



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update**

**May 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 May.*

### **Farm Bill**

#### [Healthy Waters Coalition Urges Senators to Support Farm Bill](#)

The Senate Agriculture Committee approved a new, five-year Farm Bill, *The Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2013* (S. 954), which retained language the Healthy Waters Coalition (HWC) advocated for in the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). The language ensures that nutrient management activities receive priority conservation funding. It also allows farmers that are part of a partnership agreement to receive five-year contracts and special payments for nutrient management-related activities. The full Senate began debate on the measure before the Memorial Day recess and is scheduled to conclude debate this week. While the House version of the Farm Bill currently does not contain the nutrient management-related provisions contained in the Senate bill, the HWC will be working to ensure the nutrient management language is ultimately passed into law.

### **Studies and Research**

#### [Spring Floods May Increase This Year's Gulf of Mexico Dead Zone](#)

*NCCOS, Research Office of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and National Ocean Service*

To develop an earlier prediction of the size of the Gulf of Mexico "dead zone" this summer, NOAA's National Weather Service and National Ocean Service combined data from the [National Hydrologic Assessment U.S. Spring Flood Risk Outlook](#) with knowledge of soil saturation and typical weather patterns throughout the Mississippi watershed this year. Based on estimates of flood risk, snow pack, and predicted precipitation, the current above-average conditions in the basin should lead to a larger than normal dead zone size in 2013. Upper Mississippi and Ohio River watersheds supply most of the nutrients into the Gulf, so examining spring flood risk and associated discharges from these rivers, as well as for the entire Mississippi River, can help predict the size of the summer dead zone. Also covered in: [Florida Center for Investigative Reporting](#)

### [Study Shows Restored Oyster Reef Worth its Weight in Nutrients](#)

*William & Mary Virginia Institute of Marine Science*

A study led by researcher Lisa Kellogg of William & Mary's Virginia Institute of Marine Science shows that a restored oyster reef can remove up to 10 times more nitrogen from Chesapeake Bay waters than an unrestored area nearby, providing additional evidence that reef-restoration can contribute to efforts to improve water quality in the nation's largest estuary. The study, "Denitrification and nutrient assimilation on a restored oyster reef," is the feature article in this month's issue of Marine Ecology Progress Series. Co-authors are Jeff Cornwell, Michael Owens, and Ken Paynter of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science. To date, the justification for restoring oysters to Chesapeake Bay has focused on their capacity to clear the water, provide habitat for their own young and for other species, and to sustain both watermen and seafood lovers.

### **State Activities**

#### [Iowa's Nutrient Management Plan Finalized](#)

*Ag Professional*

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Iowa State University announced the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy has been completed and is available here. The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy is a science and technology-based approach to assess and reduce nutrients delivered to Iowa waterways and the Gulf of Mexico. The strategy is designed to direct efforts to reduce nutrients in surface water from both point sources, such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities, and nonpoint sources, including farm fields and urban areas, in a scientific, reasonable and cost effective manner. "A concerted, cooperative and sustained effort by both point and nonpoint sources will be needed to meet the ambitious goals defined in this strategy, since neither source can meet the goals on its own. We must continue to recognize that both sources play critical roles in regards to nutrient loads on a seasonal and annual basis," said DNR Director Chuck Gipp. A

#### [Ohio Officials Target Rivers to Stem Algae Blooms](#)

*San Francisco Chronicle/AP*

Ohio environmental officials are focusing on six major streams as they try to cut pollutants that help toxic algae thrive in the state's lakes and other waterways. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency has for years worked to cut manure and fertilizer runoff from Ohio farms and discharge from sewage treatment plants that contribute to poisonous blooms of blue-green algae in Lake Erie and Grand Lake St. Marys in western Ohio. The state EPA will focus on the Scioto, Great Miami, Maumee, Sandusky, Cuyahoga and Wabash rivers in an effort to curtail runoff that pollutes not only Ohio lakes but the Gulf of Mexico, too, the [Columbus Dispatch](http://bit.ly/11t83s3) (http://bit.ly/11t83s3 ) reported Tuesday. Toxic algae grow thick in water polluted with phosphorus and nitrogen from sewage, manure and fertilizers. They produce liver and nerve toxins that can sicken people and have killed pets and wildlife. Dead and decomposing algae rob water of oxygen, creating "dead zones" where nothing can live. Also Covered in: [Mansfield News Journal](#), [Columbus Dispatch](#)

#### [Oklahoma Ranked No. 1 State in Reducing Harmful Nutrients in Water](#)

*High Plains. Midwest Ag Journal*

A recent comparison of Environmental Protection Agency priority nonpoint source pollutant reduction numbers from across the nation shows that Oklahoma again ranks as the No. 1 state when it comes to reducing harmful nutrients from streams and rivers. This is the second year in a row that Oklahoma has ranked number one among states in reported nonpoint source nutrient reductions and the fourth year for the state to be in the top 10, according to Kim Farber, president of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts. "This continued improvement in addressing water quality is a testimony to the success of the dedicated work done by farmers, ranchers and other landowners in partnership with the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, local conservation districts, Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act 319 programs and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to address this critical issue," Farber said.

