Michigan League of Conservation Voters - National Wildlife Federation

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**Conservation Groups: Michigan Can do More to Protect Lake Erie, Curb Harmful Algal Blooms**

ANN ARBOR, MICH.—The National Wildlife Federation and Michigan League of Conservation Voters today urged the state of Michigan to bolster its plan to protect Lake Erie from harmful algal blooms like the 2014 bloom that left more than 400,000 people without access to safe drinking water and the largest bloom on record this year. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality issued the plan in October, following the Western Lake Erie Basin Collaborative Agreement signed by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, Ohio Gov. John Kasich, and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne in June to reduce phosphorus into Lake Erie by at least 40 percent to significantly reduce harmful algal blooms. The comment period on the plan closed yesterday.

The state’s plan falls short of what’s needed to help heal Lake Erie, according to the National Wildlife Federation and Michigan League of Conservation Voters. The groups urged the state to strengthen its plan by including a more comprehensive strategy to reduce nutrient pollution, increase monitoring, research and assessment, and create a detailed timeline for getting the work done.

Read Michigan’s plan: <http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wrd-western-lake-erie_503547_7.pdf>

Read comments submitted to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality by the National Wildlife Federation at <http://bit.ly/1XYEFSE> and Michigan League of Conservation Voters at <http://bit.ly/1jM3rbj>.

Responding to the plan, the National Wildlife Federation and Michigan League of Conservation Voters issued the following statements today:

“The plan is a step in the right direction—but more needs to be done,” **said Mike Shriberg, regional executive director for the National Wildlife Federation’s Great Lakes Regional Center**. “The people who depend on Lake Erie for their drinking water, jobs, and way of life deserve to know that Michigan is doing all it can to put an end to this environmental and economic threat.”

“The draft plan to address algae blooms in Lake Erie is a missed opportunity to identify real solutions that will protect our Great Lakes and water quality throughout Michigan,” **said** **Lisa Wozniak, executive director for Michigan LCV.** “The MDEQ’s recommendations fall back on past measures to protect our clean water that do not measure up to the severity of the problem plaguing Lake Erie and putting our clean water at risk. We urge the MDEQ to improve their plan so that it truly protects our Great Lakes and all Michiganders who count on access to clean water.”

Runoff pollution occurs when rain and snowmelt wash excess fertilizers and manure high in phosphorus off farm fields and into rivers, streams and ultimately inland lakes and Lake Erie, where they feed explosive algal growth that can poison drinking water, harm fish and wildlife, and hurt recreation and tourism. Runoff pollution from cities, failing septic systems, and sewage overflows also contribute to harmful algal blooms.

Scientists in the United States and Canada have called for phosphorus reductions of at least 40 percent into the Western Lake Erie to reduce the problem—a level of reduction that will only be achieved if states like Michigan with tributaries that drain to the lake take more aggressive action.

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