



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**

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Corps of Engineers joins with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Partnering Agreement to Protect Lake Erie

COLUMBUS, OH/BUFFALO, N.Y. – (9/14/05) - The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio State Office (NRCS), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District, announced the signing of a partnering agreement to facilitate watershed management in the Western Lake Erie Basin. The agencies will engage with and support local leadership in solving water and natural resource problems and support the July 7, 2005, national partnership agreement between the NRCS and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

"This is the first regional agreement to be implemented since the national agreement was signed in early July," said LTC Timothy Touchette, Buffalo District Commander. "The Western Lake Erie Basin is an ideal area in which to enhance and challenge this partnership. It may well serve as an example of collaboration in the Great Lakes overall," stated LTC Touchette.

Under the agreement, a Federal Watershed Planning and Implementation Team will be created to increase the agencies’ coordination and collaboration in water resources activities. Models, tools and technologies, pilot projects, increased outreach to landowners in the basin, and the acceleration of existing watershed protection programs will be used to address water resources issues.

Ohio NRCS State Conservationist Terry Cosby said, "We entered into this agreement in the spirit of cooperative conservation, realizing that by working together we will each reach our common conservation goals more efficiently and effectively. This region has a strong history of people working together to improve Lake Erie. We will build on that history."

In taking collaborative partnerships one step farther, LTC Touchette and State Conservationist Cosby have invited various Federal, State, and local stakeholders to join an "Advisory Group" for the Western Lake Erie Basin. The kick-off meeting is scheduled for November 7 in Defiance, Ohio. For more information, contact Tony Friona, COE Project Manager, at 716-879-4215 or Steve Davis, NRCS Project Manager, at 419-222-0614 ext. 108.