

Alliance for the Great Lakes – Michigan League of Conservation Voters – National Wildlife Federation

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Groups to Gov. Snyder: State Plan Fails to Adequately Address Harmful Algal Blooms

ANN ARBOR, MICH. (February 2, 2016) – Conservation groups are calling on Gov. Rick Snyder to take more aggressive action to combat harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie, following the recent release of the state of Michigan’s plan to reduce runoff pollution into the Lake. Michigan, along with Ohio and Ontario, agreed in June to reduce phosphorus into Lake Erie by at least 40 percent, the minimum amount scientists say is needed to reduce the resurgence of toxic algae that has closed beaches, hurt tourism, and contaminated drinking water. The recently released plan explains how the state of Michigan intends to achieve its pollution reduction goals.

The plan fails to provide any meaningful information on how the state of Michigan will apply its programs and resources to meet the phosphorus reduction goal. The state’s plan focuses on research and assessment—yet is short on action to curb runoff and reduce harmful algal blooms.

Commenting on the state’s plan, conservation groups said:

“Michigan DEQ’s plan fails to fully address Lake Erie’s algae problem and falls short of meeting Governor Snyder’s goal of reducing runoff pollution levels into our waterways by 40 percent,” said **Lisa Wozniak, executive director for Michigan LCV**. “Last year’s algae bloom was the largest ever recorded on Lake Erie. Michigan needs new strategies to solve this chronic problem that continues to threaten the health of the thousands of Michiganders who depend on Lake Erie for their drinking water.”

“While we appreciate the state of Michigan putting forward some ideas for protecting Lake Erie, this plan fails to deliver for the people of Michigan, Lake Erie, and our economy,” said **Mike Shriberg, regional executive director of the National Wildlife Federation’s Great Lakes office**. “Gov. Snyder needs to protect our drinking water and implement an action plan that cuts nutrient runoff and significantly reduces harmful algal blooms. The current plan is mostly a recognition of past efforts without any significant new proposals. The limited nature of this plan pales in comparison to the threat harmful algal blooms pose to our drinking water, recreation and way of life in the Great Lakes.”

“The Alliance for the Great Lakes appreciates how quickly the State of Michigan has moved to deliver on last summer’s regional commitment to restoring the health of western Lake Erie,” said **Molly Flanagan, Alliance for the Great Lakes vice president for policy**. “However, the plan released by Michigan doesn’t include enough detail to ensure that phosphorus pollution is reduced to target levels. The state should go back to the drawing board and deliver a serious plan to the citizens of the region.”

Read the Michigan plan at:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/wrd-western-lake-erie_503547_7.pdf

The resurgence of harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie has become a top environmental and economic concern for the region. In the summer of 2015, Lake Erie witnessed the largest algal bloom on record. In 2014, a harmful algal bloom in Western Lake Erie poisoned the drinking water for nearly three days for more than 400,000 people in and around Toledo, Ohio.

Scientists say the leading cause of harmful algal blooms is farm field runoff pollution, which 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. These blooms 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.

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