

# Tips to Being a Sustainable Charter Captain

By Tracey Coe, Clean Marinas Program Coordinator

Charter captains play an important role in introducing people to the wonders of Lake Erie. Your actions can set the tone for the rest of the boating community. To learn what more you can do to protect one of Ohio's greatest assets, follow these tips!

## **Preventing Plastic Pollution**

Plastic pollution never disappears, it only breaks into smaller pieces that have infiltrated their way into every nook and cranny on the planet. With its rough and choppy waters and dense shoreline population, Lake Erie has one of the highest microplastic concentrations in the world.

How you can help:

- Discard excessive packaging on any items at home and use reusable items on the water that are less likely to blow away.
- Pay special attention to discarding fishing line; it's the number one entangler of fish and wildlife in Ohio.
- Use a tied down mesh trash bag or trash can with a lid to ensure trash stays onboard. And don't forget a smoking receptacle for cigarette butts.
- When back on land, recycle what you can. Microplastics leach out of landfills too so keeping materials in use for as long as possible is a win for our water!

## **Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species**

Aquatic Invasive species can wreak havoc on ecosystems and economies, costing us millions annually. They are often spread by humans moving from one body of water to another while unknowingly carrying them along. Charter boats don't typically leave Lake Erie, but crew members can serve as a role model for all those that come aboard!

How you can help:

- Clean all equipment including trailers and fishing gear, drain any water from the vessel, and dry off anything that came in contact with the water before moving to another lake.
- Buy bait locally and don't dump it into the water after fishing. Throw it in the garbage just in case its harboring anything that doesn't belong.
- You might not travel, but your customers likely do. Charter captains can model these practices and show customers what right looks like.

## **Protecting Lake Erie's Water Quality**

A small amount of fuel or cleaning product entering the lake might seem like a drop in the bucket, but when multiplied by the millions of boaters who roam the Great Lakes, it adds up to

a big impact. Keeping our water free of toxic chemicals is crucial not only for the animals and plants that live here, but for all of us who rely on the lakes for drinking water.

How you can help:

- When fueling, use an absorbent cloth to catch any drips from the nozzle and only fill up to 90% capacity to allow for expansion.
- Keep your engine tuned up and put absorbent material in the bilge to catch any oil that accumulates there.
- Choose cleaning products with aqua safe labels but even then, proceed with caution, using sparingly and catching any drips before they enter the water.
- Have all passengers use the bathroom before heading out and never discharge sewage into Lake Erie.

### **Keeping Lake Erie Clean from the Shore**

Impacts to Lake Erie don't stop at the shoreline. Every drop of rain that hits pavement or falls into the storm drain near our lake pours right back in, carrying with it any debris that it can move. This means that what we do in our parking lots and waterfront maintenance shops is just as critical to a clean Lake Erie as our actions on the water.

How you can help:

- Never dump any leftover oils or other chemicals into storm drains or dumpsters.
- If your marina had a designated boat wash area, make sure to use it. Collect all paint chips, dust, and debris with a tarp underneath and dispose of properly.
- Whenever working on the boat, work indoors or undercover whenever possible to avoid any accidental spills with wind.
- Dock at a Clean Marina or encourage your own marina to become a Clean Marina. Marinas that have earned this designation have taken extra precautions to ensure their facilities are protecting Ohio's water quality! Learn more about the [Clean Marinas program here](#).

### **Tackling Trash When Fishing** (adapted from Jill Bartolotta, Ohio Sea Grant)

Unfortunately, much of the gear you use for fishing can be a problem if left in the environment. In addition to the previous actions of utilizing reusable containers and preventing accidental littering, here are a few fishing-specific things you can do.

How you can help:

- Watch where you cast to avoid snagging your line. If your line snags or breaks off, remember to remove as much as possible from the environment and properly dispose of in a trash container. Remove any fishing line you find (yours or others) as it is the number one litter item entangling fish and wildlife in Ohio.

- Use fishing line recycling bins when available. Only place fishing line in these bins. Do not put your trash in them.
- Lures, hooks, soft plastic baits, and lead weights are all harmful to the environment if left behind. When no longer useable, dispose of in a trash bin.

