



Healthy Waters Coalition Update

July 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 July.

Farm Bill

[Congress Seeks Path Forward on Farm Bill as Deadline Approaches](#)

New York Times

Despite the differences between the farm bills passed by the House and Senate, the chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee said she wanted to work with her House counterparts to draft new five-year farm legislation that would continue agriculture programs set to expire Sept. 30. "We are willing to take what they give us and work with the chairman and ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee," the chairwoman, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Democrat of Michigan, said in a conference call with reporters on Monday. "Time is of the essence, and we need to move forward on this."

Studies and Research

[NOAA-Supported Scientists Find Large Gulf Dead Zone, But Smaller than Predicted](#)

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

NOAA-supported scientists found a large Gulf of Mexico oxygen-free or hypoxic "dead" zone, but not as large as had been predicted. Measuring 5,840 square miles, an area the size of Connecticut, the 2013 Gulf dead zone indicates nutrients from the Mississippi River watershed are continuing to affect the nation's commercial and recreational marine resources in the Gulf. Also covered in: [Science World Report](#); [Science Reporter](#); [United Press International](#); [Discovery News](#); [Des Moines Register](#); [Huffington Post](#);

[What Is Farm Runoff Doing To The Water? Scientists Wade In](#)

National Public Radio (NPR)

America's hugely productive food system is one of its success stories. The nation will export a projected \$139.5 billion in agricultural products this fiscal year alone. It's an industry that supports "more than 1 million jobs," according to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. But all that productivity has taken a toll on the environment, especially rivers and lakes: Agriculture is the nation's leading cause of impaired water quality, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Scientists want to get a better sense of how all that agricultural runoff is affecting water quality.

[A New Check-Up on the Health of U.S. Rivers](#)

National Geographic NewsWatch

Thanks in large part to the Clean Water Act, many rivers in the United States are cleaner now than when Ohio's Cuyahoga River caught fire on a Sunday morning in June 1969. But the vast majority of the nation's rivers and streams still do not measure up as healthy. According to a [new assessment](#) by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), less than one in five streams near agricultural or urban areas gets a good bill of health. Dams and diversions that alter streamflows, along with pollution from chemical fertilizers are among the key factors degrading rivers.

[Reef Survival Remains a Critical Issue](#)

ABC Online

The Great Barrier Reef may soon be assessed as a World Heritage site 'in danger' by UNESCO. Water scientist at James Cook University, Jon Brody, thinks this listing should go ahead because, despite improvements in agricultural management, the threats to the reef are still there. Jon Brodie led a team of 43 scientists to produce a report which identified the major water quality issues for the reef. While there's progress on the agricultural management side working with farmers, "the prognosis for the reef is not good south of Cooktown," he says.

[Ohio Scientists Rewriting State's Phosphorus Risk Index](#)

Ag Professional

A soil scientist with Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences is in the midst of a three-year, \$2 million project to keep more nutrients and water on farm fields as part of an effort to improve the state's water quality. Researcher Elizabeth Dayton's On-Field Ohio project is designed to offer growers more options to reduce agricultural runoff in Ohio waters by revising the current U.S. Department of Agriculture-Natural Resources Conservation Service Ohio Phosphorus (P) Risk Index to better predict the risk of phosphorus moving off farm fields.

State Activities

[Maryland's Phosphorus Management to Change](#)

My Eastern Shore

The Maryland Department of Agriculture announced this month that proposed changes to the state's Phosphorus Management Tool were submitted to the General Assembly's Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive and Legislative Review. The MDA asked the committee to request emergency status for the regulations to ensure they will be in place for the fall planting season. The PMT was originally published Jan. 25 in the Maryland Register. The final publication of the PMT includes substantive changes that require re-promulgation.

[Delaware Farmers Fret as Chesapeake Bay Pollution Money at Risk](#)

Delaware Online

Like many poultry farmers, Frank Robinson Jr. faced a dilemma when he bought his property west of Harrington in 2008: What to do with all the manure? His only viable option under regulations aimed at preventing nutrient pollution from finding its way into the Chesapeake Bay was to put a roof over it. But building storage would be a serious financial strain on an operation Robinson had named "Dead Broke Farms." "We took everything we

had to buy the farm and the chicken houses and start the business,” said Robinson, who grows chickens for Perdue.

[Minnesota Must Address Agricultural Pollution of our Waters](#)

MinnPost

Last fall, I had to give a presentation on water quality in my state as part of my environmental policy and regulation class. I knew very little about how water bodies are regulated and protected, but I assumed that clean water wasn't too big of a problem in Minnesota. After all, this is the “Land of 10,000 Lakes!” A place where children and parents alike flock to beaches or cabins on sweltering summer days to “get away from it all” and enjoy a day at the lake. Unfortunately, my research seemed to indicate exactly the opposite of what I had thought. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), around 40 percent of tested Minnesota lakes and rivers are considered impaired, meaning they may be unsafe for swimming and fishing.

[Stowe, Environmentalists Call for Farm Runoff Limits](#)

Des Moines Register

The general manager of Des Moines Water Works said Tuesday that the agency might be forced to sue the government if state regulators and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fail to limit nitrates that enter rivers from farm field fertilizer runoff. Bill Stowe joined members of the citizen activist group Environment Iowa at the Capitol to call for legislation that would set state standards to limit farm field runoff and fine violators. The group presented Iowa Sen. Dick Dearden with a petition including 5,000 signatures from Iowa residents calling for legislative action to reduce the amount of nitrate and other pollutants in the state's rivers and streams.

Local Activities

[Supervisors to Discuss Bay Cleanup](#)

The News Virginian

Augusta County Supervisors will discuss during a Monday briefing whether to join a Chesapeake Bay river monitoring program that would calculate the amount of nutrient pollution flowing to two county rivers from farms and other non-point sources. While the U.S. Geological Survey would provide the equipment necessary to monitor the phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment flowing to the Middle and South rivers, the issue is the cost of operating the monitoring program. Without any sources of grant money or cost sharing with neighboring Rockingham County, Augusta County would have to spend \$85,000 a year to operate the monitoring program.

[Conservation District Approves Nutrient Management Plan](#)

Berks County Law Update

Earlier this month, the Berks County Conservation District approved a nutrient management plan for a 160 acre chicken farm in Upper Bern Township. Pennsylvania regulations require concentrated animal operations to prepare a nutrient management plan to help the farmers develop protocols for managing manure another other potential surface water pollutants using various best management practices. Generally, farms are not subject to the stringent water quality standards applicable to other commercial and industrial operations.