



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update** **May - June 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 May and June.*

### **Federal Activities**

#### [USDA Seeks Partnerships to Protect Soil, Water](#)

*Associated Press*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is teaming with businesses, nonprofits and others on a five-year, \$2.4 billion program that will fund locally designed soil and water conservation projects nationwide, Secretary Tom Vilsack said. Authorized by the new farm bill enacted earlier this year, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program is intended to involve the private sector more directly in planning and funding environmental protection initiatives tied to agriculture. "It's a new approach to conservation that is really going to encourage people to think in very innovative and creative ways," Vilsack said.

#### [John Kerry Addresses Ocean Environmental Issues](#)

*Guardian Liberty Voice*

John Kerry, United States Secretary of State, addressed issues of over-fishing, pollution and ocean acidification on Monday during opening remarks that kicked off a two-day summit in Washington, D.C. on ocean environmental issues. The summit, the first of its kind organized by the Obama administration, brings together environmental scientists and representatives from 80 countries to discuss global environmental strategies for these issues. Dead-zones along the coast are created by toxic algae blooms caused by overabundant nutrient pollution, called red-tide or cyanobacteria. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) monitors toxicity levels closely in areas where red-tide is known to be an issue in the United States. John Kerry, in his remarks, called on the international community to cooperate more fully regarding ocean pollution.

#### [Fears of EPA 'land grab' create groundswell against water rule](#)

*The Hill*

Lawmakers are up in arms over an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposal that they fear could give federal officials expansive new powers over private property and farmland. The EPA is seeking to redefine what bodies of water fall under the agency's jurisdiction for controlling pollution. The scope of the final Clean Water Act (CWA) rule is of critical importance, as any area covered would require a federal permit for certain activities. The EPA says the

new rule — dubbed “Waters of the United States,” or “WOTUS” — would not massively expand its authority, nor would it create powers over back yards, wet spots or puddles.

### **State Activities**

#### [Most Mississippi River Basin States Have Completed Plans to Control Nutrient Pollution](#)

*Bloomberg BNA*

Ten of the 12 states participating in a federal-state task force to tackle hypoxia in the Mississippi River and Gulf of Mexico have submitted either draft or final plans to reduce nutrient runoff into the basin, according to the task force co-chairman. Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio and Wisconsin have submitted plans, while Arkansas and Tennessee are expected to submit their plans by the end of the year, Iowa Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey said May 21 at the spring meeting in Arkansas of the Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force.

#### [Utah's Waterways Flush with Pollution Problem — and It Could Cost Residents](#)

*Deseret News*

Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen in Utah are requiring a costly fix — as much as \$1.2 billion — to wastewater treatment plants so these pollutants are reduced. In a phased approach aimed at phosphorus, water quality regulators are mulling upgrades that would amount to an extra flush fee on the monthly sewer bill to reduce phosphorus. The naturally occurring element, if excessive, leads to fish kills and chokes out other aquatic life.

#### [DNREC seeks nutrient management, clean water funding](#)

*Delaware State News*

The state's capital budget writing committee could have saved \$4.3 million in natural resources funding if the governor's clean water initiative had materialized. In a hearing with the Bond Bill Committee Tuesday, Collin O'Mara, secretary of Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control, requested \$1.5 million for cover-crop nutrient management and \$2.9 million in Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving funds that could have otherwise been paid with a dedicated source of funding generated by a new homeowner fee. After some reductions, the total cash to the Bond Bill is now around \$34 million.

#### [Kasich signs Ohio's ag nutrients bill](#)

*Farm and Dairy*

A bill designed to protect Ohio's waterways and keep farm nutrients in the fields has been signed into law. Ohio Gov. John Kasich signed S.B. 150 June 5, which will require most farmers who apply fertilizer to be state certified. The bill requires one farmer per farm operation to be certified to apply fertilizer, if he applies to 50 or more acres. The bill was introduced on June 25, 2013, by senators Cliff Hite, who is also chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Bob Peterson. It was passed unanimously by the Ohio Senate Jan. 22, and by the Ohio House, April 9.

#### [Pa. makes progress on Chesapeake Bay cleanup](#)

*Associated Press*

Pennsylvania is making progress to reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay watershed but is falling short of the pace needed to meet 2017 cleanup deadlines because of pesticide and other farm runoff, according to an analysis by an environmental group. The study by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Choose Clean Water Coalition found that Pennsylvania met or exceeded benchmarks in four areas to help reduce pollution from stormwater and wastewater treatment plants. However, it fell short in four other areas to help limit agricultural runoff, including erosion and sediment control, soil conservation and forest buffers. Pennsylvania is the largest contributor of nitrogen pollution to the watershed, caused in part by farmland fertilizers and pesticides that flow into streams after rainfall. The state has about 19,000 miles of impaired streams.

