



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update August - September 2014**

*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. Please feel free to circulate this list to your members and let us know if you have any colleagues who would find this monthly update informative. 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 and other materials from the months of August to September.*

### **Federal Activities**

#### [USDA chief announces \\$45 million to help farmers curb runoff](#)

VTDigger

Vermont farmers will get a boost from the federal government to help restore Lake Champlain's water quality. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced Thursday a \$45 million program available to farmers who adopt conservation practices intended to prevent nutrient runoff into the state's waterways.

#### [EPA addresses nutrient pollution in Iowa](#)

The Des Moines Register

One of the biggest challenges the EPA sees with Iowa's nutrient reduction strategy, said regional director Karl Brooks, is getting farmers to widely adopt conservation practices that will cut nutrient pollution. Brooks, region 7 administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency, told agriculture leaders at the Farm Progress Show in Boone that the state has made progress cutting the nutrients that enter Iowa waterways and contribute to the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### [USDA Invests New Conservation Funds to Improve Lake Erie Water Quality](#)

U.S. Department of Agriculture News Release

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that \$2 million in conservation funds will be sent to Ohio to help implement conservation techniques that will help improve water quality. The Secretary said USDA is also partnering with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to expand "boots-on-the-ground" capacity in the area and will be contributing an additional \$1 million in technical assistance which will in turn be leveraged by the NFWF along with other public and private entities. Earlier this month, water service in Toledo, Ohio was disrupted by algae blooms in Lake Erie.

#### [New Audit Finds EPA's Approach to Reduce Nutrient Pollution is Ineffective](#)

Environmental Working Group

A new audit from the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency finds the agency's strategy to reduce nutrient pollution in the Mississippi River Basin and Gulf of Mexico is ineffective. "The audit is more evidence that the EPA's strategy is failing to reduce the pollution problems in our lakes, rivers, and streams, and the problem will only worsen unless the agency gets serious about cleanup," said Craig Cox, EWG's senior vice president of agriculture and natural resources.

#### [NMPF, Clean Water Agencies to Collaborate on Watershed Improvement](#)

Farm Journal

The National Milk Producers Federation (NMPF) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today to promote increased cooperation and communication between the two organizations in their efforts to make watershed-level water quality improvements. This MOU marks an important milestone in efforts to strengthen ties between urban and rural sectors on conservation activities to improve local water quality and the environment.

#### **State Activities**

##### [Ohio's new conservation program to improve Lake Erie water quality](#)

Sidney Daily News

Area farmers and landowners are encouraged to participate in a new conservation program that will help to improve water quality in Lake Erie and 5,000 miles of streams by reducing nutrient runoff. Authorized by Senate Bill 150 that was signed into law by Gov. John R. Kasich, the Lake Erie Nutrient Reduction Program (LE NRP) will assist farmers in installing best management practices that keep nutrients on fields, improve water quality and combat harmful algal blooms.

##### [Corporate farms get blame as key water-pollution culprit](#)

The Blade

What has been done to better protect the globally significant Great Lakes — which hold 20 percent of Earth's fresh surface water? And how have those changes been affected by Earth's steadily warming climate, which scientists believe is likely the cause of stronger, more violent thunderstorms that exacerbate agricultural runoff of all kinds, including manure generated by Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs? For starters, we have better sewage treatment. The trade-off, though, has been more agricultural runoff.

##### [Nutrient trading proposed as an option for reducing Lake Champlain pollution](#)

VTDigger

Phosphorus runoff from farms is the leading source of pollution in the Georgia Beach and St. Albans Bay Park lakes, and has become the central focus of the state proposal to restore Lake Champlain's water quality to standards set by the federal Clean Water Act.

##### [Farmers launch plan to improve Ohio water](#)

Associated Press

Ohio farmers say they will launch a \$1 million water quality action plan to help improve the state's water resources. The Ohio Farm Bureau says the funds will go toward helping farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin get fertilizer certification and create nutrient management plans.

