

Despite the cool 68-deg F conditions, overcast, and drizzling rain, eleven divers met in Cleveland's Flats on Wednesday, August 27, 2008, for the bi-weekly Aqua Specialist's evening dive. They boarded the "Holiday," a 60' steel charter boat run by Capt. Wayne Bratton on the Cuyahoga River. Unfortunately, Capt. Wayne, Capt. Francine, and Aqua Specialists' John Norris could not be there. However, Capt. Elliot and Bob were there, and Jay McGrath substituted for John. The divers were Rhonda Miller, Chris and Alex Herbrook, Valerie Lyons, Jamie Verevna, Leonard Myse, Julie Mereki, Jim Nelson, Tim Neiswonger, Jon Tepas, and Kevin Magee. Because of the very stormy weather in the past few days that had stirred up the near-shore water, it was decided to once again dive in deeper water three miles out in Lake Erie on the "Old Cleveland Crib." Additionally, most divers on the boat were new and had not seen the crib.

Only 1'-2' seas were encountered upon entering the lake from the mouth of the Cuyahoga River, which was much better than the previous day's 4'-6' waves. The boat quickly made its way out into the lake and tied up to the large white buoy that marks the crib. The "Old Crib," or "Crib No. 5," is a submerged water intake in 50' of water off Cleveland. Despite its name, it was built in 1917 after the more famous "Five-Mile Crib," or "Crib No. 3," which is the above-water structure to the east by less than a mile. Upon entering the water, the divers were pleasantly surprised to find 8'-10' of visibility, which continued all the way to the top of the crib at 35' depth. This is where the buoy's two mooring blocks are located from the two chains that come off the bottom of the buoy. One chain goes to the north side of the crib, and one goes to the south side. Despite the good visibility, however, it was found to be very dark, requiring a good light to see. The crib is a pile of stone blocks neatly piled to form a large circular mound with the intake at the center.

Swimming towards the center of the crib, one descends into the intake cavity, which is lined with large wood timber walls that form a box with a large approximately 20'x20' metal grate at the bottom. The top of the grate is at a 45' depth, but little could be seen due to the poor 3'-5' visibility in this area. Descending over the outside slope of the crib, good visibility existed until a 45' depth, where the visibility decreased to just 3' or so close to the bottom. The sides of the crib and the surrounding bottom are littered with large limestone blocks, large wood timbers, grated structures, metal railroad rails, and other pieces of debris. Some divers used reels to explore the outside area around the crib since it is confusing and navigation can be difficult. The water temperature was 71-73 deg F with no thermocline evident. Large schools of small perch were seen everywhere, and many large sheephead were also sighted. All the fish were spooked at the divers' lights and would scatter when the lights were pointed at them. Lots of gobies of various sizes and colors were also seen.

Overall, everyone enjoyed the dive and found it interesting, even first-time lake divers. For those who would like an enjoyable after-work dive, there will be

one more trip aboard the “Holiday” this season on Sept 10, and you can sign up at Aqua Specialists.