



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update**

### **October 2012**

*The Healthy Waters Coalition is a diverse group of municipal and state water and wastewater organizations, and conservation and sustainable agriculture organizations working in Washington DC and in communities throughout the country. The Coalition is focused on strengthening links between our working agricultural lands and the quality of our Nation's waters with a specific focus on nutrients. If you do not wish to receive these updates, we can remove you from our lists.*

*Below is an overview of the related press coverage during the month of October.*

### **Studies and Research**

#### [LSU Research Team Shows Negative Impact of Nutrients on Coastal Ecosystems](#)

*Terra Daily*

LSU's John Fleege, professor emeritus in LSU's Department of Biological Sciences, is part of a multi-disciplinary national research group that recently discovered the impact of nutrient enrichment on salt marsh ecosystems is marsh loss and that such loss is seen much faster than previously thought. Globally between a quarter and half of the area of the world's tidal marshes has already been lost, and although multiple factors -- sea-level rise, development, loss of sediment supply -- are known to contribute to marsh loss, in some locations the causes have remained unexplained. Also covered in: [ClimateWire](#); [OCEANS](#); [Science Codex](#); [Science Daily](#); [Phys.org](#)

#### [Fertilizer Harming Plum Island Salt Marsh, Study Finds](#)

*Boston Globe*

David Johnson kayaked across a narrow channel and scrambled up a muddy bank into the heart of New England's largest salt marsh. After a 30-minute trek through woods, water, and fiercely biting flies, the Marine Biological Laboratory researcher stopped short in front of refrigerator-sized pieces of marsh bank that had collapsed into two narrow creeks. It was stark evidence in an unusual scientific experiment that demonstrates the profound damage fertilizers and sewage can wreak on marshes that are critical for protecting young marine life and blunting the sea's fury. Also covered in: [The Daily News of Newburyport](#); [Red Orbit](#); [Boston.com \(blog\)](#); [Science Blog](#); [EP Magazine \(Environmental Protection\)](#); [The Salem News: Scientists](#)

### [Environment: Excess Nutrients Speed up Ocean Acidification](#)

*Summit County Voice*

Runoff from agricultural and urban areas is speeding up ocean acidification in some coastal areas, adding to the woes resulting from increased concentration of atmospheric carbon dioxide. A new study by researchers with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the University of Georgia found that CO<sub>2</sub> released from decaying algal blooms intensifies acidification, which is already taking a toll on shellfish populations in some areas.

### **Federal Activities**

### [Technical Announcement: Stream Nutrient Reductions from Conservation Practices Not Consistently Detectable Across U.S.](#)

*U.S. Geological Survey*

The effects of conservation practices meant to reduce nutrient loss to streams were not consistently detectable in 133 large agricultural watersheds across the U.S. in a new analysis by the USGS. One explanation for the lack of widespread improvement may be that changes in water quality lag behind the implementation of conservation practices. Lags may be occurring for a number of reasons. Nitrogen from agricultural land moves slowly to streams through groundwater, so it can take several years for reductions in nitrogen inputs on the land surface to affect nitrogen levels in streams.

### [Clean Water Act Turns 40 \(Part II\): A Harvest of Clean Water Exemptions on the Farm](#)

*Circle of Blue*

In 1972, when Congress enacted the Clean Water Act, it was still possible to see North Carolina farmers using mules to plow their tobacco, cotton, and corn fields. A typical Nebraska cattle feedlot measured a few hundred acres. In Washington, D.C., lawmakers still viewed the American farm as a family-owned and -managed enterprise, and not much of a threat to the nation's water. Forty years later, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency and state water quality departments, the agriculture sector is the largest producer of nitrates, phosphates, chlorinated compounds, sediment, and other major sources of water pollution.

### [Next Challenge for Clean Water: Controlling Pollution from Runoff](#)

*Winona Daily News*

Forty years after the passage of the Clean Water Act, efforts to control pollution are shifting to a broad range of sources — agricultural, storm sewer and other runoffs. “There are still some needs out there,” said municipal wastewater manager Wendy Turri of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, referring to concerns about pollution from single sources. For instance, new research shows evidence of harm from hormone levels and traces of prescription drugs in rivers that weren't able to be scrubbed by wastewater treatment facilities. But today, experts argue, the bigger threat is nutrient runoff from fields, feedlots and storm sewers.

## **State Activities**

### [Indiana Farmers Focusing on Soil Health](#)

*Hoosier Ag Today*

USDA is advising farmers on ways to make soils healthier for the long-term success of their operations. A growing number of farmers and conservation experts are focusing on soil health to reduce costs, help the environment and increase yields. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service is working with farmers to maximize their soil's performance. Dan DeSutter of Attica, Indiana says, "By building our soils now will allow us the competitive edge that may mean the difference between survival and not surviving later on." DeSutter is using no-till planting and cover crops to increase soil nutrients and prevent runoff.

