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**Litter Prevention Strategies Implemented in
Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie**

*~ Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority and partners
Collaborate to keep Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie clean and beautiful ~*

In 2023, with funding from the Ocean Conservancy, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful collaborated with numerous individuals, organizations and businesses who make their home in Lake Erie, to pilot devices made to capture debris that makes its way into the water. The devices, known as litter control booms, are designed to limit the spread of trash and debris and corral floating litter so it can be collected and removed from the waterway.

Two booms were installed at points of stormwater discharge in Presque Isle Bay at the property of Lakeshore Towing Services, Inc. Interns from the Regional Science Consortium (RSC) at Tom Ridge Environmental Center (TREC), have been monitoring the sites, collecting the trash that accumulates in the booms and evaluating data, determining the types and sources of trash and the effectiveness of the devices. Data collected includes date, time, current and previous weather parameters, counts for various categories of litter, weight of materials removed, and water quality analyses including bacteria and presence of petroleum products such as gas and oil.

The litter booms have thus far proven successful in preventing litter from entering Presque Isle Bay. An analysis of the thousands of pieces of litter captured by the booms indicated cigarette butt litter was the most prevalent, followed by foam pieces, then plastic pieces. Future analyses will examine the occurrence of correlations between meteorological conditions and the presence of litter. Information gleaned from this program will aid in determining how to reduce the amount of trash entering the waterway.

"Marine debris is a serious issue, not only locally, but globally. The data from this project will highlight the most common litter that enters our waterways and impacts our drinking water and sport fishery," said Jeanette Schnars, Ph.D., Executive Director, Regional Science Consortium.

As a result of this pilot project educational strategies will be evaluated and developed to inform residents and visitors about the effects litter has on local industry, people and wildlife and help

change attitudes and behaviors toward littering. This portion of the program will be funded by Department of Environmental Protection's Coastal Resources Management Program.

In addition, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is distributing portable ashtrays to adult tobacco users at various marinas along Presque Isle and shoreline that are under the jurisdiction of the Port Authority to reduce the amount of cigarette butts and other tobacco products that make their way into the waterway.

Erie residents and volunteers will also be mobilizing as part of the Ocean Conservancy's International Coastal Cleanup, the world's largest volunteer initiative to keep trash from reaching our waterways and oceans. Cleanups will be held in various locations along Lake Erie on Saturday, September 21, 2024 from 9am to noon. All are welcome to participate. For more information and to register to participate, contact Audrey Knight, Erie County Recycling and Sustainability Coordinator at aknight@eriecountypa.gov or 814-451-7326.

"Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is grateful for this collaborative effort to keep Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie clean and beautiful. Not only does trash adversely affect water quality, it harms wildlife, the local economy and tourism. Every cigarette butt and piece of litter that is disposed properly is a step closer to cleaner and safer waterways," said Don Benczkowski, Program Coordinator, Lake Erie Region, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful.

Not only is Lake Erie a popular vacation destination, according to the Great Lakes Guide, it is also the most biologically diverse of all the Great Lakes due to its warm, shallow waters. The Lake Erie Watershed provides drinking water for 12 million people and supports a variety of industries and is most susceptible to agricultural practices. It is also home to one of the world's largest and most valuable freshwater commercial and sport fisheries.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful will report results to the Ocean Conservancy who will analyze litter trends and sources.

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About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's vision is a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Since 1990, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has worked with hundreds of thousands of volunteers across the state to pick up nearly 158 million pounds of trash from Pennsylvania's roadways, waterways, greenways, vacant lots, forestlands and other community spaces. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful's core programming focuses on litter and illegal dump prevention, cleanup, community greening, and proper waste handling and sustainable practices. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful works with many partnering organizations on the state and grassroots level to accomplish our goal of a clean and beautiful Pennsylvania. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the state affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation's largest volunteer-based community action and education organization. To learn more about Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, visit www.keeppabeautiful.org.