

OHIO COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ISSUE AREA: RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Uses Subject to Management

- Activities associated with the development of public park and recreation areas including marinas and boat-launching facilities.
- Activities associated with the development of public hunting and fishing areas.
- Activities affecting archaeological or historic sites.

Recreational Facilities

Over 3,200 square miles of Lake Erie are held in trust as a state resource for the people of Ohio. The Lake offers an almost endless variety of recreational opportunities on a year-round basis. However, user conflicts arise because the coastal area must provide for the recreational needs of Ohioans, while also maintaining nonrecreational and nonwater-dependent opportunities. Some existing recreational facilities are overburdened, and new facilities and expansion of existing facilities are needed in some areas.

Despite a wide variety of state, local and federally managed recreational areas, there remains a shortage of access and facilities necessary to promote the full recreational enjoyment of Lake Erie, according to the 1993 Ohio Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The demand for current facilities is increasing more rapidly than new ones can be provided. The high cost of land and the loss of potential recreational areas to other uses make it increasingly difficult to offer new services. The lakeshore is one of the more intensively developed areas of the state, and decreasing acreage has been available for recreational development, especially parcels both large and suitable enough for extensive recreation.

Many local officials indicate that the high cost of maintenance is a significant deterrent to new recreational development. Communities have limited resources and rely increasingly on federal funding for general municipal operations. As other costs of city government increase, park maintenance is often given a lower priority. In some cases, parks were built without provision for continuing park maintenance. Many local governments previously neglected the maintenance of shore area parks because poor water quality, high lake levels and erosion have lessened their value as public recreational areas. Improved environmental quality and increased awareness of Lake Erie's opportunities have created a growing demand for lake-based recreation that must be matched by government commitment to providing appropriate facilities.

Beaches

Swimming and other beach activities have always been popular along the Lake Erie lakeshore. During the 1970s, poor water quality significantly reduced the use of Lake Erie beaches. Today, only a few beaches near larger cities and municipal/industrial facilities experience beach advisories for swimming during the summer months because of water pollution. Eventually, all beaches must be cleaned up for recreational use.

Erosion also has damaged beaches. Recent high lake levels have increased erosion, significantly reducing beach areas in many locations and completely eliminating others. In some areas, damage has extended to beach houses and shelters. Erosion is costly, not only in terms of the loss of valuable beach resource, but also in terms of construction and maintenance costs for erosion control structures.

Boating

Lake Erie is the primary area of use of a substantial number of Ohio's recreational boaters. The high degree of demand creates several pressures on the Lake's resources.

Harbors of refuge are an important need of recreational boaters. Recreational boats are typically small and are often threatened by storm waves that develop quickly due to Lake Erie's shallow depth. Harbors of refuge provide safety when storm conditions develop. Most of the accessible and geographically suitable natural locations for harbors of refuge have been developed, although the capacity and accessibility of these existing harbors varies.

Construction, maintenance and improvement of boating facilities can conflict with environmental concerns. Marinas and small boat harbors often have been located at the mouths of streams or in wetland areas. The development of marina facilities and the review of such projects must consider the environmental impacts and the public interest.

Fishing and Hunting

Lake Erie provides a greater variety of fish species than any of the other Great Lakes. While fish populations fluctuate on an annual basis, the Lake supports a thriving sport fishing economy. The one-half million anglers who fish there spend an estimated \$100 million annually in pursuit of their sport. Principal species are walleye, yellow perch, white bass and smallmouth bass.

Mallards, black ducks, wood ducks and blue-winged teal comprise approximately 70 percent of Ohio's annual harvest of more than 100,000 ducks. Mallards and black ducks are late migrants into Ohio and make up over half of the waterfowl reported on the hunter bag checks in the Lake Erie marsh region. Trapping for sport and harvest is particularly important in the Lake Erie marshes. Ohio's consistent second place rating in muskrat production is due principally to trapping along Lake Erie.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources include the historic, architectural and archaeological resources important in the history and pre-history of the State of Ohio. The State of Ohio has acknowledged the importance of historic sites for over a century. In 1885, the state granted a charter to the Ohio Historical Society (OHS), a private, nonprofit organization, to serve as curator for the material remains of Ohio's past. Federal-level consideration for the protection of cultural resources is provided under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. In accordance with the provisions of the act, Ohio has designated the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Executive Director of OHS to serve as the State Historic Preservation Officer.