Submitted: Joy Mulinex – March 25, 2026

Re: Comments on the Progress Report under the Great Lakes Water

Dear IJC Commissioners:

On behalf of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC), I am writing to provide comments on the latest Progress Report and State of the Lake Report under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. OLEC appreciates the oversight efforts provided by the International Joint Commission (IJC) and the opportunities given to provide input. The Great Lakes are a unique resource shared and enjoyed by millions of people and governed by two countries, multiple first nations, states and provinces, and municipalities.

The role of the Ohio Lake Erie Commission is to preserve Lake Erie's natural resources, to protect the quality of its waters and ecosystem, and to promote economic development of the region by ensuring the coordination of policies and programs of state government pertaining to water quality, toxic substances, and coastal resource management. To coordinate state efforts and to speak with a unified voice, the Lake Erie Commission works with and is comprised of Ohio EPA, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, and Department of Development. As part of our coordinating responsibilities, we represent the State of Ohio on various boards of regional and international Great Lakes management organizations of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding to improve coordination of Lake Erie programs and priorities with federal, state and local entities. In this capacity, the Commission respectfully provides the following comments on the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Progress Report and State of the Great Lakes (SOGL) Report.

Lakewide Action and Management Plans (LAMPs)

As stated on U.S. EPA's website, LAMPs are plans of action to assess, restore, protect and monitor the ecosystem health of each Great Lake and its connecting river system. It coordinates the work of all the government and non-government partners working to improve the lake's ecosystem. The many of the ecosystem challenges facing the Great Lakes are not new, LAMPs are a valuable management and planning tool designed to be updated every five years. The process of updating individual lake LAMPs involves scientific scrutiny as well as public engagement. As programs such as the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) require alignment between GLRI project funding and LAMPs, the Commission encourages the parties to maintain the five-year schedule for updating LAMPs.

Communication

A variety of agency staff members in different state agencies participate in working groups for the ten annexes, and after discussions with Ohio's annex members, the Commission heard about a wide range of experiences. For example, participants in Annex 4 appreciate the regular discussions, follow-up communications, and overall support provided by the federal governments. However, on the other end, some annexes rarely meet or share any updates with the state teams. While some annexes may not have any immediate work or need to convene regularly, the Commission recommends that the annex leads communicate at least an annual update on the status of the annex working groups. Along the lines of

improving communication, the Commission encourages the parties to keep the binational.net website updated. For example, the website could provide a list of federal annex leads, the status of annex working groups and other work structures outside of the annexes such that interested citizens can contact the Parties to follow along. In today's online landscape, websites are unique informational spaces allowing you to reach a broad audience. The constant availability of websites provides an opportunity for the parties to provide information and outreach and may be the only way people access information about implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Refining SOGL Metrics

Ohio appreciates the opportunity to participate alongside U.S. EPA in the management of the Great Lakes as Lake Erie is a critical resource for our communities. The Commission finds the ability to coordinate extremely valuable and hopes that the Parties find state and provincial assistance useful. From Ohio's perspective, the regional view of the SOGL loses some of the important detail and nuance that is available for each of the lakes individually. States could help refine the report further by providing to the SOGL co-authors a team of state scientists on staff, coordination of datasets within and between states, and participation in efforts to update and revise the SOGL metrics. These additional efforts would help the Parties ensure that the report is better aligned with results and efforts that are closer to where citizens live and align better with more localized understanding of the resource.

In closing, on behalf of the agencies working with the Commission and for Lake Erie, thank you for the latest triennial Progress Report of the Parties and the opportunity to provide comments. Protecting and restoring the Great Lakes for today and future generations is a shared responsibility. Lake Erie continues to be a draw for recreational tourism, representing the Walleye Capital of the world, provides drinking water for 2.8 million people in Ohio, and serves as an affordable transportation link for commodities and products. Moving forward on the goals of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement is important to Ohio, and the Commission looks forward to our continued work together through the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement.

Sincerely, Joy Mulinex, Executive Director