



Healthy Waters Coalition Update November 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 November.

Federal Activities

[EPA's Draft Guidelines Urge States to Work With USDA on Nonpoint Sources](#)

Bloomberg BNA, Daily Environmental Report

Under draft guidance for distributing grants for state nonpoint source programs, the Environmental Protection Agency would no longer require states to set aside \$100 million to develop watershed-based plans for impaired lakes and streams. The draft guidance encourages states to look for alternative sources of funding, acknowledging the limited funds that Congress appropriates for Section 319 programs. In FY 2012, Congress appropriated \$165 million for Section 319 grants. EPA requested the same amount in FY 2013, but now the agency is operating under FY 2012 levels, owing to the continuing resolution that is in effect. Nonpoint source pollution arises from nutrient and sediment runoff from farms to stormwater and other pollutants in urban environments. EPA said it remains the largest source of water quality impairments in the nation.

State Activities

[Pollution Eyed in Chisago Lakes Watershed](#)

The Forest Lake Times

State seeks input on plan to address excess phosphorus: The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is seeking comments on a water quality improvement report for the Chisago Lakes Chain of Lakes Watershed. The report focuses on pollution caused by excess phosphorus in nine lakes in the watershed. A public comment period runs through Nov. 21. The impairment affects the lakes' ability to

support aquatic recreation including fishing, swimming and boating. Phosphorus is a necessary nutrient in lake ecology; however, too much can cause excessive algae blooms.

[Plan to Ease Manure Regulation Touted](#)

Watertown Daily Times

Carthage dairy farmer Lee W. Bach has wanted to expand his herd size from 185 to 250 cattle for years at the family-owned farm he co-owns with brother Justin W. and father John W. But he hasn't, because doing so would mean complying with costly state regulations to properly dispose of manure. But those requirements — which affect farms with 200 or more cattle — are tentatively slated to be relaxed by Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to entice farmers like Mr. Bach to grow their operations. The governor plans to change the enrollment criteria by raising the number of cattle farmers can own before they enroll as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, which require them to develop plans for controlling runoff from manure that can pose a risk to the environment.

[Iowa Releases Plan to Cut Runoff in Gulf of Mexico](#)

Bloomberg Businessweek/AP News

Wastewater treatment and industrial plants would be asked to make costly upgrades to cut pollution while farmers would do so voluntarily under a long-awaited strategy released Monday to reduce harmful nutrients in Iowa waterways and the Gulf of Mexico. Gov. Terry Branstad's administration released the 200-page document laying out plans to tackle one of Iowa's most pressing environmental issues, after two years of study and private meetings. It comes in response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's order in 2008 for 12 states along the Mississippi River to develop strategies to prevent nitrates and phosphorous from reaching the Gulf of Mexico, where excess levels of the substances make large areas unsuitable for marine and plant life. Also Covered in: [Des Moines Register](#); [Iowa Farmer Daily](#); [Quad City Times](#); [Altoona Herald](#); [CBS News](#); [WHOTv Des Moines](#); [The Republic](#); [Radio Iowa](#)

[MDA Issues Guidelines for Implementing New Nutrient Management Regulations](#)

MD Press Release

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) today issued new guidelines for farmers and wastewater treatment operations outlining immediate actions necessary to comply with Maryland's newly revised nutrient management regulations which took effect October 15, 2012. The revised regulations redefine how a farm nutrient management plan is developed and implemented while changing the way organic nutrient sources and other materials are managed. They are designed to help Maryland meet nutrient reduction goals spelled out in its Watershed Implementation Plan to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Local Activities

[Runoff from Iowa Farms Growing Concern in Gulf](#)

Des Moines Register

CHAUVIN, La. -- Generations of shrimpers, crabbers and oystermen have set out from this bayou village to net their catch. They share an emotional bond with Iowa's farmers: Both harvest nature's bounty to earn a livelihood. Iowa farmers always know where they'll find their crop. For those who work these waters, locating their harvest has become an increasingly taxing game of hide-and-seek. Nitrates from the fertilizer and manure that Iowa's farmers apply to their fields, mixed with sewage and runoff from suburban lawns, flow 800 miles down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico Also covered in: [Society of Environmental Journalists](#); [The Advertiser](#); [Examiner](#)

[Treatment Facilities Not the Only Problem](#)

Jamestown Post Journal

Wastewater treatment facilities aren't the only source of phosphorus or nutrients feeding the growth of weeds and algae in Chautauqua Lake. Other contributions come from groundwater, septic systems, agriculture runoff, land development and internal loading, which are phosphates already in the lake. In the north basin, groundwater contributes 36.7 percent of phosphorus and internal loading adds 25.1 percent, which are larger sources than wastewater treatment facilities, which contribute 19.6 percent.

