



Healthy Waters Coalition Update

January 2016

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 January.

National Activities

[Rural pollution is becoming an urban issue](#)

The Chesapeake Bay Journal

Lawsuits from Washington State to Iowa are forcing regions to come up with solutions to agricultural pollution, including the Chesapeake Bay. Many sewage plants have already been upgraded, and at a certain point, efforts to reduce their pollution will reach a point of diminishing returns. The cost to remove additional pounds of nitrogen from a sewage-treatment plant that is already highly effective will be much higher for each additional pound than the cost to remove nitrogen from agricultural land.

[Agriculture is big threat to **water quality. These farmers are doing something about it.](#)**

Christian Science Monitor

Agriculture, with its fertilizers, has emerged as the biggest threat to water quality in many parts of the US. Some farmers are trying new conservation strategies. Farmers are becoming more aware of nutrient pollution and agriculture's contribution to it, says Wayne Fredericks, a corn and soybean farmer in Iowa and president of the Iowa Soybean Association. And a growing number of them, including both Werling and Mr. Fredericks, are adopting practices known to curb, if not eliminate, nutrient pollution. Many worry that if they don't do more on their own, government will force them.

[Judge rules in Des Moines **Water Case](#)**

Farm Futures

A U.S. District Court judge in Iowa has punted on the first decision regarding the Des Moines Water Works (DMWW) vs. counties and drainage districts. The Court wrote "I would have to reject the

thoughtful, creative, novel, and well argued positions of DMWW, as unsupported by Iowa law and unlikely to be adopted by the Supreme Court, if I did not certify these questions.”

State Activities

[Some Idaho dairies to be regulated as public water systems](#)

Capital Press

Idaho dairies with 25 or more people on site will now be regulated as public water systems by Idaho DEQ in accordance with the Clean Water act. Teaming up with the Idaho Dairymen’s Association, the state Department of Environmental Quality has begun the process of bringing large dairies that qualify under the regulatory umbrella of public water systems.

[Farmers step up to reduce fertilizer runoff and toxic algae in Lake Erie](#)

cleveland.com

The pathway to a summer without toxic algae on Lake Erie remains elusive, but experts are optimistic about several programs designed to reduce algae-feeding phosphorus runoff into the lake. One program provides \$17.5 million to farmers in the lake’s western basin. It supports pollution-control efforts such as planting cover crops, creating buffer strips of trees and prairie grasses, and installing drainage-control structures. The fund was intended to last for five years, but has become so popular that it could be consumed in one.

[ISDA Launches State Nutrient Reduction Strategy](#)

Inside Indiana Business

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture has released a statewide strategy aimed at improving water quality in Indiana, the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. The State Nutrient Reduction Strategy has been developed over several years following a call to action by the Environmental Protection Agency.

[Farmers Embrace Cover Crops To Improve Soil, Reduce Runoff](#)

Vermont Public Radio

The sight of bare soil and chopped down corn stalks might become rarer in Vermont, as farmers plant more winter cover crops. Agriculture officials say the practice can improve soil health and protect water quality by preventing nutrient run off.

[Task force: Here's how we fix Iowa's water quality](#)

Des Moines Register

A task force designated to find solutions to Iowa's water quality problems says the state should offer low-interest loans or grants for farm improvements tied to conservation efforts that could help clean up waterways.

[Governor’s water quality plan unfair to urban taxpayers](#)

Des Moines Register

For good reasons, Iowans are asking many questions about Gov. Terry Branstad’s plan for cleaning up the state’s waterways. But no one is asking this very important one: Why should Iowa’s urban residents bear most of the cost of fixing pollution problems caused by the national and international demand for the state’s agricultural bounty?

Regional and Local Activities

[New Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan for Pennsylvania will fall partly on shoulders of farmers](#)

Lancaster Online

Under “immense pressure” from the federal government for not keeping up with pledges to clean up waters that drain into the Chesapeake Bay, Pennsylvania officials Thursday launched a new cleanup plan that focuses considerably on farmers. Other linchpins of what state officials are calling a bay cleanup “reboot,” is increased use of high-impact, low-cost conservation measures on farmland, accelerated plantings of vegetation and trees along streams and getting communities to stem stormwater runoff.

[Harmful Lake Erie algal blooms worsened by power plant pollution](#)

Midwest Energy News

The number of severe algal blooms in Lake Erie will likely double during the next century, according to new research from The Ohio State University. Although fertilizers from farms played a major part in last year’s record-breaking algae bloom in Lake Erie, climate change is also a driver, reported Noel Aloysius of Ohio State and Hans Paerl of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The two researchers spoke at last month’s meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco. Moreover, power plants help create conditions that are conducive for algal blooms, researchers say.

[Five Cape Cod Communities Receiving EPA Technical Assistance to Address Nitrogen Pollution](#)

EPA News Release

With funding from EPA’s Southeast New England Program for coastal watershed restoration (SNEP), EPA is investigating innovative treatment technologies to help control the discharge of nitrogen from groundwater to Cape Cod waters. One of these innovative technologies is called a “Permeable Reactive Barrier” (PRB), a technology that may be able to intercept and mitigate nitrogen reaching Cape Cod water bodies. EPA chose sites in the five Cape communities for preliminary investigation to explore their potential as suitable sites for PRB installations.

Research and Studies

[Researcher offers recommendations from manure study](#)

Capital Press

University of Idaho Extension soils scientist Amber Moore has completed the third year of an eight-year crop rotational study assessing the crop and soil affects of long-term manure applications. Moore recently released her first tentative grower recommendations based on the study and intends to publish them this spring in a UI Extension bulletin. “Nobody really knew what too much (manure) was, and nobody really knew what was going to happen if you applied too much,” Moore said. “We’re understanding the story so much better than before.”