#### [Corbett joins other governors in protecting Chesapeake](#)

*The Morning Call*

An agreement to restore the Chesapeake Bay by protecting its vast drainage area from pollution was signed last week by governors from six states, including Pennsylvania. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement is aimed at restoring and conserving the 64,000-square-mile watershed that spans six states and the District of Columbia and drains into the bay, the biggest U.S. estuary. The accord updates an existing agreement and marks the first time Delaware, New York and West Virginia have pledged to work toward restoration goals in the bay that go beyond water quality. The 20-page agreement signed Monday sets 10 goals and 29 projected outcomes and deadlines that aim to help create an environmentally and economically sustainable watershed. They include lowering nutrient and sediment pollution; ensuring the water is free of toxic contaminants; sustaining blue crabs, oysters and forage fish environment; and restoring wetlands and underwater grass beds.

#### [USA: Funds Announced to Reduce Pollution in St. Lucie River](#)

##### *Dredging Today*

The State of Florida and St. Lucie County together have committed more than \$1 million to stormwater system improvement projects that will help reduce nutrient pollution reaching the St. Lucie River. Specific projects include upgrades to the existing stormwater conveyance system and the construction of a 4-acre detention lake, which will reduce both erosion and nutrient pollutants. Florida will provide \$500,000 and St. Lucie County is providing matching grant funds in the amount of \$535,000. The proposed projects are expected to substantially reduce nutrient pollutant loads for total nitrogen and total phosphorous by 42 percent and 77 percent, respectively.

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

##### [Higher Nitrogen Levels at Headwaters than Healthy](#)

##### *The Star Democrat*

Mid-Shore Riverkeeper Conservancy (MRC), with assistance from citizen volunteers (Midshore Creekwatchers), has been collecting water quality data in a consistent and objective manner from our local waterways for five years. Even though 2013 was a wet year, its patterns are reflective of those in each of the four prior years. In other words, each of the five years shows a similar pattern. Nutrient pollution is measured in terms of milligrams per liter of water, or "mg/l." Data from year 2013 was collected from the headwaters, all the way to the mouth, where the rivers connect to the Chesapeake Bay. Standards for a healthy river are those that can adequately support human and biological health.

#### [Board of Public Works approves \\$289,059 in agricultural cost-share grants](#)

##### *The BayNet*

The Board of Public Works yesterday approved \$289,059 in Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share grants, which help farmers install best management practices that significantly reduce nutrient runoff in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and accelerate Bay restoration. The O'Malley-Brown Administration has supported more farmer pollution reduction projects cost-share program than any other administration in the nearly three decades since the program began. The Board approved grants for 20 projects in nine counties that will prevent soil erosion, manage nutrient pollution and safeguard water quality in streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay. Together, these projects will prevent 3238.85 pounds of nitrogen, 1125 pounds of phosphorus, and 764.7 tons of soil from entering the Bay and its tributaries. These projects are funded by state general obligation bonds.

#### [Benton/Tama Nutrient Reduction Demonstration project opens today](#)

##### *Vinton Iowa*

Benton County and Tama County Soil & Water Conservation District Commissioners and project partners are celebrating the kick-off of the Benton/Tama Nutrient Reduction Demonstration Project. The primary objective is to demonstrate nutrient reduction practices, as identified in the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy, on cropland acres devoted to seed corn production.

#### [New nutrient recovery facility helps WI county improve wastewater](#)

##### *Water World*

Thanks to innovative nutrient recovery technology installed by Wisconsin's Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District as part of its "11th Addition" Project, freshwater resources in Dane County are getting relief from the pollution caused by excess phosphorus. On Wednesday June 4, the District's Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) marked the launch of the 11th Addition with an open house that saw the official opening of its nutrient recovery facility, which it installed in partnership with Ostara Nutrient Recovery Technologies. Part of the District's continuous improvement program, the facility will help protect area freshwater lakes and rivers by recovering phosphorus from wastewater streams at the plant and transforming it into an environmentally-responsible fertilizer, Crystal Green®

#### [Island restoration to make ecotourism destination](#)

*Asbury Park Press*

Up to \$16 million will be spent to restore salt marshes on Cedar Bonnet Island and control storm water pollution to Barnegat Bay, all part of an environmental mitigation project to make up for effects of constructing the new Route 72 bridge. DOT project manager Pankesh Patel said the whole contract will cost between \$15 million and \$16 million, including storm water improvements such as basins to trap nutrient pollution before it reaches Barnegat Bay – a key goal of the state's bay restoration program, to reduce nitrogen compounds that over-fertilize the water and trigger harmful blooms of microscopic plants.