### [State's Revised Nutrient Management Regulations go into effect Monday](#)

*Carroll County Times*

The Maryland Department of Agriculture announced that the final notice to adopt its revised nutrient management regulations was published in the Oct. 5 issue of the Maryland Register. The regulations will take effect Monday and are designed to achieve consistency in the way all sources of nutrients are managed and help Maryland meet nitrogen and phosphorus reduction goals spelled out in its Watershed Implementation Plan to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. Also covered in: [MD Register](#); [Southern Maryland News Net](#); [Star Democrat](#); [Gazette](#); [Frederick News Post](#)

## **Local Activities**

### [Results Seen on River: Phosphorus levels in Illinois River falling](#)

*Muskogee Phoenix*

Efforts to restore the Illinois River as a pristine waterway that snakes its way from the Arkansas Ozarks into northeastern Oklahoma appear to be paying off. Reports released in advance of the 40th anniversary of the Clean Water Act — an event commemorated this past Thursday — show phosphorus levels in the Illinois River are trending downward. The reports take into account data collected during the past 18 years.

### [Authorities worry Erie is ailing](#)

*Delhi News Record*

Agricultural practices are under the microscope now that rampant algae growth has returned as a problem in Lake Erie. Massive algae blooms were a serious issue in the west end of the lake in 2010 and 2011. Algae was shaping up to be a serious problem this summer but was pre-empted by the prolonged dry spell in July and August. The International Joint Commission — the bilateral agency that manages the Great Lakes on behalf of Canada and the United States — is so concerned about the situation that it will recommend legislative and regulatory changes in a major report in 2013. The IJC held eight open houses on the issue in communities surrounding Lake Erie between Aug. 20 and Sept. 20. Of primary concern is the contribution nutrient runoff from farm operations is making to the proliferation of algae.

### [KIC Aims for Defensible, Responsible, Reliable N Rate](#)

*Agri News*

The importance in fall soil testing, split applications, new technologies and a fundamental change in how Illinois will fund nutrient research were among topics at the recent Keep It for the Crop by 2025 Conference. Dan Schaefer, Illinois Council for Best Management Practices nutrient stewardship director, said a focus of the meeting was to recommend to fertilizer dealers best management practices for growers to utilize. "It's about nitrogen management mostly in these watersheds and trying to promote split applications of nitrogen," he said.

### [Stormwater Runoff Prevention; Congress Fails To Pass Farm Bill](#)

*Vermont Public Radio*

In the puzzle of restoring Lake Champlain's health, the reduction of phosphorous in stormwater runoff is an important piece. Now, the Agency of Natural Resources is preparing to launch a new initiative that focuses on building "green" infrastructure to prevent stormwater runoff. We talk with Environmental Conservation Commissioner David Mears about in a preview of the program announcement to be held on Wednesday. Also, with the farm bill. Every five years or so Congress reauthorizes the massive piece of legislation, which covers much more than farm subsidies and crop insurance.

## ***Litigation Activities***

### [Shore Farm Pollution Blamed on Cows](#)

*Baltimore Sun*

Cows, rather than chickens, caused the pollution for which an Eastern Shore farm couple and Perdue are being sued, contends a witness for the Salisbury-based poultry company. Charles Hagedorn, a microbiology professor from Virginia Tech, told a federal judge Monday that a small herd of cattle grazing on Alan and Kristin Hudson's farm near Berlin were the sole source of high levels of bacteria and nutrients found in drainage ditches there. "These counts - and they are high - came from the cattle," Hagedorn testified.

### [Chicken Farm Owner Testifies in Water Pollution Trial](#)

*CapitalGazette.com*

BALTIMORE — Alan Hudson, the owner of an Eastern Shore family farm accused of polluting nearby waters with chicken manure, testified in U.S. District Court Thursday that water containing cow manure may have run off into a ditch draining from his property. Waterkeeper Alliance Inc. is suing Hudson — along with Perdue Inc., which owns the chickens raised by the Hudson family — for violations of the Clean Water Act. The cross-examination of Hudson closed the second week of the trial, which has gripped the attention of chicken farmers and environmentalists.

## **Miscellaneous**

### [Nitrogen Plan Offered with Touch of Smartphone Pad](#)

#### *Agri News*

New technologies to aid in nutrient management and research were outlined during the recent Keep It for the Crop by 2025 Conference. Among the new tools is a smartphone application for the Maximum Return to Nitrogen calculator. Developed by Dennis Bowman, University of Illinois Extension crop systems educator, and provided through funding by the Illinois Council for Best Management, the app can be installed free on Android smartphones or tablets. In addition, Apple currently is evaluating the app for its iPad, and upon approval, it will be available for all growers and fertilizer representatives. "It's a really neat tool that the farmers and dealers are going to be able to use," said Dan Schaefer, CBMP nutrient stewardship director.