OHIO COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
POLICY 22 – LAKE ERIE BEACHES AND PUBLIC BATHING

IT IS THE POLICY OF THE STATE OF OHIO TO PROVIDE PUBLIC BEACH ACCESS AND SAFE PUBLIC BATHING AREAS ALONG LAKE ERIE BY:

A. DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING BEACHES AND BATHING AREAS ON STATE-OWNED LAND;

B. PARTICIPATING JOINTLY WITH THE U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, SHORELINE PROPERTY OWNERS AND LOCAL LAKESHORE GOVERNMENTS IN BEACH AND LITTORAL NOURISHMENT PROJECTS;

C. PROVIDING FOR CONTINUING STUDY OF BATHING BEACH WATER QUALITY ALONG THE LAKE ERIE SHORE AND ADVISING APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES OF WATER TEST RESULTS WITHIN THEIR RESPECTIVE JURISDICTIONS; AND

D. ENCOURAGING LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO ESTABLISH BEACH SAMPLING AND SANITATION PROGRAMS.

Authorities and Administration

A. ODNR, through the Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR), develops and maintains Lake Erie public beach access areas. DPR is charged with the development, operation and maintenance of new and existing bathing facilities within the state park system. DPR also has the authority to govern all state beaches and swimming activities on lands and waters that are part of the state park system (O.R.C. 1541.03).

B. ODNR strongly urges the COE and requires other public and private entities to provide littoral/beach nourishment by returning dredged material composed primarily of sands or gravels derived from Lake Erie beach or nearshore zones to the shallow (less than 10 feet deep) nearshore waters or on the beach downdrift of the worksite. This is consistent with ODNR's position that all sand and gravel of littoral origin be returned to the downdrift littoral zone when dredged from marinas and channels by private interests and/or public agencies. ODNR works with the COE and other intrastate agencies on littoral/beach nourishment projects.

The COE, through several federal laws, including Section 145 of the Water Resources Development of 1986, Section 111 of the 1968 Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 103 of the 1962 Rivers and Harbors Act, is authorized to coordinate with the state on littoral/beach nourishment projects. The state also comments through the Section 404, Environmental Assessment and Evaluation, Public Notice, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

review process, to achieve an environmentally acceptable alternative for the disposal of dredged material.

C. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) samples and analyzes water from (1) selected beaches to determine the need for water quality improvements and pollution abatement, (2) all state park beaches along the lake to determine water quality and to monitor changes in the various state park watersheds, and (3) various community and privately owned beaches within local health districts to provide water quality data and assist in developing local bathing beach sampling and sanitation programs. All ODH samples along the Lake Erie shore are taken routinely throughout the bathing beach season. Additional samples are taken in response to unusual conditions or to evaluate water quality problems when identified.

If E.coli bacteria counts exceed standards, ODH recommends to DPR or the beach operator that a swimming advisory be posted. Such a posting does not prohibit swimming; it merely informs the public that for a particular time period, high-risk groups may increase their chances of becoming ill as a result of increased E.coli levels. Subsequent testings determine whether or not the beach advisory remains posted.

D. ODH encourages local health districts to establish permitting systems for operation of public bathing beaches and to develop regulations regarding water quality and other health and safety concerns. ODH provides local health districts with guidelines for developing regulations and strongly recommends adoption of regulations through their program surveys and reviews of local procedures. Cuyahoga, Erie, and Lake counties administer their own permitting and regulatory programs.