#### **Litigation Activities**

##### [AD operator Biogen slapped with court fine after pollution spill](#)

*Click Green (UK)*

A pollution spill at Biogen's anaerobic digestion site in Bedfordshire resulted from a series of company errors, a court has been told. Claire Corfield, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told Luton Magistrates' Court, said the spill on June 11, 2012, resulted from the company not following its own procedures. The AD firm, which operates from Twinwoods Farm, Oakley Littlewood, Clapham, pleaded guilty to breaching its permit and was fined and ordered to pay costs totalling £8,700.

#### **Research and Studies**

##### [Purdue Partners With EPA To Reduce Water Pollution](#)

*Indiana Public Media*

Purdue University is one of a dozen schools partnering with a task force of federal and environmental groups to help curb water pollution. The group will specifically focus on addressing nutrient pollution from the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. Purdue University Professor of Agricultural Economics Otto Doering says the partnership initially aims to answer one question. "How do you link the work that's going on in the land grant universities with what the state governments, the state agencies, and the federal government and the federal agencies need in terms of their efforts of reducing the nitrogen flows down the Mississippi?" he says.

##### [Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Task Force Announces Agreement with 12 Universities to Further Water Pollution Reduction Programs and Goals](#)

*ThomasNet News*

The Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force today announced a partnership with 12 land grant universities to support state-level strategies and actions to curb water pollution. The agreement is the first for the task force with non-governmental entities. The Hypoxia Task Force is a partnership of five federal agencies, tribes, and environmental quality, agricultural, and conservation agencies from 12 basin states working to address nutrient pollution and the hypoxic zone, or dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

#### **Miscellaneous**

##### [As Dairy Farms Grow Bigger, New Concerns About Pollution](#)

*Yale Environment 360*

The slogan on Wisconsin's license plate — "America's Dairyland" — celebrates the state's number one agricultural activity and iconic status as a milk and cheese producer. What it doesn't reveal is how dramatically the dairy industry

in Wisconsin and in other parts of the United States has been changing, or the environmental concerns those changes pose. While milk carton imagery pictures bucolic, small farms, more than 50 percent of U.S. milk is now produced by just 3 percent of the country's dairies. With this increased concentration of milking cows comes a corresponding concentration of manure production. And what happens to this manure is at the heart of the pollution issues surrounding the dairy industry

#### [North American Manure Expo July 8-9 in Springfield](#)

*Cristian County Headliner*

When it comes to learning about nutrient and manure management, the 2014 North American Manure Expo held July 8-9 at the Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, 3001 N. Grant in Springfield, is the place to go. The theme of the 2014 two-day event is "Valuing Manure and the Environment." The free expo offers practical demonstrations, classroom teaching, and the opportunity to interact with industry representatives and regulators, according to Bob Schultheis, a natural resource engineering specialist with University of Missouri Extension in Webster County.

#### [Online tool helps calculate organic fertilizer requirements](#)

*The Grower*

Organic growers may have a more difficult time with nutrient management because the nutrient content of cover crops and fertilizers they use can vary widely. The Oregon State University Extension Service has developed a new online tool that does the math, according to a news release. The [spreadsheet-based tool](#) helps users estimate how much nitrogen and other nutrients are in cover crops and fertilizers. Growers may be able to cut back on fertilizers or find out they're not applying enough to meet yield potential. By managing nutrients more precisely, organic producers also can reduce the risk of nutrient runoff into waterways. Users need to first sample their soil and have a lab report available. The calculator helps factor in legume cover crop nitrogen and helps you select the most cost-effective fertilizers.

#### [Lake Guardian on patrol this summer to help fight the sliming of Lake Erie](#)

*Cleveland*

The season of algal blooms — the green slime that coats the water — and dead zones is upon Lake Erie. This year, though, joining the fight is the Lake Guardian, the U.S. EPA's 180-foot, 850-ton environmental battleship, loaded with scientists and researchers. The Lake Guardian is on the water at a crucial time: The push is on in Washington, D.C., and Columbus to add millions of dollars to the anti-algae effort, sewage treatment plant upgrades are being put in place and there are indications that this summer's algal bloom may be less severe than recent years.