### [Delaware Nutrient Management Commission Releases 2012 Report](#)

*Cape Gazette*

The Delaware Nutrient Management Commission has released its 2012 Annual Report, documenting the progress Delaware farmers and other nutrient handlers have made in reducing nutrient runoff. The report, recently submitted to Gov. Jack Markell and members of the General Assembly, reviews accomplishments for fiscal year 2012, including continued implementation of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation regulations and the drafting of the state's first CAFO permit. All of Delaware's cropland and nutrient-applied land is managed under nutrient management plans developed by certified consultants. More than 54,000 tons of poultry litter and manure were relocated from Delaware farms during the year, divided almost equally among relocation within the state for land application, relocation outside of the state for land application and relocation to alternative use projects.

### [Utah Facing \\$1.2 Billion-Dollar Water Pollution Problem](#)

*Desert News*

Utah is staring at a \$1.2 billion-dollar water pollution problem that state regulators say is the most severe issue they have confronted since the federal Clean Water Act was passed more than 40 years ago. The culprits are phosphorus and nitrogen, naturally occurring nutrients necessary in the right quantities to sustain critical aquatic life in waterways. An excess, however, results in prolific algae blooms that rob the water of life-giving oxygen. Walt Baker, director of the Utah Division of Water Quality, detailed the pressing problem this week in a meeting of the Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment Committee, where he told legislators Utah should act to take care of the problem now, rather than wait until the federal government forces a solution.

## **Local Activities**

### [Davidsonville Wildlife Center Pond Restoration Project Getting Results](#)

*Capital Gazette*

For years the South River Federation's annual water quality survey found the stream next to the Davidsonville Wildlife Sanctuary in Maryland had the highest bacteria and nutrient pollution counts in the entire watershed. Now an \$80,000 pond restoration project is beginning to change that. "We are already seeing some promising bacteria reduction results," said Erik Michelsen, executive director of the federation, speaking to a crowd Thursday at the dedication of the completed project. For years Davidsonville Wildlife Sanctuary has taken in injured or abandoned wildlife, bringing them back to health so they can be released or given a permanent home at the Beard's Point Road facility.

### [Approved Law Looks to Reduce Lake Runoff](#)

*The Post Journal*

Reducing the runoff of phosphates into New York's Chautauqua Lake is the expected result of town of Chautauqua Local Law No. 1 unanimously adopted by the town board following a public hearing earlier this month. Titled, "Stormwater (sic) Management, Erosion and Sediment Control Management in the Town of Chautauqua," the proposed law drew no public comment during the hearing held before the board voted. Town Supervisor Don Emhardt summed up the measure by saying, "What we've been telling people to do, we can say, yeah, now you have to legally do." The measure resulted, Emhardt said, from working with the Inter-Municipal Committee on Lake Chautauqua. "We've got a pile of those," Emhardt commented about various studies and reports about lake pollution.

### [State, Federal Agencies Steering \\$7.5 Million to St. Johns River Cleanup](#)

*The Florida Times-Union*

About \$7.5 million in state and federal money is being earmarked to help clean water flowing into the St. Johns River from farm areas near Palatka, Florida state Environmental Protection Secretary Herschel Vinyard said Thursday. The money is in addition to \$7 million for helping the St. Johns that Sen. John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine, shepherded into the state budget. The work announced Thursday is meant to shrink levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the river, cutting off nourishment for algae blooms that can choke downstream areas including Jacksonville during summer months. A large bloom that developed this spring near Toco in St. Johns County added urgency to the effort. "It was a bit of a surprise, because we had been seeing significant levels of improvement," Vinyard said. "We started to dig in, figuring out how can we help reduce the chances that this would happen again."

### [Jordan Lake Advocates Call on Rejection of Bill to Repeal Cleanup Plan](#)

*WNCN*

Local leaders, business owners and residents gathered at Jordan Lake in North Carolina Friday to urge lawmakers to reject a bill that would repeal a 2009 cleanup plan for the lake. "I'm a Republican and here I am talking with all the environmental groups," Morrisville Town Councilman Mark Stohlman said at Friday's event. "I think what it shows is we're talking about fish and birds, not elephants and donkeys." Senate Bill 515, entitled the Jordan Lake Water Quality Act, would repeal a 2009 plan to mitigate pollution and runoff flowing into Jordan Lake. The Senate passed the bill last week with 31-16 vote. It has been referred to the House Committee on Environment.

### [Floating Wetland Absorbs Harmful Runoff in Henrico](#)

*Richmond Times Dispatch*

The little crab on the corner of Virginia "Friend of the Chesapeake" Bay license plates that motorists pay \$25 annually for became relevant to Henrico County on Wednesday afternoon. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Floating Island Southeast of North Carolina installed a floating wetland garden in lakes at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden and Belmont Golf Course on Wednesday to absorb harmful fertilizer runoff. The floating wetlands, which cost about \$4,000 each, were funded by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund fueled from sales of the license plates. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and Upham Brook Watershed Restoration also helped fund the project.

## **Miscellaneous**

### [Nutrient Pollution: A Public Drinking Water Risk](#)

*Daily Kos/Malibu Arts Journal*

As a result of interdependent factors, the amount of nutrient pollution entering our waters has significantly increased over the past 50 years. It enters our aquatic systems via the air and surface and ground waters. Nitrogen and phosphorus, forms of nutrient pollution released into freshwater and coastal areas, comes from a wide range of sources. "There are many sources of phosphorus, both natural and human. These include soil and rocks, wastewater treatment plants, runoff from fertilized lawns and cropland, failing septic systems, runoff from animal manure storage areas, disturbed land areas, drained wetlands, water treatment and commercial cleaning preparations," reports the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The sources considered here include: fossil fuel combustion; agriculture and industry; urban stormwater runoff, urban wastewater and septic tanks.