

**FOR RELEASE:** April 15, 2010  
**MEDIA CONTACT:** Dina Pierce, (614) 644-2160  
**CITIZEN CONTACT:** Darla Peelle, (614) 644-2160

## **Ohio EPA Authorizes Toledo Harbor Dredging for 2010, with Limits**

Ohio EPA has issued a water quality certification to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers authorizing the Corps to dredge Toledo Harbor in 2010. The certification will allow open lake disposal of up to 800,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment.

The Corps requested certification to dredge the shipping channel for three years, from 2010-2012, and to open lake dispose of up to 1.25 million cubic yards of material. Ohio EPA held a public hearing on the proposal on January 14 in Toledo.

Ohio EPA is limiting the scope of the water quality certification in order to continue working on alternatives to open lake disposal with the Corps and its state and local partners, including the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

“While I certainly feel compelled to keep the port functioning, I cannot overstate my concerns about the environmental impacts likely resulting from the annual disposal of large amounts of sediment in the shallow western basin of Lake Erie,” said Ohio EPA Director Chris Korleski.

Director Korleski and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Sean Logan expressed in a letter to the Corps the need to seek a feasible alternative to open lake disposal. They note that while open lake disposal may be the most cost-efficient option for the Corps, the real dollar costs to communities in the Western Basin resulting from environmental impacts, lake recreation and drinking water treatment, while difficult to calculate, are not adequately being considered.

In the letter, Ohio EPA and ODNR ask the Corps whether certain interim steps could lessen the impact of open lake disposal while work continues to find and fund long-term solutions. The interim steps could involve delaying the beginning of open lake disposal until later in the year, when cooler temperatures will help reduce the extent of harmful algae blooms, and disposing of some clean sediment in the confined disposal facility (CDF). Currently, only sediment too contaminated for open lake disposal is placed in the CDF, up to 100,000 cubic yards per year.

Toledo is the shallowest and most heavily dredged port in the Great Lakes. The Corps is required to dredge it annually to keep the U.S. navigation channel open for shipping. Dredging is conducted in the lower seven miles of the Maumee River and 19 miles of the approach channel in Maumee Bay.

The federal Clean Water Act requires anyone discharging dredged or fill material into Ohio waters to obtain a Section 401 water quality certification from Ohio EPA. Ohio EPA's review is to ensure the project will comply with Ohio's water quality standards. The discharge will result in a change from the current water quality conditions of the Maumee River and Western Basin of Lake Erie. Therefore, Ohio EPA was required to consider technical, economic, social and environmental aspects of the dredging project.

The Toledo Harbor Section 401 water quality certification, joint letter from Ohio EPA and Ohio Department of Natural Resources and other documents are available online at [www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/401/toledo\\_dredging\\_apr10.aspx](http://www.epa.ohio.gov/dsw/401/toledo_dredging_apr10.aspx).

Issuance of the certification can be appealed to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission (ERAC). Many appeals must be filed within 30 days of the issuance of the final action; therefore, Ohio EPA recommends that anyone wishing to file an appeal contact ERAC at (614) 466-8950 for more information.