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Conneaut City Manager
H.B. 643 Proponent testimony
House Finance Committee
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Chairman Ryan Smith, Vice Chair Scott Ryan, Ranking Member Cera, and members of the House Finance Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify as proponent of House Bill 643, the Clean Lake 2020 Plan. My name is Jim Hockaday, and I am the City Manager for Conneaut, Ohio. Conneaut has approximately 6 miles of lakeshore and one of the states wild and scenic rivers. Ultimately the lifeblood of our community is drawn from Lake Erie and Conneaut Creek. Environmental impacts along the lakefront and river appear to be escalating and evolving rapidly.

Below is a list of items why we support this bill.

Dredging

55% of the dredge material in the Great Lakes is generated on Lake Erie. In large part the challenge of managing dredged materials will be designed and managed by local communities with deep water ports with assistance from the State. The enormity of this challenge cannot be overstated. In less than 2 years from now, the City of Conneaut will have to have a designed facility, fully operational in order to take in 100,000 cubic yards of material. While we are receiving assistance in identifying a path forward, long-term sustainability of these facilities is going to be critical.

In 2020 the city will be responsible for the proper disposal of the dredged material from our deep-water port. We anticipate removing 60,000 cubic yards of material every two years. Currently the regulations do not affect private dredging – which in the case of Conneaut produces a nearly equal volume of material to that in the federal channel. We believe that all dredging should be treated equal due to the potential for both to harm the water quality of the lake.

Drinking Water

The city owns and operates a 2.8MGD filtration facility. Even though Conneaut is located at the Eastern edge of the lake, where cyanobacteria is less we are very concerned about how it will affect us in the future. Below is a list of how the bacteria will affect the filtration plant:

- Since September 2016 to present 10 samples of Raw Water (LT2001) have tested positive for microcystin. The values recorded range from Min 0.307ug/L to Max 1.23ug/L and have an Average of 0.509ug/L. To date we have no positive results in our final water for cyanobacteria, which indicate our current process is adequately removing the low levels we have encountered. If higher levels are found protocols have been established to effectively treat the contaminated water.

- The potential exists that with the increase of cyanobacteria levels more treatment would be necessary. The current treatment process would need to be upgraded and new processes implemented in order to effectively treat our water for consumption. Upgrades would cost somewhere between 4 to 5 million dollars, and potentially an additional 16 million dollars would be needed for the installation of a new intake pipe.

This is a major threat that has continually evolved. I think it is important to note that it is commonly believed this a western basin issue only – it is not. Without proper filtration this is one of the largest and newest threats to our drinking water supply which serves over 5,000 households and businesses.

Lakefront Septic Systems

Conneaut has 6 miles of lake front of which only 50% are serviced by our sewer system.

- Several areas with documented failed systems
- Most systems installed prior to current septic rules.
 - o Average system no more than a 55-gallon drum with a great potential for direct discharge to the lake.
- This is not matter of mere enforcement. These already built properties lack adequate space to have effective treatment via a septic tank. The true answer in this case is to expand sewer lines to areas along the Lake front to ensure adequate treatment of waste. Presently these expansions only take place when communities carry the entire cost of expansion on a rate basis. Most often residential cannot justify sewer line extension on a purely rate basis and therefore they are left underserved.

Wastewater

The city owns and operates a 3.5MGD sewer treatment facility. A list of ways that we are currently protecting the water quality of Lake Erie and its tributaries:

Current

- o Using BMP to reduce our phosphorous discharge levels to the lowest achievable.
 - Current effluent limit of 1mg/L and we consistently obtain below .7mg/L

Future improvements

- o Switch to UV disinfection, eliminating the possibility of discharging CL2 to the receiving water.
- o Collaborate with a dewatering firm to dispose of dredging materials and sludge produced by the wastewater treatment process. Currently the City disposes that material through a field application process – our facility management plan identifies selecting an alternate process which could include several upgrades costing over 1 million dollars.

I support House Bill 643 and believe action is needed to protect Lake Erie and the communities and their economies.