



## **Healthy Waters Coalition Update**

### **July 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 June and July.*

### **National Activities**

#### [USDA, Interior Announce More than \\$47 Million in Investments for Water Conservation, Drought Response & Agriculture Operations Across the West](#)

##### *USDA Press Release*

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Interior today announced more than \$47 million in investments to help water districts and producers on private working lands better conserve water resources. The funds include \$15 million in USDA funds and \$32.6 million from the Bureau of Reclamation for local projects to improve water and energy efficiency and provide a strengthened federal response to ongoing and potential drought across 13 states in the West.

#### [From Kellogg's to Unilever, A Quiet Revolution in Sustainable Farming](#)

##### *GreenBiz*

From Nebraska to Ohio, a quiet revolution is happening. It's manifest in the reduced fertilizer use and better yields from taller, fuller plants on Miller's farm: Sustainable farming has taken root among farmers of roughly half of the U.S. row-crop acreage. "We cut our nitrogen amounts by 25 percent give or take this year," Miller said, after describing his use of so-called split application of nutrients and planting cover crops of rye and oats on his fields in the off season to replenish nutrients naturally and improve the soil's water retention.

#### [Status of Efforts to Address Nonpoint Source Water Pollution through the Section 319 Program](#)

##### *Government Accountability Office News Release*

From fiscal years 2011 through 2014, the most recent years for which complete data were available, states awarded at least 3,080 projects under the section 319 program for addressing nonpoint source

water pollution, which comes from such sources as runoff from farms, managed forests, and urban areas.

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

#### [Lake Erie, S. Florida Algae Crises Share Common Toxins and Causes](#)

*Toledo Blade*

Several parallels exist between the putrid algae that has sickened South Florida and the green goop that has appeared in western Lake Erie nearly every summer since 1995. Florida's Lake Okeechobee and western Lake Erie are both huge, but shallow, bodies of water. That shallowness keeps Lake Okeechobee warm year-round. It allows western Lake Erie to warm up relatively quickly each spring.

#### [Trading Pollution Credits to Try to Fix Lake Erie's Toxic Bloom Problem](#)

*Michigan Public Radio*

The Great Lakes Commission just launched a new pilot program with Michigan, Ohio, Indiana and Ontario. It'll be a trading program for phosphorus, and they're calling it the [Erie P Market](#).

#### [Wastewater Treatment Plants Meet Bay Goals 10 Years Early](#)

*The Chesapeake Bay Journal*

The challenges facing the Chesapeake restoration effort often seem daunting, but recent data provide some good news: One group of polluters has done more than its share so far to clean up its act. Sewage treatment plants in the watershed have upgraded their operations so much that they are meeting the pollution reduction goal set for them in 2025. That's right — according to figures from the Environmental Protection Agency, it appears that collectively they're 10 years ahead of schedule in reducing the amounts of nutrients they're discharging into the Bay.

#### [Hogan Administration Eyes Relaxing Maryland Farm Pollution Regulation](#)

*The Chesapeake Bay Journal*

Maryland agriculture officials said Tuesday they are looking to relax a four-year-old regulation aimed at reducing farm runoff pollution into the Chesapeake Bay after farmers and some municipal sewage agencies complained about the costs of complying. The regulation, which took effect July 1, affects mainly dairy farmers and municipal wastewater agencies that generate treated sewage sludge, also known as biosolids.

#### [Chesapeake Bay Oxygen Levels Rise to Second-highest Since 1985](#)

*The Baltimore Sun*

Recent reports have shown growing populations of blue crabs, striped bass and anchovies in the Chesapeake Bay, and a fundamental environmental barometer is explaining why: Oxygen levels in the estuary are among the highest in three decades.

#### [Nitrogen Pollution Reductions Lagging, EPA Warns](#)

*Chesapeake Bay Journal*

The Chesapeake Bay cleanup effort has fallen behind by almost 25 percent in reducing a key pollutant because of lagging progress in Pennsylvania and New York, federal regulators warned Friday.

## **Research and Studies**

### [Regional Effects of Agricultural Conservation Practices on Nutrient Transport in the Upper Mississippi River Basin](#)

*Environmental Science & Technology*

Despite progress in the implementation of conservation practices, related improvements in water quality have been challenging to measure in larger river systems. In this paper we quantify these downstream effects by applying the empirical U.S. Geological Survey water-quality model SPARROW to investigate whether spatial differences in conservation intensity were statistically correlated with variations in nutrient loads. The results provide empirical evidence at the regional scale that conservation practices have had a larger statistically detectable effect on nitrogen than on phosphorus loadings in streams and rivers of the Upper Mississippi Basin.

### [Wastewater is Key to Reducing Nitrogen Pollution](#)

*Scientific American*

Beyond farming changes, municipalities in recent years have increasingly focused on improving how wastewater, or sewage, is treated. Upgrading wastewater treatment facilities as well as household septic systems can be expensive, but such measures can dramatically return bodies of water to health. "Wastewater treatment is clearly part of the solution, especially in limiting outflow of nitrogen to estuaries," says Jan Willem Erisman, a professor of integrated nitrogen studies and CEO of the Louis Bolk Institute in the Netherlands. He notes that roughly one half of nitrogen that is lost to the environment when humans excrete what they eat can be reduced by proper wastewater treatment.

### [Researchers Predict Average 'Dead Zone' for Gulf of Mexico in 2016](#)

*Phys Org*

A University of Michigan researcher and colleagues from several institutions are forecasting an average but still large "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico this year. The forecast calls for an oxygen-depleted, or hypoxic, region of 5,898 square miles, an area roughly the size of Connecticut and similar to the past several years. The forecast was released today by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, which sponsors the work.

### [Iowa State Research Shows Perennials Would Reduce Nutrient Runoff to the Gulf of Mexico's Dead Zone](#)

*Iowa State University News Service*

A new study from an Iowa State University agronomist shows that an increase in perennial bioenergy grasses throughout the Corn Belt would lead to a significant reduction in nitrogen moving down the Mississippi River and into the Gulf of Mexico.







