



Healthy Waters Coalition Update May 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 May.

National Activities

[USDA Invests \\$6.5 Million to Help Conserve Water, Improve Water Quality in Ogallala Aquifer Region](#)

USDA Press Release

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$6.5 million in the Ogallala Aquifer region this year to help farmers and ranchers conserve billions of gallons of water and improve water quality. Funding will be targeted to seven priority areas to support their primary water source and strengthen rural economies.

State Activities

[DNR report shows Iowa's water pollution rising](#)

KCCI News 8

According to a new report released by the Department of Natural Resources, the list of Iowa's polluted waters is growing. "What we're seeing here is one out of every two water bodies that we've assessed is determined to be impaired," said Susan Heathcote of the Iowa Environmental Council.

[Vermont Legislature passes water quality bill to clean lake](#)

Portland Press Herald

Gov. Peter Shumlin said he was looking forward to signing what's he's calling the most significant clean water bill in the state's history, a measure designed to counteract years of worsening pollution in Lake Champlain. The legislation, given final approval on Wednesday, will help unlock tens of millions of dollars in federal funds and provide state funds to clean up waters in the lake's watershed and across the state by reducing polluting runoff from farms, roads and other sources.

[Beaver Watershed Alliance prepares for nutrient-trading program to improve drinking water](#)

Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette

A nutrient "trading" program to improve the quality of drinking water in Arkansas could be established within the next two years because of legislation passed in March by the Arkansas Senate and House of Representatives, the executive director of the Beaver Watershed Alliance said Thursday. Act 335, formerly House Bill 1067, authorized a nutrient-trading program to allow utility plants to rely on cheaper methods of reducing pollution instead of investing in new infrastructure and expensive equipment.

Regional and Local Activities

[NRCS Funding Available to Improve Water Quality in Three Boise River Watersheds](#)

Ag Weekly

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is offering a second signup opportunity to implement conservation practices to improve water quality in three watersheds that flow into the lower Boise River. Applications for the current funding cycle must be received by June 19, 2015. The Water Quality Initiative was designed to encourage voluntary conservation efforts to address agricultural sources of water pollution, including nutrients, sediment, pesticides, and pathogens in priority watersheds.

[Cedar Rapids kicks off Middle Cedar Partnership Project to improve water quality](#)

KCRG.com

The city is getting a big grant from the United States Department of Agriculture to improve water quality. Work will start later this month on the Middle Cedar Partnership Project. The plan is to work with farmers and other landowners to prevent nitrates and other chemicals from getting into the water supply. The \$4.3 million program focuses on a number of areas in the Cedar River watershed, which are along the river in Black Hawk, Tama and Benton counties.

[Conservation farming: Local operations taking advantage of state grants](#)

The Daily Progress

While some efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay watershed have proven to be controversial, such as the implementation of stormwater fees for residents in some municipalities, proactive initiatives have been underway in Albemarle County and throughout the region. Farmers are using the state Department of Conservation and Recreation's Agricultural Best Management Practice Cost Share and Tax Credit Program to build new infrastructure to reduce water pollution.

[Officials in Columbus discuss Midwest's role in Gulf of Mexico dead zone](#)

The Columbus Dispatch

The farmlands of the Midwest are contributing to a dead zone the size of Connecticut in the Gulf of Mexico, where low oxygen levels have made it impossible for fish and other aquatic life to survive. On Wednesday, May 20, policymakers from across the Midwest met in Columbus to talk about ways to ease that dead zone and solve other agriculture-runoff problems, including the kind of toxic algae that plagues Lake Erie each summer.