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## WILDLIFE HABITATS and STATE PARK USE of CLEVELAND'S DIKE 14

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Since September 2000, the Environmental Committee of the League of Women Voters of Cleveland has pursued a study of Cleveland's Dike 14, a remarkable coastal wildlife area that developed from Nature's reclamation of her transported dredged soils. Federal actions during 1999 and 2000 closed the confined disposal facility (CDF) use of Dike 14, and the 88-acre landmass of Dike 14 began its transition to becoming a Cleveland Lakefront State Park.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio passed a Resolution in May 2001 to "Protect Lake Erie Coastal Wildlife Habitats at Cleveland's Dike 14". This LWVO Resolution appealed to Governor Taft and Director Speck of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to protect the Dike 14 site from degradation and dumping so that the wildlife habitats, which are sanctuary to significant numbers and diversity of migratory birds, could be given full consideration during the State's public planning process for State Park use of Dike 14.

The League's ongoing advocacy work for Dike 14 is based on its 16-month study of the issues and the Natural Resource Positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States.

**DESCRIPTION** Cleveland's Dike 14 is an odd-shaped, stone-walled, 88-acre container built in Lake Erie, at Cleveland's eastern shoreline, during the 1970's by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Dike 14 is a confined disposal facility (CDF) that has received 20 years of annual deposits of dredged sediments taken from the navigational channels of the Cuyahoga River and Cleveland Harbor.

Dike 14 is one of 45 CDF's built throughout the Great Lakes since the late 1960's when environmental regulations forbade open lake disposal of contaminated dredged sediments. Designed for a 15-year service life, 1979 to 1994, Dike 14 was modified by Federal action in 1993, extending its CDF use to 20 years. Army Corps ended dredge disposal at Dike 14 in 1999 when it opened Cleveland's new CDF, Dike 10B, north of Burke Lakefront Airport.

Dike 14 is located 4.5 miles east of Downtown Cleveland at the mouth of the Doan Brook and at the shoreline of Cleveland Lakefront State Park at Gordon Park. The Doan Brook empties into Lake Erie through a culvert that lies within Dike 14. The perimeter of Dike 14 measures about one mile, and its 88-acre landmass projects 2,200 feet into Lake Erie.

**DESIGNATED STATE PARK USE** In 1979, the year Army Corps began placing dredged materials at Dike 14, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) depicted Dike 14 as a State Park in its Master Plan for Cleveland Lakefront State Parks.

Support for State Park use of the 88-acre site continues today among all interested public agencies including ODNR; but until the City of Cleveland takes control of Dike 14 and grants a lease agreement to ODNR, the transition to State Park use will be limited.



Photo by Ted Gilliland

*In response to broad-based public interest during 2001, ODNR agreed to take the first step in State planning for Dike 14 - a "Public Input Process", which is scheduled to begin in 2002 to address the question "What kind of State Park use will be implemented at Dike 14?"*



Photo by Ted Gilliland

One may view waterfowl and herons at the eastern perimeter.

### **WILDLIFE HABITATS AND MIGRATORY BIRDS**

Dike 14 functions as a premiere wildlife sanctuary for migratory birds. It contains diverse wildlife habitats including wetlands, mudflats, shrublands, grasslands, meadows and woodlands. Dike 14 is documented with 274 species of birds of which 28 are endangered or threatened and 52 are species of concern. Dike 14 is also documented with tens of thousands of birds per month during 4 months of spring migration and 5 months of fall migration.

Dike 14 is located at the intersection of four important migration routes: The shoreline of Lake Erie; the north-south route across Lake Erie; the Doan Brook Valley leading to the Shaker Lakes; and the Cuyahoga River Valley.

Dike 14 provides the only high quality wildlife habitat along an 80-mile stretch of highly urbanized coastline between Mentor and Huron. The sanctuary functions of Cleveland's 88-acre Dike 14 equals that of the 650-acre Mentor Marsh State Nature Preserve and the 575-acre Old Woman Creek State Nature Preserve in Huron.

Recognized as deserving of the highest conservation priority, Dike 14 was designated a National Audubon Society *Important Bird Area* by Audubon Ohio in October 2000.

From an environmental and regional perspective, Dike 14 is functioning as the original Lake Plain eco-region functioned, before urbanization, by providing nutrient-rich shoreline habitats that support significant numbers and diversity of migratory birds and other wildlife.

**PORT AUTHORITY** In February 2000, the Army Corps transferred the responsibility for long-term maintenance of Dike 14 to the local sponsor, the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority. In late December 2000, the Port Authority exceeded its maintenance role and placed 1,500 cubic yards of dredged materials onto the Dike 14 site without governmental approval. Since January 2001, public scrutiny has halted the

**THE SOLUTION** In mid-October, the LWVC called for a review of the Port Authority's role at Dike 14 in the context of the terms, objectives and agreements of the Federal Projects of Dike 14 (1976 and 1993) and in the context of the authority of Federal actions that completed and closed Dike 14 in 1999 and 2000. Elected officials are reviewing the situation and are working to resolve any unreasonable delays in the issuance of Army Corps permits for use of Cleveland's CDF, Dike 10B.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** Public participation is essential during the upcoming **ODNR Public Input Process**, a 4 - to - 6 month process to take place in Cleveland in 2002. Through private interviews, small informal meetings, and two public meetings, the public's views on "what kind of State Park use is desired at Dike 14" will be gathered. Public input will greatly influence the ODNR draft plan for Dike 14, which will lead to a revision of the Master Plan for Cleveland Lakefront State Parks. Final planning and implementation are dependent on funding.

A special **ODNR Public Meeting** will be held in early 2002 for review of the Port Authority's Submerged Lands Lease Application for Dike 14. The Port Authority submitted an application to ODNR in July 2001, but did not clearly describe its proposed and intended use of the site. Concern for the wildlife habitats at Dike 14 prompted the Dike 14 Committee, Sierra Club and the Cleveland City Council to request this ODNR public review.

Port Authority's stated intention to continue to alter the site with dredged materials.

**THE DIKE 14 COMMITTEE** The Cleveland Waterfront Coalition created the Dike 14 Committee in January 2001 as a grassroots voice for the future of Dike 14. The Dike 14 Committee was made independent of the Waterfront Coalition in August 2001. It is an informal group open to all organizations and individuals. It acts as a clearinghouse, an information source and a point of contact on Dike 14 issues. The LWVC Environmental Committee is an active participant in the Dike 14 Committee.

**OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS** There is broad-based community support among citizen groups, individuals and public agency representatives for allowing the existing Dike 14 site, and its diverse wildlife habitats, to continue to serve as sanctuary for significant numbers and diverse species of birds until the completion of the State Park planning process. In this way, conservation proposals based on the existing wildlife conditions of Dike 14 are assured during the State Park planning process.

This vision extends to hundreds of citizens who appealed to Governor Taft, ODNR Director Speck and U.S. Senator Voinovich through petitions, letters, e-mails and phone calls during 2001, to protect Dike 14 from the Port Authority's desire to dump dredged materials at Dike 14. Support for this vision also extends to Audubon Society, U.S. Senator George V. Voinovich, the League of Women Voters of Ohio, the Sierra Club, Cleveland City Council and the Bratenahl Village Council.

In contrast, the Port Authority seems to view this transition period as an opportunity to re-introduce dredge disposal at Dike 14 primarily because of a troublesome permitting process at Cleveland's new CDF, Dike 10B. Addressing the LWV in October 2001, the Port Authority stated that Army Corps Buffalo was taking up to a year to issue permits for dredge disposal at Dike 10B, when previously permits were issued within 3 weeks to 3 months.