



Healthy Waters Coalition Update January 2013

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 January.

Studies and Research

[A Cost Effective Alternative Approach to Meeting Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Reduction Targets](#)

Pennsylvania Legislative Budget and Finance Committee

The Pennsylvania General Assembly's Legislative Budget and Finance Committee published a study detailing the economic and environmental benefits that would result from the implementation of a competitively bid, request for proposal (RFP) program for nitrogen reductions to fulfill Pennsylvania's obligations under the EPA-mandated Chesapeake Bay TMDL. The study finds that a competitive RFP program would lower overall compliance costs by 80% or more through the purchase of verified nitrogen reductions from all public and private sector sources. Click [here](#) to read the full report.

[Drainage Ditches Can Help Clean Up Field Runoff](#)

USDA Agricultural Research Magazine

Vegetated drainage ditches can help capture pesticide and nutrient loads in field runoff, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientists report. These ditches—as common in the country as the fields they drain—give farmers a low-cost alternative for managing agricultural pollutants and protecting natural resources. Agricultural Research Service (ARS) ecologist Matt Moore at the agency's National Sedimentation Laboratory in Oxford, Miss., and his colleagues conducted the research. ARS is USDA's chief intramural scientific research agency. Also covered in: [Phys.org](#)

Federal Activities

[Vilsack to Stay as USDA Secretary to Face Drought and Farm Bill](#)

Bloomberg

Tom Vilsack is staying on as agriculture secretary during President Barack Obama's second term, when he'll be dealing with the effects of the worst drought since the 1930s and a Congress that hasn't been able to pass a new

five-year farm bill. In a speech today to an American Farm Bureau Federation conference in Nashville, Tennessee, Vilsack said he's honored "to have another opportunity to continue this work." Matt Paul, the Department of Agriculture's communications director, said Obama asked Vilsack to stay on and Vilsack accepted. During his first four years in office, Vilsack, 62, pushed for expanded export markets as U.S. farmers earned near-record profits and enjoyed the highest land values ever.

[Senator Harry Reid Re-Introduces Senate Farm Bill](#)

Agri-Pulse

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., re-introduced today the Senate-passed version of the five-year farm bill, calling it a "revolutionary piece of legislation." Speaking on the Senate floor, Reid said he plans to take up the bill, but he did not give a timetable. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said Reid considers the farm bill as "one of several privileged, top priority bills." "I applaud Sen. Reid's leadership and commitment to getting a five-year farm bill done to provide certainty to the 16 million Americans working in agriculture," Stabenow said. "Last year we were able to pass a farm bill with overwhelming bipartisan support, saving more than \$23 billion in taxpayer money and reforming farm bill programs to be more cost-effective and market-oriented. Unfortunately, the House didn't bring the farm bill to the floor." Stabenow said the committee will mark up a bill "as soon as possible." Also covered in: [The Hill](#); [Agriculture and Food Law Policy Blog](#); [Western Farm Press](#); [Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry](#); [Denver Post](#); [Farm Futures](#)

State Activities

[Pollution plan deadline moved](#)

Des Moines Register

Responding to pressure from critics, the state has extended by two weeks the comment period on a controversial plan to cut pollution running down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. The Nutrient Reduction Strategy report lays out voluntary projects farmers can pursue, partly at taxpayer expense, to reduce fertilizer runoff blamed for depleted oxygen in the Gulf of Mexico's lucrative shrimping waters. It also details improvements required in future permits issued to large sewage treatment plants. Also covered in: [San Francisco Chronicle](#), [Mason City Globe Gazette](#); [American Agriculturalist](#)

[Iowa pollution plan criticized](#)

Des Moines Register

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has told Iowa that the state's plan to stem runoff pollution blamed for contributing to a seasonal dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico is lacking an adequate system to measure results. In a letter released Thursday, the EPA also notes that the state's draft on Nutrient Reduction Strategy appears to question the wisdom of setting numeric standards for nitrogen and phosphorus, two key ingredients in crop fertilizers — a mistake in the agency's view. "Numerical criteria has a place, as one of the tools," EPA regional administrator Karl Brooks said during a telephone interview from his Lenexa, Kan., office. "We just don't think numeric criteria should be taken off the table at the outset." Also covered in: [Iowa Farmer Today](#)

[Ohio Farmers Being Pushed to Voluntarily Control Runoff](#)

The Newark Advocate

Ohio farmers are being encouraged to voluntarily reduce nutrient runoff to avoid the possibility of more stringent and costly regulations. The Ohio Farm Bureau, along with 19 other groups, sent letters to thousands of farmers as

a kickoff to a campaign to promote voluntary action. "If farmers don't do this on their own, there will be federal and state laws and regulations that will mandate how you farm," it said. Joe Cornely, spokesman for the farm bureau, said there are concerns of state or federal regulations for farmers after Grand Lake St. Marys and the western basin of Lake Erie were shut down in 2011 because of algae blooms. Runoff of phosphorus from manure and fertilizer on farms has been partly blamed for such blooms, which are deadly to other aquatic life. Also covered in: [Mansfield News Journal](#); [Bucyrus Telegraph Forum](#); [San Francisco Chronicle](#); [Toledo Blade](#); [Columbus Dispatch](#)

[Patrick Recommends State Aid Cape in Combatting Nitrogen Pollution](#)

South Coast Today

After decades of Cape Cod waterways languishing in nitrogen pollution, the region is finally in line to get some relief. The Patrick administration recommended Thursday that the state's Water Pollution Abatement Trust spend \$3.35 million to develop a water quality management plan to reduce nutrient pollution of Cape waterways. Excessive studies of the Cape's estuaries conducted by the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth show that the Cape's bays and ponds face "significant contamination from excessive nitrogen," 70 percent of which comes from septic systems, according to a joint statement by the Patrick administration and the Department of Environmental Protection.

Local Activities

[Lisa Jackson calls Bay cleanup role "one of prouder moments"](#)

Baltimore Sun Blog

As she prepares to step down as administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Lisa P. Jackson says one of the "prouder moments" of her tenure was President Obama's agreement to have the federal government take the lead in trying to ramp up the lagging Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. Jackson, whose agency's work to address climate change and reduce air pollution have drawn much more attention and controversy, recalled with pride her role in helping to renew a cleanup effort that had repeatedly failed to reach its goals in the decades before Obama took office. At the urging of Jackson and other advisers, Obama issued an executive order in May 2009 declaring the bay a national treasure and calling on the federal government to lead a renewed effort to restore it from decades of decline.

Miscellaneous

[New farm bill must include measures for conservation](#)

Orlando Sentinel

If the recent battle over the fiscal cliff is any indication of what's to come this year from our elected officials in Washington, D.C., there is reason for us all to be worried. Marked by partisan bickering, the debt-ceiling debacle was just one of many disappointments dealt by Congress last year. Take the farm bill, for example. It started off well. The Senate came together last spring and passed its version of the bill. It was not perfect, but it contained many hard-won provisions to protect our country's soils and water resources. For Floridians, we need a bill that will keep our outdoor economy thriving, which means reducing soil erosion and preventing harmful runoff into our waterways. For the past 25 years, this has been achieved by linking basic soil and wetland conservation measures to the publicly funded cash payments handed out to farmers.