust •Lake County Farm Bureau
- Nursery Growers of Lake County, Inc.
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- Ohio Federation of Soil & Water Conservation Districts

### AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

All Lake SWCD and USDA programs and services are available without regard to race, age, gender, national origin, political beliefs, color, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or marital or family status.

**The public is invited to attend Lake SWCD's monthly Board meetings**, held the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at 125 East Erie St., Painesville. Meeting announcements appear under the public agenda in the News-Herald. Please call in advance to let us know you will be attending

Lake County Soil & Water  
Conservation District  
125 East Erie St., Painesville, OH 44077

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