

LWVCA INFORMATIONAL ADDENDUM: DIKE 14

Prepared by Barbara A. Martin, Director, Dike 14, League of Women Voters of the Cleveland Area, October 2003

- 1) Dike 14 is an 88-acre Public Trust property and a completed Army Corps confined disposal facility sited on the land beneath the waters of Lake Erie and thereby belongs to all of the people of Ohio.
- 2) Dike 14 is located four miles east of downtown Cleveland and extends 2,200 feet into Lake Erie from the shoreline of Gordon State Park, which is one of six Cleveland Lakefront State Parks.
- 3) Dike 14 was federally built for the containment of polluted, but not toxic, dredged sediments taken from the navigational channels of the Cuyahoga River and Cleveland Harbor over a period of 20 years, 1979 to 1999, and is one of 45 such facilities constructed throughout the Great Lakes.
- 4) Natural reclamation of sediments at Dike 14 has produced a fully-vegetated, 88-acre, urban wildlife area of diverse habitats that include wetlands, grasslands, meadowlands, shrublands and woodlands and that provide essential food, water, shelter and critical staging areas for significant numbers and diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife.
- 5) Dike 14 has additional ecological importance, as it is the **only** quality habitat for migratory birds along 100-miles of highly urbanized Lake Erie coastline from Huron to Mentor, Ohio.
- 6) Flora and fauna surveys conducted by Field Biologist Sean T. Zadar document Dike 14 with 26 native plant species, 9 native tree and shrub species, 2 species of reptiles, 29 species of butterflies, 16 species of mammals, and 281 species of birds that include 23 of Ohio's 29 Endangered Bird Species, 3 of Ohio's 3 Threatened Bird Species, two (2) Federally Endangered Bird Species, and 54 of 68 National Audubon Society Bird Species of Concern.
- 7) Dike 14 is a designated National Audubon Society Important Bird Area, a classification that denotes the highest conservation priority, as this 88-acre coastal site provides essential stopover for tens of thousands of migratory birds each year during seasonal migrations between breeding grounds in Canada and wintering grounds as far south as Mexico, Central America and South America.
- 8) Habitat loss has been and continues to be the primary cause of marked decline in bird populations; and the natural reclamation of the 88-acre coastal site of Dike 14 constitutes a unique and significant replacement of diverse habitats along the shoreline of the central basin of Lake Erie.
- 9) The importance of protecting and conserving Lake Erie's coastal wetlands, coastal habitats and coastal biological diversity is cited in many Ohio documents including the *Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan*, Ohio Lake Erie Commission, 2000; the *Biological Diversity Strategic Plan and Implementation Plan*, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, 1998; and the *Cuyahoga County Greenspace Plan*, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission, February 2002.
- 10) Dike 14 is already a dynamic birding site and, if judiciously enhanced with amenities such as nature trails, boardwalks, coastal viewing decks, benches, scopes, a hawk tower and educational/informational signage, this urban wildlife site would provide delightful, year-round, outdoor nature opportunities for Ohio residents and visitors of all ages, as well as many important educational benefits for hundreds of urban schools and schoolchildren in Cleveland, Greater Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.
- 11) A nature education center, if built on the existing Gordon State Park land adjacent to the 88-acre site of Dike 14, would provide significant educational, economic and social benefits for residents of Cleveland, Greater Cleveland and Northeast Ohio.
- 12) Conservation of habitats at the 88-acre Dike 14 would provide a distinct opportunity for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County to reap the economic benefits of Nature Tourism, which is a priority business for Coastal Ohio's seven lakefront counties, according to the *Lake Erie Protection and Restoration Plan*; the *Cuyahoga County Greenspace Plan*; and the *Lake Erie Coastal Ohio Strategic Plan for Experiential Tourism (Toledo to Conneaut)*, Fermata, Inc., April 2002.
- 13) The City of Cleveland, in developing a Lakefront Plan to achieve urban revitalization of more than half of its 14-mile Lake Erie coastline, has reviewed internationally accepted design concepts that prioritize conservation and/or restoration of natural areas as the first step and the central feature of successful urban waterfront revitalization projects.
- 14) The public has strongly proclaimed their desire for Dike 14 to be a "nature preserve", first and foremost, with amenities for "public access" and "nature education." This dominant public preference was expressed to the Director of Ohio Department of Natural Resources during the ODNR public input process, "Goals for Dike 14" in 2002, and to the Governor of Ohio in November 2002 by a petition co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Cleveland and Sierra Club of Northeast Ohio containing signatures of 841 Ohio citizens calling for "the preservation of Dike 14 as a nature preserve with judicious public access."
- 15) Organizations in support of conserving Dike 14 as a nature preserve with public access and of establishing a nature education center at the adjacent Gordon State Park include the Leagues of Women Voters of the Cleveland Area, Cuyahoga Regional Area, Euclid, Geauga County, and Shaker Heights; the League of Women Voters of Ohio; Audubon Ohio; Bratenahl Land Conservancy; Baldwin-Wallace College Biology Department; Cleveland Metroparks Naturalists; Earth Day Coalition; Friends of Whiskey Island; Lake Erie Nature and Science Center; Nature Center at Shaker Lakes; Ohio Coastal Research Management Project; Ohio Public Interest Research Group; Tinkers Creek Land Conservancy; and Sierra Club of Northeast Ohio.