

- Funding in FY 2004 and FY 2005 is equal to funding for FY 2003
- Excess moneys in the Lake Erie Resources Fund may be transferred to the Lake Erie Protection Fund

Lake Erie Commission

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ROLE

The Lake Erie Commission is responsible for coordinating state policies and programs that are related to Lake Erie and its surrounding areas. The Commission's role is to preserve Lake Erie's natural resources, protect the quality of its waters and ecosystems, and promote development of the North Coast. Efforts to protect and improve the environmental quality of the lake are coordinated with the development of tourism, recreation, the fishing industry, and the maintenance of Lake Erie ports.

Agency In Brief					
Number of Employees*	Total Appropriations-All Funds		GRF Appropriations		Appropriation Bill(s)
	2004	2005	2004	2005	
5	\$1.8 million	\$1.8 million	\$0	\$0	Am. Sub. H.B. 95

*Employee head count obtained from the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) payroll reports as of June 28, 2003.

OVERVIEW

Appropriations for FY 2004 and FY 2005 total \$1,759,979 each year. This amount is equivalent to the total appropriated in FY 2003 and is \$75,138 more than actual expenditures for FY 2003. Funding levels over the 2003-2005 biennium match those requested by the Board and recommended by the Executive.

The Commission consists of the directors of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and of the departments of Agriculture, Development, Health, Natural Resources, and Transportation. Commission staff works from the Lake Erie Office in Toledo and currently consists of four full-time and one part-time employee. When fully staffed, the Office consists of five full-time and two part-time employees.

The Lake Erie Commission uses no General Revenue Fund moneys and maintains two State Special Revenue accounts. The Lake Erie Resources Fund (Fund 5D8) receives Ohio's share of earnings from the Great Lakes Protection Fund, an interstate trust fund established to protect and restore the Great Lakes. States contiguous to the Great Lakes deposit money to the fund for projects and programs related to the lakes. Moneys in Fund 5D8 are used to support the operations of the Commission and its staff.


The Lake Erie Protection Fund (Fund 4C0) receives money from thousands of individual donations, primarily through the Lake Erie license plate program. This fund is used solely to award research grants and contracts, through a competitive proposal process, that protect and enhance Lake Erie. Over the 2003-2005 biennium, the Commission will award some 80 grants to private and nonprofit organizations, academic groups, and state and local agencies totaling \$2 million.

BUDGET ISSUES

LAKE ERIE PROTECTION FUND AND GRANTS PROGRAM

A continuing challenge for the Lake Erie Commission is generating sufficient revenue to maintain a meaningful Lake Erie Protection Fund grants program. The fund's main source of income, the Lake Erie license plate program, has decreased from a high of \$919,210 in FY 1997 to \$605,970 in FY 2002 due to increased competition within the specialty license plate market. Overall, revenue from license plate sales decreased at an average annual rate of 5% from FY 1997 to FY 2001. From FY 2001 to FY 2002, revenue decreased 19%.

Temporary language in Am. Sub. H.B. 95 allows the Commission to transfer excess funds from the Lake Erie Resources Fund to the Lake Erie Protection Fund to support both ongoing and future grants.

In FY 1999, the Lake Erie Office commissioned a comprehensive marketing research evaluation of its revenue-generating programs. In keeping with the findings of this research, the Commission intends to pursue new license plate initiatives aimed at reversing decreasing sales trends. 

FY 2004 - 2005 Final Appropriation Amounts

All Fund Group

Line Item Detail by Agency			FY 2001:	FY 2002:	FY 2003:	FY 2004 Appropriations:	% Change 2003 to 2004:	FY 2005 Appropriations:	% Change 2004 to 2005:
Report For: Main Operating Appropriations Bill			Version: Enacted						
LEC Lake Erie Commission									
4C0	780-601	Lake Erie Protection	\$ 998,298	\$ 987,520	\$631,529	\$ 1,070,975	69.58%	\$ 1,070,975	0.00%
5D8	780-602	Lake Erie Resources	\$ 462,347	\$ 452,039	\$371,312	\$ 689,004	85.56%	\$ 689,004	0.00%
State Special Revenue Fund Group Total			\$ 1,460,645	\$ 1,439,559	\$ 1,002,841	\$ 1,759,979	75.50%	\$ 1,759,979	0.00%
Lake Erie Commission Total			\$ 1,460,645	\$ 1,439,559	\$ 1,002,841	\$ 1,759,979	75.50%	\$ 1,759,979	0.00%