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### **BIG CREEK WATERSHED BALANCED GROWTH PLAN – 5<sup>TH</sup> IN OHIO, MOST URBAN TO DATE**

The Big Creek Watershed Balanced Growth Plan received State endorsement from the Ohio Lake Erie Commission (OLEC) at its June 15, 2011 meeting. In honor of this accomplishment, the OLEC, Friends of Big Creek, and the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization are holding a special meeting of the Big Creek Partnership **Wednesday, November 2nd, 2011 from 11:00 to 11:45 AM** at Parma City Hall, 6611 Ridge Road.

An Ohio Lake Erie Commission member will be present to offer congratulations and present certificates to the mayors of Brooklyn, Brook Park, Cleveland, Parma, and Parma Heights, recognizing the five Big Creek watershed cities of the Partnership as an Ohio Balanced Growth Community. OLEC Director Gail Hesse will briefly discuss program incentives and future goals for the Ohio Balanced Growth Program.

Ohio's Balanced Growth Program is a voluntary, community-based effort and incentive-based strategy to promote sustainable growth and conservation development. It was developed by the Ohio Lake Erie Commission in 2004 and expanded to a statewide program in 2009. The Program uses watersheds as the key organizing feature for land use planning. Watershed-scale land use planning has become an accepted approach in Ohio and throughout the nation because collaboration across the watershed allows coordinated, regional decision-making about how growth and conservation should be promoted by local and state policies and investments.

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*A community-based greenway advocacy and watershed stewardship organization.  
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Big Creek is a sub watershed of the Cuyahoga River. Its Balanced Growth plan was developed as a multi-year effort of the five municipalities working with the Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization and the Friends of Big Creek. The communities represent 98% of the population and 95% of the land area of the watershed. The cities are now eligible for state support for plan implementation through special incentives.

The Big Creek Plan identifies numerous priority conservation and development areas, as well as opportunities for storm water retrofits. Considering the urban nature of Big Creek, storm water retrofits are the primary means for improving watershed function and expanding green infrastructure. The Plan also contains data, tools, recommendations and strategies the Partnership will use for implementation. The stewardship organization, Friends of Big Creek, will act as Plan managers and as liaison between the Partnership cities and the OLEC.

The Ohio Lake Erie Commission is comprised of the directors of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Ohio departments of Natural Resources, Transportation, Development, Health and Agriculture. The commission was created to preserve the lake's natural resources and protect the quality of its waters and ecosystems.

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