



Healthy Waters Coalition Update

February 2015

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 month of February.

National Activities

[States develop strategies to reduce nutrient levels in Mississippi River, Gulf of Mexico](#)

Dairy Herd Management

The 12 states of the Hypoxia Task Force have devised new strategies to speed up reduction of nutrient levels in waterways in the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin. Each state has outlined specific actions it will take to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus in the Mississippi/Atchafalaya River Basin from wastewater plants, industries, agriculture, and stormwater runoff.

[Here's How to End Iowa's Great Nitrate Fight](#)

NPR Blog

We won't fix this mess by using less fertilizer, Carlson says. "The way to fix this is, we need to have something growing from October to May." Turning cropland back into permanent grasslands, perhaps to graze cattle, would be most effective but also very costly. There's a much cheaper option, though. Farmers can plant a cold-weather crop — rye is a popular choice — right after the corn or soybean harvest. These plants will grow through the fall, go dormant when everything freezes and come back to life in the spring. They're called "cover crops," because they cover the soil over winter, and their impact can be dramatic.

[The failure of US farm policy? It's in the snirt](#)

Al Jazeera America

“Snirt” is not another trendy buzzword. It is the mixture of snow and dirt that represents a real and growing ecological problem. Visible in wintry rural ditches, snirt embodies the twin problems of soil erosion and water pollution. Snirt is formed when winds blow across bare farm fields each winter. As the dirty snow washes downstream with spring rains, the movement of soil from fields to waterways damages both the farms and the waterways.

State Activities

[Millions Go To Reducing Nutrients in Kentucky Waterways...By Controlling Manure](#)

wkms

A new public-private partnership in Kentucky will help the state’s livestock producers control their animals’ poop. [The project](#) will direct more than \$4 million toward planning resources and on-the-ground solutions designed to help keep excess nutrients out of the commonwealth’s waterways. This is an issue in Kentucky—and in many watersheds.

[Iowa center invests in future best practices](#)

Iowa Farmer Today

There has been plenty of debate and no small amount of controversy regarding Iowa’s nutrient reduction strategy, which was approved by the legislature in 2013. What hasn’t been controversial is the creation of the Iowa Nutrient Research Center as part of that plan. So, while much of the attention is on cost-share dollars for farmers to put in cover crops, wetlands or other practices, the research center is starting a variety of projects aimed at finding out what practices work and how results might eventually be measured.

['Nutrient trading' for watersheds proposed in House bill](#)

Arkansas Online

A bill in the Arkansas House of Representatives would enable organizations to trade nutrients they discharge into a watershed with another organization in exchange for money or some other service. Springdale Water Utilities Director Heath Ward, a supporter of the bill, said a wastewater utility that's having trouble meeting compliance standards, for instance, could send excess nutrients to another portion of a watershed that's well under permit limits.

[Ohio Senate approves farm runoff bill - Legislation on Lake Erie algae advances to House](#)

The Blade

The Ohio Senate voted to send a bill to the House implementing restrictions on land application of manure and other fertilizers that contribute to the nutrients feeding pea souplike algal blooms on Lake Erie. The bill would prohibit the application of manure and other fertilizers containing phosphorous and nitrogen on ground that is frozen, snow-covered, or saturated. Manure also could not be applied when the weather forecast calls for a 50 percent or better chance of half an inch of precipitation over the next 12 hours. The threshold for dry chemical fertilizers would be an inch over 24 hours.

[Farmers union eyes runoff, taxes](#)

Telegraph-Forum

Members of the Ohio Farmers Union, after gathering last month for their annual meeting in Columbus, will look for new ways to improve watershed quality in the western basin of Lake Erie and seek changes to the state's farm real estate taxes as the state's agricultural producers head into another growing season.

[Biz Buzz: Eastern Iowa Airport launches conservation initiative](#)

The Des Moines Register

The landscape underneath the planes flying in and out of the Eastern Iowa Airport will begin to change next year, thanks to a major conservation initiative that will bring native prairie strips and tall perennial grasses to some of the airport's 2,000 acres of corn and soybeans. Iowa State University and the University of Iowa will help the Cedar Rapids airport tackle the conservation initiative, designed to reduce nutrient loss from farming and boost environmental sustainability.

[Hogan proposes curbs on farm pollution](#)

The Baltimore Sun

A month after blocking hotly disputed environmental regulations drawn up by his predecessor, Gov. Larry Hogan announced Monday that he is putting out his own rules to curb Chesapeake Bay pollution from farms — including an immediate ban on spreading poultry manure on some Eastern Shore fields where the water-quality threat is greatest.

[Budget cuts affect manure spills, runoff mitigation](#)

Green Bay Press Gazette

Proposed cuts to Wisconsin's agricultural programs could exacerbate a recent spike in manure spills and runoff accidents, state conservationists warn. Several cuts tucked into Gov. Scott Walker's proposed budget would decrease staff who ensure farmers meet environmental standards, remove dollars for developing safe manure management plans and limit research into the impact of agricultural runoff.

Regional and Local Activities

[New Boise Project Seen As Innovative Way to Improve Water Quality](#)

Boise State Public Radio

In the middle of working farms between the towns of Notus and Parma, the city of Boise owns a 49 acre field. In March the city plans to start construction there on a unique project to reduce phosphorus in the Boise and Snake Rivers. It's generally referred to as the Dixie Drain Project.

[County awarded \\$4.5M in water quality improvement grants](#)

Central Kitsap Reporter

Kitsap County Public Works, Stormwater Division received full or partial funding totaling \$4.5 million for five stormwater retrofit construction projects and one stream restoration project.

Research and Studies

[Farmers can better prevent nutrient runoff based on land characteristics](#)

Phys Org

Farmers on a quest to keep more fertilizer on their fields—and out of Iowa's waterways—may have an easier time finding a solution, thanks to new research from the University of Iowa. Researchers with the Iowa Geological Survey, housed at the University of Iowa College of Engineering's IIHR-Hydroscience & Engineering, have created a comprehensive nutrient runoff mitigation guide for farmland in both the Ohio and Upper Mississippi River Basins.

[Advocacy group touts buffer zones to reduce pollution](#)

The Des Moines Register

The use of buffer zones between crop fields and streams could help improve Iowa's water quality and reduce the amount of pollutants that run off from nearby farm land, according to a study from the Environmental Working Group. It found that requiring the use of buffer zones could get the state two-thirds of the way to its goal for reducing phosphorus pollution and one-fifth of the way to its nitrogen pollution target.