##### [Group Talks Future of State's Water Quality](#)

WHO TV, Des Moines

The state's water quality has a long way to go. At least, that's what one might have gathered at the Department of Natural Resources' Triennial Review meeting in downtown Des Moines Wednesday morning. Every three years, the Iowa DNR hosts a meeting for water quality stakeholders from across the state to gather and share ideas on how to improve water quality. The purpose is to outline where water quality currently is in Iowa, and where they'd like to see it in three years.

## ***Regional and Local Activities***

### [How drones could limit fertilizer flow into Lake Erie](#)

PBS Newshour

A toxic algae bloom in Lake Erie this summer left the city of Toledo, Ohio, without drinking water for three days. Now environmentalists and farmers are working to prevent future blooms by evaluating fertilizer use in hopes of cutting excess runoff. Special correspondent Christy McDonald of Detroit Public Television reports on how drones may be a tool for maximizing crops and minimizing pollution.

### [Toxic algae cocktail brews in Lake Erie](#)

Journal Sentinel

The American public might have been shocked to see 50-foot-high flames dancing on a downtown Cleveland River in the late 1960s, but Frank Samsel wasn't. His job was to keep the Cuyahoga River channel clear for the boats and barges that fed the industries lining its banks, and he knew the truth about the river. It was no longer the vital freshwater artery nourishing Lake Erie that nature designed it to be.

### [Dead zones haunt Green Bay as manure fuels algae blooms](#)

Journal Sentinel

Nearly 400 years after French voyageur Jean Nicolet arrived with a bang on the banks of lower Green Bay — he fired two pistols skyward to announce the white man's arrival in the world's largest freshwater estuary — the same stretch of shoreline was the scene of another fateful landing. Phones at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources started ringing in early August 2005 with an outrageous tale of a mass migration of fish from the center of the bay to its rocky beaches.

### [Changes in America's Dairyland foul the waters of Green Bay](#)

Journal Sentinel

Manure is a potent fertilizer that does wonders for the crops that feed the cows that give the milk that makes Wisconsin America's Dairyland. It's also making a mess of its waters. While Green Bay holds a mere 1.4% of Lake Michigan's water, it receives one-third of the lake's nutrient load — due largely to the farm fields that drip phosphorus-rich manure into the streams, creeks and rivers that flow toward the bay.

### [Despite efforts, Sauk River Chain of Lakes face pollution challenges](#)

SCTimes

When Kay Cook spent time on the Horseshoe Chain of Lakes as a little girl, cows roamed the shoreline and algae blooms were thick in the water. These days Cook, who retired on Horseshoe Lake with her husband, Neil, in 1998, says the lake is clearer and the algae problem has gotten better. But she still worries a little when her grandchildren jump in the water for a swim.

### [Rare collaboration aims to reduce nutrient pollution in Mississippi River Basin](#)

WaterWorld

The U.S. Water Alliance issued a report highlighting common ground and innovative strategies between agriculture and water and wastewater utilities to reduce nutrient pollution in the Mississippi River Basin. The report, titled "Coming Together to Protect Mississippi River Watersheds: Agriculture and Water Sector Collaboration for Nutrient Progress", embodies the discussions and recommendations of agriculture, wastewater and drinking water leaders with participation from environmental, business, academic and scientific, local, state, and Federal agency interests.

### [Scientist: Chesapeake Bay efforts working but challenges lurking](#)

The Capital Gazette

A top U.S. Chesapeake Bay scientist says the long-term effort to improve conditions in the estuary is beginning to show progress, but could be undermined by increasing population, development and agriculture generating more runoff and nutrients to the bay.

**Miscellaneous****Agriculture's role in nutrient loss**

Manitoba Co-operator

Checking the news feeds across my conservation agriculture news, I see a common thread. Increased nutrient loads at Lake Erie, Chesapeake Bay, the ever-present "dead zone" of the Gulf of Mexico and calls for more action on the state of Lake Winnipeg. The human contributions are relatively constant, albeit constantly increasing, so when things go south, the blame gets placed on agriculture.