



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

## **Peer Review Plan**

### **Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study**





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### **Introduction**

The study area is located in the western basin of Lake Erie encompassing watershed areas primarily in the State of Ohio with significant portions in the States of Indiana and Michigan. This current study effort focuses on the watersheds of the Maumee and adjacent Portage, and Ottawa Rivers. The lake portion of the study area is characterized by shallow littoral waters generally less than 25 feet deep.

Authority for the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) Study was given by Section 441 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1999, which directed the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works to conduct a study to develop measures to improve flood control, navigation, water quality, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat in a comprehensive manner in the Western Lake Erie Basin, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, including watersheds of the Maumee and adjacent Ottawa, and Portage Rivers. In carrying out the study, the Secretary was directed to cooperate with interested Federal, State, and local agencies and non-governmental organizations and consider all relevant programs of the agencies.

The WLEB 905(b) analysis was signed and approved by the Buffalo District Commander in October 2001 and recommended that a Project Management Plan be developed for a Feasibility Study along with a Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement to be 100% federally funded for an additional \$300,000. HQUSACE approved the Expanded Reconnaissance Study as a basis for preparation of a PMP(s) and FCSA for detailed watershed studies on December 9, 2003. In May 2006, the Feasibility Cost Share Agreement (FCSA) with the city of Toledo was signed. FY07 funding provides funding to begin the *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report.

The peer review plan (PRP) presented below is a collaborative product of the project delivery team (PDT) and the USACE Flood Damage Reduction Planning Center of Expertise (FDRPCX). The FDRPCX shall manage the PRP, which for this study includes only an Independent Technical Review (ITR) and not an External Peer Review (EPR).

## The Peer Review Plan

The following paragraphs correspond to paragraph 6.a. to 6.j. of Engineering Circular 1105-2-408.

a. A number of decision documents are possible. The first decision document shall be the *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study*. This report shall present measures to improve flood control, navigation, water quality, recreation, and fish and wildlife habitat in a comprehensive manner in the Western Lake Erie Basin, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan, including watersheds of the Maumee and adjacent Ottawa, and Portage Rivers. Contact information for team members and designated points of contact are listed in appendix A.

b. The *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* that the Corps will be distributing shall be based on existing information used in identifying needs and opportunities within the study area. It is not likely to create new influential scientific information or be a highly scientific assessment. The risk and magnitude of this project are NOT such that a critical examination by a qualified team outside of the Corps not involved in the day-to-day production of a technical product is necessary. At this time it is not anticipated that this study effort will result in a direct recommendation to congress for a specifically authorized new start construction project. If in the future it would appear this report will identify costly, complex or controversial structural measures for implementation, the need for an EPR will be reconsidered. The identified goal of this study is a inventory of problems and opportunities in the WLEB watershed and where appropriate identification of the need for follow on detailed project authorization feasibility studies. For these reasons, the interim reevaluation report shall be subjected to only an ITR, and not an EPR.

c. Individual members of the ITR team shall review technical products as they are completed, submitting comments to the PDT, receiving responses, and resolving and certifying individual products, including the draft *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report. This ITR review is planned for FY08, subject to availability of funds. Otherwise, ITR will be deferred until funds become available for the project.

d. Study will not lead to an authority.

Disciplines being sought are listed in the PRP. ITR Team leader has been named and is responsible for assembling the team that will provide the appropriate mix of disciplines for this watershed study that primarily focuses on the flood control business line. The ITR Team Leader will finalize team by balancing required expertise and individual's work loads. Independent Technical Review (ITR) teams shall be staffed with sufficient experience to adequately review the subject matter; their selection should be based on the difficulty of the subject matter and the depth of experience that may be required for full understanding. ITR is a holistic, comprehensive review of the project. A goal will be the establishment of an informed, objective ITR team with full accountability to maintain objectivity. To ensure this objectivity, the members of the review teams must be independent from those who perform the work. Supervisors of project delivery team members or, as indicated above, the project managers are not to be included on the review team. In addition, technical managers of contracts that provide assumptions, clarify guidance or otherwise participate in the preparation of the products are not to be review team members. ITR teams will be comprised of team members from other districts, divisions, HQUSACE, centers of expertise, laboratories, the non-Federal sponsor's organization or by contract. Project or study funds shall be used to pay for the cost of conducting independent technical reviews. A district in

need of review assistance shall find the expertise needed and negotiate the schedule and cost for the required services during the development of the PMP. The formation of the review team should consider regional interests, resources, special expertise requirements and unusual complexity.

e. The ITR Team Leader is from LRL, outside the product District of LRB and is a member of the Corps' National Flood Risk Management Center of Expertise (FRM PCX). This study will not lead to direct authorization of a project, and will not require external peer review.

f. As indicated in the paragraph “b” above, an EPR shall not be conducted on the *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report.

g. There are several mechanisms in place for Public input and review. During the development of the *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report, the study team shall have an initial meeting with other Federal agencies, state agencies and interested stakeholders. During the development of the report, the study team has quarterly meetings with other Federal agencies, state agencies and interested stakeholders. As currently planned, a series of public meetings would be held after the draft *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report is available for public review and comment.

h. During the public review period of the draft *Western Lake Erie Basin Feasibility Study* report, comments will be provided to the ITR team as available.

i. The ITR team is anticipated to be comprised of six technical experts.

j. The ITR team is comprised of individuals with experience in hydraulics and hydrology modeling, real estate, economics, basic civil engineering, NEPA/ecosystem restoration and an ITR Team flood damage reduction plan formulation.

k. The MSC has concurred on the level of review the District is recommending, and this study will not lead to direct authorization of a project, and will not require external peer review.

l. DrChecks will be used for all comments.

m. This is not a multipurpose project. Principle problem identified as part of this watershed study was flood control. This watershed study does not need review by multiple PCXs.

n. The team will only be using standard Corps models for which the certification process is already underway.

o. The watershed study will not lead to any specific authorized projects for implementation, there the anticipated implementation costs are zero as design and construction is not authorized under the Section 441, WRDA 1999 study authority.

p. The ITR team leader will coordinate selection of the ITR Team project cost estimator through the NWW Cost Estimating Center of Expertise