



Healthy Waters Coalition Update

June 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 June.

National Activities

[National Network on Water Quality Trading Document Aims to Help New Program Development](#) *USDA*

The National Network on Water Quality Trading released a comprehensive reference document for those interested in setting up a trading program. The document introduces 11 key elements of establishing trading programs, and provides examples and program design considerations to help stakeholders evaluate how best to build a program that meets local needs.

State Activities

[Minnesota Governor Dayton signs bill to mandate buffers to improve water quality and habitat](#) *StarTribune*

Most Minnesota rivers, streams and ditches will get grass buffers to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality and create wildlife habitat under the compromise passed Saturday by the Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Mark Dayton. But the new policy — hailed by Dayton and others as landmark legislation — is weaker than the original proposal offered in January by the governor. Wildlife, in particular, might benefit less because of the changes.

[Minnesota's water war: Battle brews over needs of tourism, agriculture](#) *StarTribune*

A battle is brewing between two of Minnesota's biggest economic engines over the new Clean Water Rule. Minnesota's \$22 billion-a-year agriculture industry has declared war on the new construct while the state's \$13 billion-a-year tourism industry is firing back pointing to degrading water quality.

[State Begins Work on Rules for New Water Quality Law](#)

VT Digger

The Vermont Attorney General's Office and the state's Agency of Agriculture will begin the process of drafting rules for agricultural practices for all farms in Vermont, as directed by the recently passed water quality law. H.35, signed by Gov. Peter Shumlin this month, aims to reduce the amount of pollution that enters the state's waterways through agricultural and stormwater runoff, among other things.

Regional and Local Activities

[Great Lakes leaders agree to cut phosphorus runoff](#)

Detroit Free Press

Leaders from Michigan, Ohio and Ontario have agreed to reduce phosphorus in the western Lake Erie basin by 40% by 2025. Phosphorus is a key ingredient of widespread algae blooms in that portion of the lake. The joint agreement was a highlight of a weekend summit in Quebec City of Great Lakes governors and premiers discussing economic and environmental cooperation opportunities.

[Chesapeake Bay receives D+ on report card](#)

PennLive

Chesapeake Bay Foundation's most recent evaluation scores the bay's health at a dismal D+. The key points laid out in the report identify agriculture as the largest source of phosphorus, nitrogen and sediment that enters the bay. According to CBF's annual report document, "Agriculture agencies are not on track to meet their 2017 interim goals for reducing these nutrients and sediment.

[Ribble entreats stakeholders to "Save the Bay"](#)

Wisconsin State Farmer

Over 100 stakeholders attended Ribble's Phosphorus Summit to "Save the Bay" in April to discuss the growing problem of toxic algae blooms plaguing Green Bay during summer months. Earlier this month, Ribble convened a second meeting with additional stakeholders that included organic farmers, environmentalists, government officials and conservation groups. Ribble said he is hoping to use the bully pulpit of his office to pull people together in search of solutions.

[New farm technology reducing nutrient pollution](#)

My Eastern Shore MD

Eight farms in Kent and Queen Anne's counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore are using cutting-edge technology that will reduce nutrient pollution to the Chester River as well as its creeks, streams and groundwater. This technology pinpoints exactly where and how much fertilizer is needed on their crops — a big switch from the typical practice of spreading a uniform amount of fertilizer across fields and one that has the potential to change farming practices that endanger waterways.

[Conservation projects aim to fill gap left by traditional funding](#)

Farm and Dairy

Mahoning, Columbiana and Jefferson soil and water conservation districts were approached about finding conservation projects that would help to remove phosphorus and nitrogen from the Ohio River basin. The projects funds were funneled by the American Farmland Trust and funded through the Electric Power Research Institute.

[SJRWMD and Agricultural Partners Explore Innovative Ways to Save Water](#)

Florida Water Daily

St. Johns River Water Management District Executive Director Ann Shortelle and Charles Shinn, director of government and community affairs with the Florida Farm Bureau Federation, toured Trader Hill Farms in Nassau County where an innovative technique of rainwater harvesting will be used to irrigate crops, conserving fresh groundwater and reducing nutrient loading to area waterways. This project will allow the farm to use rainwater as an alternative to groundwater to make up for evaporation losses within their irrigation system.

Research and Studies

[Study shows farm, urban runoff affect fish abundance](#)

Summit County Citizens Voice

Nutrient pollution from farming has seeped into nearly every corner of a California estuary, affecting the abundance of fish in the important marine nursery, according to new research by scientists with the University of California at Santa Cruz and The Nature Conservancy. The new study, based on data collected over the past 40 years, shows how low levels of dissolved oxygen (a condition known as "hypoxia") affects fish populations in the estuary and beyond.

[Below-average 'dead zone' predicted for Chesapeake Bay in 2015](#)

Phys Org

A University of Michigan researcher and his colleagues are forecasting a slightly below-average but still significant "dead zone" this summer in the Chesapeake Bay, the nation's largest estuary. The 2015 Chesapeake Bay forecast calls for an oxygen-depleted, or hypoxic, region of 1.37 cubic miles, about 10 percent below the long-term average.

[Model confirms no till, cover crops help minimize erosion, surface runoff](#)

Tri-State Neighbor

The same spring rains that lessen producers' concerns about drought can also lead to soil erosion and nutrient runoff. A South Dakota State University researcher is using computer modeling to identify the most effective farm management techniques to keep soil and fertilizers where they belong — in the field. No-till farming, cover crops and rotational grazing will help producers reduce surface runoff to improve soil and water quality.

[Study: More data needed before assigning Erie algae fix](#)

Columbus Dispatch

Scientists need more data to understand how different farming practices affect the watersheds that drain to Lake Erie and lead to toxic algae blooms, according to a study released this week. The study, by the nonprofit Northeast-Midwest Institute and the U.S. Geological Survey, found that programs that aim to help farmers keep fertilizers and manure from flowing off their fields during rainstorms often are scattered, making it difficult to track data about how those practices affect watersheds.

[Farm Nitrogen Pollution Damage Estimated At \\$157 Billion Yearly](#)

Environmental Working Group

Nitrogen from fertilizers and manures washed off farmland costs Americans \$157 billion a year in damages to human health and the environment. According to the study, the median cost of nitrogen pollution damages inflicted by fertilizing crops, burning fossil fuels, manufacturing industrial products and all other human-induced sources is \$210 billion a year. Agriculture accounts for roughly 75 percent of the problem.