Lake Erie is one of the most important freshwater systems on the planet. Thank you for everything you do to protect our most valuable resource! To learn more about how you can protect Lake Erie and be an ambassador for environmental stewardship, consider becoming [Erie PrOH certified here.](#)

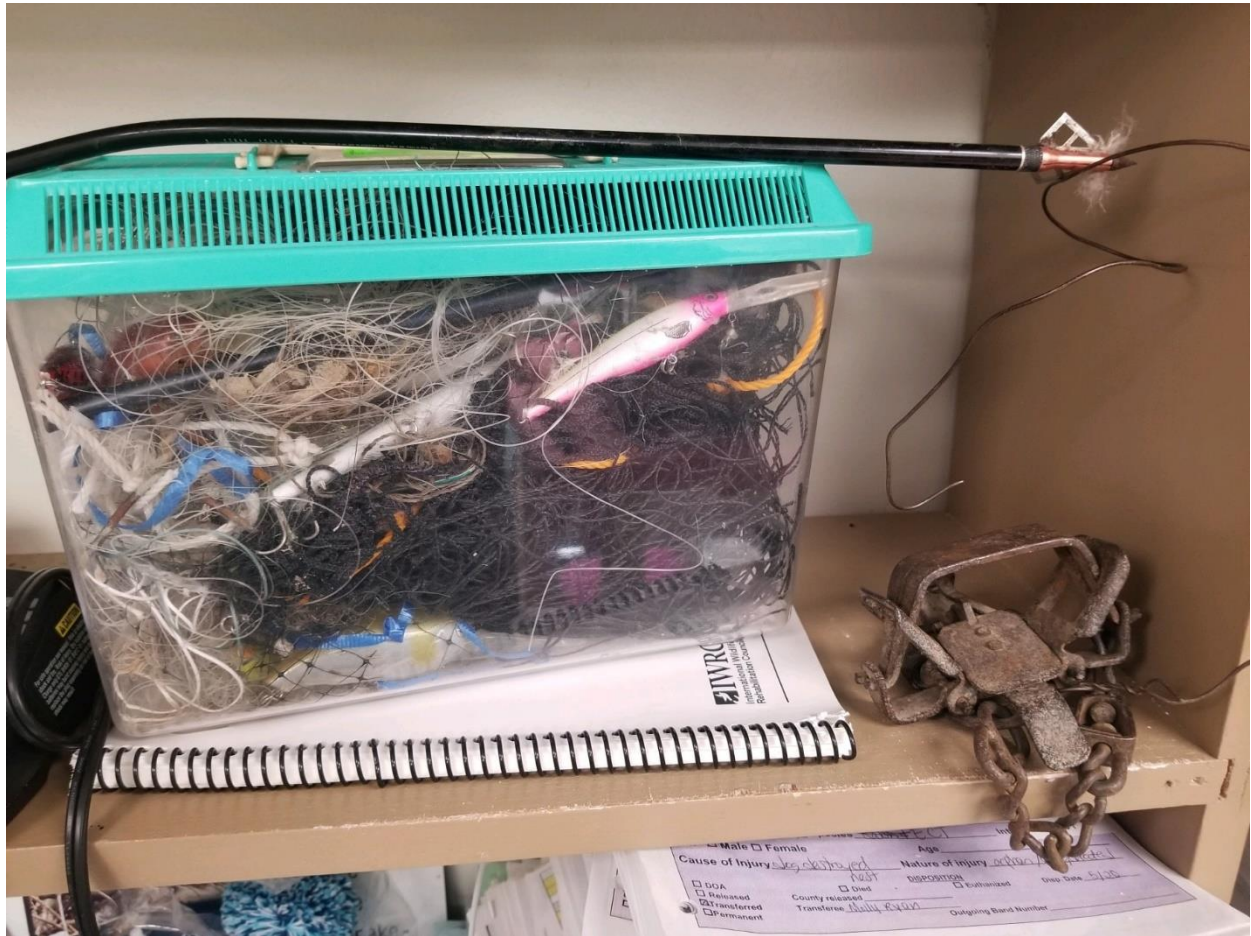


Photo by Tim Jasinski, Lake Erie Nature & Wildlife Center



Photo by Jill Bartolotta



Fishing Line Recycling Bin