



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update August 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 August.*

### **National Activities**

[USDA commits \\$5 million to help farmers reduce runoff feeding Lake Erie toxic algae bloom](#)  
*Cleveland.com*

Faced with the prospect of a near-record toxic algae bloom in Lake Erie this summer, the U.S. Department of Agriculture said Friday it would invest an additional \$5 million in a project designed to curb algae-feeding phosphorus runoff from farm fields. The new funds represent a 66 percent increase to the \$7.6 million already invested this year in the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentive Program, said Jason Weller, chief of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### **State Activities**

[New Clean Water Rules May Mean Tough Choices For Some Small Farmers](#)  
*VPR*

Vermont's small farms have always been subject to state clean water standards, but now the state's near 7,000 small farms are facing a new reality: farm inspections. For the first time small farms will have to certify with the state and undergo routine farm inspections to make sure they're doing everything they can to keep pollutants out of the water.

[Clearer and cleaner: Study finds Narragansett Bay's health improving](#)  
*Providence Journal*

In yet another sign of the improving health of Narragansett Bay, a study led by oceanographers at the University of Rhode Island has found that nutrient levels in the Bay are half what they were in the 1990s, resulting in clearer water and fewer algae blooms.

### [Court rebuffs farm pollution waiver](#)

*Los Angeles Times*

A state court has struck down rules governing runoff from farms along the Central Coast, a decision that could have broader implications for the state's \$43-billion agriculture industry. The Sacramento County Superior Court sided with environmentalists who opposed a blanket waiver for growers in the Salinas Valley and other areas of the Central Coast, saying the conditions of an "ag order" failed to protect the public from dangerously high nitrate levels in drinking water and from chemicals linked to the deaths of sea otters and other animals.

### [Ribble joins phosphorus cruise](#)

*Green Bay Press Gazette*

A longtime recreational boater, U.S. Rep. Reid Ribble, R-Sherwood, wanted a little more science with his cruise Wednesday on the waters of Green Bay. Ribble went out with researchers from NEW Water and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for a few hours to gain an understanding of the processes that go into monitoring algae blooms and phosphorus loads. Ribble said he's been involved with — "I won't call it a crusade, but a yearlong effort" — of studying the issue of phosphorus, and its impact on Green Bay, the Fox River and Lake Winnebago.

### [Oklahoma Recruits Farmers To Reduce Water Pollution](#)

*Times Record*

For nearly a decade, Couch and about 350 other Oklahomans have participated in a program that pays rural landowners annual stipends and shares in the cost of conservation techniques to curb pollution in two major watersheds, feeding the North Canadian and Illinois rivers. By the end of this year, the state team leading the program, which launched in 2007, will know its results. The program is in its final days — \$5.7 million in federal funding has dried up — so state scientists are measuring its impact by testing water quality.

### [Report: Delaware farms can do more to keep water clean](#)

*Delaware Online*

Delaware's voluntary program to encourage farmers to reduce runoff into the tributaries of Chesapeake Bay and other waterways may not go far enough to meet the Chesapeake cleanup targets for reduction of nitrogen and phosphorous pollution, a just-released federal review concluded. Ultimately, Delaware agricultural and environmental officials may need to develop new policies or explore mandatory compliance with on-farm best management practices to conform with the bay cleanup initiative, the report concluded.

### [EPA Releases Report on West Virginia Agriculture Programs](#)

*U.S. EPA Press Release*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced today it has completed an evaluation of West Virginia's animal agriculture regulations and programs. The assessment, which is one of six that the agency is conducting of state animal agriculture programs in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, found that West Virginia is relying heavily on programs with voluntary participation to increase the implementation of conservation practices to meet water quality goals.

### [Forum brings together opposite ends of water quality debate](#)

*Des Moines Register*

Des Moines Water Works CEO Bill Stowe skipped formalities Wednesday and laid out exactly who he believes is responsible for the state's polluted waterways. He was one of five panelists from opposite sides of the water quality debate -- those who favor more government regulation and those who oppose it -- brought together to discuss the issue at the Greater Des Moines Botanical Garden.

#### [Northey: 1,800 farmers commit \\$3.5 million to water quality practices](#)

*Agrinews.com*

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey announced last week that \$3.5 million in cost share funds to help farmers install nutrient reduction practices have been obligated to farmers in each of Iowa's 99 counties. The practices that were eligible for this funding are cover crops, no-till or strip till, or using a nitrification inhibitor when applying fall fertilizer.

#### [Toxic algae closing Iowa beaches at record numbers](#)

*Des Moines Register*

The state is closing Iowa beaches in record numbers this year because of toxic blue-green algae that makes the water unsafe for families and their pets. So far, Iowa state park beaches have been closed 25 times this year, outpacing 2013, when beaches were closed two dozen times. And more closures are expected before the summer ends.

#### [Algae blooms threaten state's \\$13B tourism industry](#)

*West Central Tribune*

In southern parts of the state, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency considers 75 percent or more of lakes and streams to be impaired. Overall, more than 600 of Minnesota's famous 10,000 lakes are rated as not able to fully support aquatic recreation — such as the remote Lake of the Woods, which has regular summer algae blooms. About one-fifth of the 2,500 stream segments rated by the MPCA fall into the same category. Gross-looking lakes could have real costs. Minnesota's \$13 billion tourism industry is built on a foundation of scenic lakes and streams for fishing, boating and swimming.

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

#### [The 30,000-Foot View: Why It's So Tough To Keep Nutrient Pollution Out Of Lake Champlain](#)

*VPR*

More than two-thirds of the problematic phosphorus overload in Lake Champlain comes from Vermont. To clean up its act the state recently signed Act 64, the Vermont Clean Water Act. It tackles runoff coming from sources varying from roofs and roads to forests and farms. But there is no simple fix for keeping pollution out of the lake, in part due to the state's vast network of waterways, hilly landscape and unique geography.