



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update**

### **March 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 March.*

### **National Activities**

#### [Water quality on the farm: Staying ahead of the regulatory curve](#)

##### *Farm Futures*

More than 20 years ago when Chesapeake Bay water mandates first came out, farmers in the region were adamantly opposed to the idea of the government coming in and dictating what levels of nutrients could be applied to crop fields. They were convinced it would put them out of business. But today, that's exactly what Chip Bowling does on his 1,700 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and grain sorghum in Newburg, Md. "In my operation it has made sense for me economically and allows me to lead in conservation efforts," he says.

#### [EPA awards over \\$17M in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants to address algal blooms](#)

##### *Water World*

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced the award of 14 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants totaling over \$17 million to fund projects that will improve Great Lakes water quality by preventing [phosphorus runoff](#) and soil erosion that contribute to [algal blooms](#) and by reducing suspended sediments in Great Lakes tributaries. Many of these grants target Great Lakes watersheds where there have been harmful algal blooms in recent years -- such as Maumee Bay on Lake Erie, Saginaw Bay on Lake Huron and Green Bay on Lake Michigan.

### **State Activities**

#### [Des Moines water leaders say no to farmer's invitation](#)

##### *Des Moines Register*

Earlier this week, Dwight Dial asked Bill Stowe and Graham Gillette, leaders of Des Moines Water Works, in a Register video to visit his northwest Iowa farm to get a better understanding of what he and other

growers are trying to do “not only to make a living but to act in a conservation-minded” way. The answer from Stowe, the utility’s CEO, and Gillette, the board chairman, was, “Thanks, but no.” “Our lawsuit is not about farmers and farming, but how Iowa handles the massive pollutants entering our waterways,” the leaders responded via their spokeswoman.

#### [Iowa Corn provides update on Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#)

*Globe Gazette*

Iowa Corn provided an update on the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy during a recent Tools for the Future Crop Fair at the North Iowa Area Community College in Mason City. Efforts so far have included public and private partnerships to help implement different strategies. Millions of dollars worth of strategies have been implemented throughout the state, but nine watersheds have been identified as priorities including the Boone and Middle Cedar.

#### [Farm-water cleanup project falls short, critics say](#)

*Star Tribune*

In January, Minnesota’s top agriculture and environmental leaders gathered at a triumphant news conference to announce a \$9 million federal grant for a novel project to help farmers protect streams and rivers from the chemicals that come off their land. A one-year trial had been a resounding success. Federal money, combined with another \$11 million from the state, would finance a full-scale launch and would make Minnesota a national leader in showing how farmers will step up to solve one of the country’s most grievous environmental problems — agricultural water pollution. But a growing chorus of critics is saying not so fast.

#### [Ohio lawmakers pass bill to clean up Lake Erie](#)

*Sandusky Register*

The Ohio General Assembly Wednesday passed a major new measure to clean up Lake Erie pollution and fight the harmful algal blooms that contaminated Toledo’s water last summer. The bill focuses on reducing the amount of nutrients such as phosphorus which flow into the lake as rain runoff, feeding the growth of harmful algal blooms.

#### [EPA warns Pennsylvania it is coming up short in making sure farmers have anti-runoff plans](#)

*Lancaster Online*

Pennsylvania is not doing enough to make sure farmers have required on-the-farm plans to control manure and soil erosion, the federal Environmental Protection Agency says. In addition, EPA warned that “additional state policies and programs are likely to be necessary for implementing agricultural conservation practices that reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution.”

#### [No, Ohio farmers are not wiggling around water quality issue](#)

*Farm Dairy*

You can hardly go to an Ohio farm meeting these days and not hear something about water quality. Whether it’s planting more cover crops, doing a better job of applying nutrients, becoming certified to apply fertilizer, or adopting the 4Rs of Nutrient Stewardship — farmers are talking and they’re taking action.

#### [Prepare to do more for water quality](#)

*Ohio’s Country Journal*

A heavy fog blanketed much of Ohio one early March morning as the long winter freeze was just starting to give way to the warmer temperatures of the coming spring. A thin top layer of the soil had thawed,

but a deep freeze remained below. This, combined with persistent rains and a significant snowmelt, set the stage for nutrient and sediment loss from farm fields.

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

#### **[Eastern Shore Contributes Excess Nutrients to Chesapeake Bay](#)**

*USGS Press Release*

A new USGS report, a compilation and interpretation of research and data focusing on the Chesapeake Bay's Eastern Shore, found that it receives nearly twice as much nitrogen and phosphorus per square mile of land area as other parts of the Bay watershed. The disproportionately large amounts of nutrients are due primarily to agricultural production of crops and livestock. More than 90 percent of nitrogen and phosphorus reaching the land in the Eastern Shore is applied as inorganic fertilizers, manure or comes from crops which use nitrogen from the atmosphere.

#### **[Turning pollution into crop nutrients to be focus of 2015 Manure Expo](#)**

*Penn State News*

The 2015 North American Manure Expo will take place July 14-15 near Chambersburg, Franklin County. The event provides an opportunity for commercial applicators and livestock producers to advance their knowledge about manure-nutrient utilization, while showcasing the latest technology in manure handling, treatment and application, according to expo co-chairman Robb Meinen.

#### **[CR praised for working with farmers to prevent runoff](#)**

*The Gazette*

Iowa farmers much prefer cooperative rather than confrontational approaches to improving water quality, several of them said Friday during a tour of conservation practices in the Middle Cedar River watershed. In contrast to the litigation in Des Moines, the Cedar Rapids water utility has formed a partnership with farm-related agencies and organizations to invest \$4.3 million in conservation practices intended to reduce nutrient runoff into the Cedar River.

### ***Research and Studies***

#### **[Algae from clogged waterways could serve as biofuels and fertilizer](#)**

*Phys Org*

Water-borne algal blooms from farm fertilizer runoff can destroy aquatic life and clog rivers and lakes, but scientists will report today that they are working on a way to clean up these environmental scourges and turn them into useful products. The algae could serve as a feedstock for biofuels, and the feedstock leftovers could be recycled back into farm soil nutrients.