



JOHN R. KASICH
GOVERNOR • STATE OF OHIO

Communication Department

AGGRESSIVE NEW ACTION TO IMPROVE LAKE ERIE WATER QUALITY

Governor Kasich Issues Executive Order to Further Tackle Nutrient Runoff into Lake Erie

Governor John R. Kasich today signed an executive order to initiate aggressive new action by state agencies and their partners toward further reduction of nutrient runoff from watersheds in Lake Erie's western basin. Nutrient runoff from agricultural fertilizer applications is considered a leading contributor to harmful algal blooms that have plagued the western end of the lake. With the executive order signed by Gov. Kasich today, state agencies are directed to take the following actions:

Targeting Watersheds With High Levels of Phosphorus: Based on water quality monitoring data from the Ohio EPA, eight watersheds within the western basin of Lake Erie must be considered for designation under state law as "Watersheds in Distress" due to their high nutrient levels, especially levels of phosphorus from fertilizer runoff and soil erosion. Included in the governor's executive order are all or portions of the following watersheds:

- Platter Creek
- Little Flat Rock Creek
- Little Auglaize River
- Eagle Creek
- Auglaize River
- Blanchard River
- St. Marys River
- Ottawa River

The director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture will make an initial consideration of these watersheds and then, following the protocol established by state law, seek consent of the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission to officially designate all or portions of each as a "Watershed in Distress."

Putting in Place Nutrient Management Plans to Reduce Phosphorus: Upon consent by the Ohio Soil and Water Conservation Commission to make "Watershed in Distress" designations, the directors of the state Department of Agriculture, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Agency are directed to recommend a rules package that establishes nutrient management requirements for all agricultural nutrient sources. These include rules for the use, storage, handling and control of nutrients and the development of nutrient management plans for all agricultural land and operations within each designated watershed. A "Watershed in Distress" designation can be removed only after the director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture has confirmed the sustained recovery, restoration and mitigation of factors leading to the original designation.

Building on Earlier Kasich Administration Efforts to Improve Water Quality in Ohio: Actions called for by the executive order are in step with a number of other efforts by state agencies and their partners to improve water quality throughout Ohio. In recent years, a special focus of these efforts has been on Lake Erie and its tributaries, with programs aimed at reducing the threat of algal blooms and eliminating the open-lake disposal of dredge material. Ohio has invested more than \$3 billion since July 2011 in Lake Erie and its watershed to improve drinking water and wastewater facilities, monitor water quality, plant cover crops, recycle dredge material, install controlled drainage structures on farm fields and fix faulty septic systems.

In early 2015, Gov. Kasich signed legislation to tackle water quality in and around the lake's western basin by making it illegal to put manure or fertilizer on frozen, snow covered, or rain soaked ground unless proper farming techniques are used; eliminate the disposal of dredge material in Lake Erie by 2020; and modify new and existing wastewater discharge permits for major wastewater plants while expanding monitoring and continuing to limit phosphorus in state waters. Ohio also reached an agreement with two of its Lake Erie neighbors, the State of Michigan and Province of Ontario, to achieve a 40 percent reduction in the amount of phosphorus entering the lake's western basin by 2025.

