



Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

PLEWA and the City of Erie worked together to install the Millcreek Litter Boom to reduce the trash entering the lake.

Erie group aims for restoration

One group's concern for the quality of Lake Erie water led them to form the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Watershed Association (PLEWA) in 2000.

Now a program of Environment Erie, this group, made up of volunteers from around the area, continues to facilitate restoration projects to improve Lake Erie water quality and the health of the entire watershed.

They meet the first Tuesday of every other month at 4:15 at the Erie County Department of Health. At the January meeting they discussed individual Pennsylvania Lake Erie subwatershed plans and the watershed representatives agreed to review the plans to identify 24 potential improvement projects from each. The goal is to find opportunities where

PLEWA and its partners could work together to start implementing the recommendations.

The March topic for discussion is the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement and the Lake Erie Management Plan (LAMP), a binational action plan for restoring and protecting the Lake Erie ecosystem. This plan facilitates information sharing, sets priorities and helps coordinate binational environmental protection and restoration activities.

For more information about the next meeting or if you would like to get involved in improving and protecting your subwatershed contact Pat Lupo, OSB, at 490-3108 or plupo@neighborhoodart house.org.

— Anna McCartney



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Iroquois Elementary School Garden Club, Behrend students and Jen Salem planted native plants to improve one of the school's retention ponds.

Iroquois students help improve watersheds

The Iroquois Elementary School Garden Club and their teacher Katherine Hall are helping to improve their watershed. They added a native garden in the retention pond in front of their school. With the help of Jen Salem, Garden Volunteer Coordinator at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, and several Behrend students, they planted over 30 native plants. Salem taught them about the advantages of these water-loving plants in their selected area and how to transplant the plants.

Some student comments:

"I learned that most of our Native plants like to soak up lots of water and make it less likely to flood."

— Kaiya

"It was lots of fun. I learned that some plants grow in wetlands."

— Kirstin

"Definitely worth staying after school."

— Trey

"I learned that there is a plant called obedient plant."

— John

"I learned native plants absorb water. I liked it because you can get dirty."

— Maikayla



PENNSYLVANIA SEA GRANT

The Pennsylvania Lake Erie Watershed drains water from 33 municipalities in 2 counties. Maps in the new watershed plan, including the one above, demonstrate the importance of working collaboratively to ensure safe drinking water and a healthy Lake Erie. Download the plan at www.seagrants.psu.edu.

Who is responsible?

Plan provides outline for vital water source

By ANNA MCCARTNEY
Contributing writer

Do you know who or what entity is responsible for protecting Lake Erie?

This vital resource is important to our region environmentally and economically because it provides millions of people water for drinking, recreation, fishing, manufacturing and irrigation. It is also critically important for wildlife.

Guarding and enhancing Lake Erie should be a priority. But because all the water that drains into the lake does not follow political boundaries, no single entity ensures that it will be protected. Two countries, eight states and two Canadian provinces impact this important water source, some more than others. The Pennsylvania portion of the Lake Erie Watershed alone drains water from 33 municipalities in 2 counties. What happens in North East, Harborcreek, Erie, Millcreek, Girard, Fairview, and every municipality in the watershed affects not only the residents in each individual area. It affects all the residents that rely on Lake Erie.

Therefore keeping it healthy requires a collaborative watershed approach that begins on a local level and which uses accurate data to guide personal choices and decisions that are made collectively in our communities and region.

Until recently the information was incomplete, scattered and hard to find. But now the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Integrated Water Resources Management (PALE IWRM) Plan provides the data needed in one plan with a central online database.

This collaborative effort between Pennsylvania Sea Grant, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and the Erie County Conservation District was not to re-write or replace existing watershed plans. Instead they brought together users, planners, and policy mak-



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/Anna McCartney

A watershed approach to managing water resources will safeguard Lake Erie for multiple uses including fishing and boating, which add millions to the local economy.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/Anna McCartney

Addressing algal blooms and dead zones in Lake Erie requires monitoring, cooperation and action to reduce the nutrients in runoff from the entire watershed.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/Anna McCartney

A balanced approach to land use and conservation is needed to reduce runoff that threatens Lake Erie's recreation and tourism-based economy and ecosystem.

ers from all reaches of the watershed representing the social, environmental, and technical aspects of water management to assist with identifying goals

and objectives. The advisory group guided the plan development and provided insight into available and missing data. They used an ecosys-

tem approach that links water quantity with water quality, and connects land use to water management. The information, analysis, and planning can prevent choices that could negatively impact Lake Erie and its watershed.

The goals of the PALE IWRM Plan are to (1) assist watershed stakeholders identify restoration actions, promote green infrastructure, protect environmentally sensitive lands, and improve access to and use of water resources; and (2) enhance the ability of agency staff to manage water resources.

The resulting plan provides information and data that guides users to the areas in the watershed where restoration, conservation, and/or monitoring projects are needed. It summarizes existing regulatory, management, and monitoring programs implemented by government agencies at the federal, state, and local level. Included is an inventory of available data on the natural resources, permitted facilities and discharges, ecological systems, recreation and public access opportunities, and real-time data from Lake Erie buoys and weather stations. Also summarized are several past plans and the results of data collections, studies, and proposals that address water and water-related resources are provided. A series of maps and charts offer a clearer picture for making more informed choices and decisions.

Funding for this project was provided by the Pennsylvania Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) State Capacity Funding Program.

To learn more you can download the plan at www.seagrants.psu.edu.

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Find articles about different municipalities in Erie or Crawford County. Is there evidence they are working together for a common cause? In which municipality do you live? Write a letter to the editor about why municipalities should work together to protect Lake Erie. E-mail your letter to axm40@psu.edu for possible publication in the weekly "your space" feature.

