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Icebreaker Wind project collaborating on initiatives to benefit Lake Erie and other Great Lakes

Proposed wind turbine project to help with scientific studies benefiting fish and ecosystems

Cleveland - April 22, 2019 – Clean wind power has its obvious environmental benefits. But a unique partnership between developers of the first freshwater wind energy project in North America and some of the nation’s leading research organizations will further protect and improve the health of Lake Erie. As a result, the research will also be used to help ecosystems across the Great Lakes.

The Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation (LEEDCo) and the Cooperative Institute for Great Lakes Research (CIGLR) at the University of Michigan today announced they have developed a broad collaboration agreement designed to work together on projects of mutual interest. This includes the sharing of scientific data, access to offshore platforms, and research to monitor and understand large scale processes on Lake Erie. CIGLR is comprised of 21 research organizations and the U.S. National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

LEEDCo President Lorry Wagner said the organization is committed to the health of Lake Erie and the other Great Lakes as the non-profit works to design and build the six-turbine Icebreaker Wind project.

“Our mission here goes beyond simply generating clean energy,” Wagner said. “All of our Great Lakes are vital, immense resources for both people and wildlife. From day one, our mission has been to protect them and advance science to keep this region healthy for generations to come. This data-sharing collaborative will give us the opportunity to work side by side with the research community to design the most advanced lake monitoring system in the Great Lakes.”

The collaboration will allow CIGLR members to propose projects to conduct scientific analysis and research on Lake Erie in and around the project site. Traditionally, researchers have to remove sensors and buoys from the lake in the winter and redeploy them in the spring due to ice. However, using LEEDCo’s investment in offshore infrastructure, scientists can deploy sensors and collect data year-round in the offshore waters of Lake Erie. This is an ideal complement to Icebreaker’s commitment, for at least five years, of post-construction monitoring of aquatic life and water quality.

LimnoTech, an environmental engineering and science firm based in Ann Arbor, MI, has been working with LEEDCo to monitor Lake Erie and involve the research community as often as possible.

“We have a passion for protecting and monitoring our water environment,” said LimnoTech project engineer Ed Verhamme. “Our work with LEEDCo fits right in with our mission to create beneficial public/private partnerships that will benefit all of the Great Lakes.”

Icebreaker Wind is being planned eight miles off the Cleveland shore by LEEDCo, a non-profit regional economic development public-private partnership that includes support from the City of Cleveland; the Cleveland Foundation; Cuyahoga, Lake, Ashtabula and Lorain counties; and Erie County, Pa.

LEEDCo is participating in multiple research networks including:

- Great Lakes Acoustic Telemetry Observation System (GLATOS), which is using advanced acoustic technology to more **accurately track fish patterns, resulting in better data so Lake Erie’s multi-billion dollar recreational fishing industry can be better managed.** GLATOS outfits fish such as walleye and whitefish with transmitters, and their movements are measured by a network of 600 underwater receivers deployed around the Great Lakes, including nearly 300 in Lake Erie. LEEDCo is the only non-research organization to support this network in the Great Lakes.
- The **Ohio State University’s Stone Laboratory**, which is a full-time Lake Erie research operation, has supported the collecting of offshore fish data and supports analysis of Lake Erie water to understand plankton and water chemistry.
- Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS), which aggregates and disseminates data from across the Great Lakes to boaters, policy makers, and others. **LEEDCo deploys a real-time weather buoy annually and freely shares the data with GLOS, which allows the boating community and search and rescue operators to assess conditions offshore in real-time via text message and the internet.**

The Icebreaker Wind project has been reviewed and approved by 14 local, state and federal agencies and is awaiting final approval by the Ohio Power Siting Board.

The project has been endorsed by the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Ohio Environmental Council.

Icebreaker also has the support of community leaders, labor unions, many elected officials across the state and more than 275 area companies.

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