[Key to the Dead Zone Lies Hundreds of Miles North](#)

The Advertiser

We call it the dead zone. It's the place in the Gulf of Mexico where nothing can live, except the algae that uses up all the oxygen in the water. No fish, no crabs, no oysters. The size varies during the summer algae bloom, but it can grow to more than 8,800 square miles. And that creates problems for the fishermen whose livelihood depends on the abundance of aquatic life in the Gulf. They have a hard job, made harder by losing an area of water that is just a hair smaller than the state of New Hampshire.

[Potomac Conservancy Warns of Pollution from Runoff, Sees Urgent Need to Make Changes](#)

Cumberland Times-News

The Potomac River's health stands to suffer setbacks if the region does not change its development and building standards, according to the Potomac Conservancy. The conservancy's sixth annual State of the Nation's River reports improvements to the river since the metropolitan region has worked to reduce pollution at sources such as water treatment plants, but stormwater runoff stands to undo those gains, a group of speakers said during a conservancy teleconference Thursday. The conservancy urges Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia to get new development and redevelopment to cut back on nonporous pavement — streets, sidewalks, curbs and roofs. Also covered in: [Fredericksburg.com](#); [Frederick News Post](#); [WTOP](#)

[The Muddy Minnesota River Comes Back to Life](#)

Minneapolis Star Tribune

More than a decade of effort to clean up wastewater -- plus millions of dollars in construction and new technology -- have made the lower reach of the Minnesota River a much healthier place for aquatic life, state officials announced Monday. Tests conducted in August, when the river was at its lowest point in years, showed that even under stressed conditions the water now has enough oxygen to support fish, mussels, plants and other life, according to officials from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (PCA).

It proves, they said, that long-term efforts to reduce the nutrient phosphorus, which suppresses oxygen in water, were a good investment. Also covered in: [Minnesota Public Radio](#)

Litigation Activities

[Opposition Threatens Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Plan](#)

Washington Post

The embattled Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan is being hit by opponents from both the left and right. A pair of liberal watchdog groups struck it with a lawsuit last month seeking to erase one of the plan's key programs — nutrient trading. They support the overall cleanup plan but call nutrient trading a “pay to pollute” program that departs from the spirit of the Clean Water Act, enacted 40 years ago this fall. At the other end of the political spectrum, the conservative American Farm Bureau Federation is arguing that only the states in the bay's watershed — not the Environmental Protection Agency — have the authority to put pollution-control measures into place.

[Clean Water Act Suit Enters Final Stretch](#)

Maryland Coastal Dispatch

The latest milestone in the ongoing landmark civil suit filed against a Berlin farm family and Perdue over alleged pollution violations passed this week with parties on both sides filing their proposed findings of fact and conclusions. Testimony ended in mid-October in the civil trial pitting a New York-based environmental watchdog group against Berlin's Hudson Farm and Perdue and on Wednesday, each of the parties filed their proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law following the trial. In the findings of fact and conclusions of law, each of the parties attempts to show the court what they were successful in presenting during the trial and what their opponents did not prove successfully.

[Rancher Brings Pollution Battle to WA Supreme Court](#)

Northwest Public Radio

The Washington Supreme Court heard arguments Tuesday that will decide how much control environmental regulators have over pollution that runs off people's land and into streams. Cowboy hats and wrangler jeans could be seen among the business suits normally worn in the Washington Supreme Court building. Around 80 ranchers and environmentalists packed into the courtroom. They traveled from around the state: Spokane, Dayton, and Puget Sound. At issue: Can the Washington Department of Ecology make a rancher fence-in a stream that runs through his land?

Miscellaneous

[The Problem is Clear: The Water is Filthy](#)

The New York Times

Like most children, the students at Stone Corral Elementary School here rejoice when the bell rings for recess and delight in christening a classroom pet. But while growing up in this impoverished agricultural community of numbered roads and lush citrus orchards, young people have learned a harsh life lesson: “No tomes el agua!” — “Don't drink the water!” Seville, with a population of about 300, is one of dozens

of predominantly Latino unincorporated communities in the Central Valley plagued for decades by contaminated drinking water. It is the grim result of more than half a century in which chemical fertilizers, animal wastes, pesticides and other substances have infiltrated aquifers, seeping into the groundwater and eventually into the tap.