

Lake Erie Foundation

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## **Lake Erie Algae Forecast needs to add progress report on phosphorous reductions**

Lake Erie Foundation: Government and universities do a great job on forecasting and tracking algae. They need to add reporting that states where and how much phosphorous is being reduced so that there will be less algae.

Port Clinton, Ohio, Thursday July 12

It is official, scientists have now predicted how much algae will be in Lake Erie in 2018. The news is that 2018 will not be a record algae year, but there will be a substantial bloom. The annual forecast along with biweekly NOAA Lake Erie Algae bulletins, Ohio Beach Guard, and other information help Lake Erie water users keep up to date on current lake conditions and this is one of the best notification systems in the U.S.

While this information is valuable and appreciated, the Lake Erie Foundation believes the forecast should be accompanied by an accountability and progress report that shows how each western Lake Erie tributary is reducing or increasing phosphorous discharges into Lake Erie.

Scientists tell us that a 40% phosphorus reduction is needed to substantially reduce harmful algae in Lake Erie. They also tell us that most of the phosphorous entering Lake Erie (80 to 90%) is coming from the Maumee and Detroit Rivers, and in the case of the Maumee an estimated 25% of the phosphorus load is from land application of manure.

By reducing the amount of manure entering the watershed, we can reduce the amount of phosphorus, just as was the case many decades ago when phosphorus was removed from laundry detergent. The land application of manure often replaces commercial fertilizer for crops. But commercial fertilizer is recommended to be applied at the crop/agronomic need, while manure can be applied at about four times that amount. This is more than what the crop needs for optimal growth and results in soil saturation and phosphorus runoff to Lake Erie.

To underscore the critical need to address manure runoff, we need to consider that the number of mid and large size animal feeding operations in Ohio continues to climb thus producing more manure and runoff. Just in the last year, Ohio permitted 4,500 more cows in the Maumee watershed which is about the equivalent of land applying 90,000 humans waste. Ohio is currently considering a permit for 4,800 more hogs.

We believe there are several ways Ohio can address this issue:

1. Require all new and expanding mid and large size animal feeding operations to apply phosphorus at the commercial fertilizer crop need.

2. Within the next three years , require existing mid and large facilities to be limited to soil phosphorus that is the agronomic/crop need amount.
3. Ask the federal government, Ohio and other states should invest in manure technology that can reuse and/or treat manure instead of the excessive application practices used today Ohio should incorporate recommendations one and two into the nutrient management plans of the newly designated Lake Erie distressed watersheds. We feel Ohio should also be mindful that as long as the number of cows, hogs and poultry continues to increase, without addressing the current manure application excessive soil phosphorous amounts, Lake Erie will continue to get greener.

The information about what we should expect to see in Lake Erie's waters this year is helpful, but we feel it must be combined with a report on where the phosphorus is coming from, what is working to address the problems, and how well we are doing with those efforts, along with updates on manure management .

Visit the Lake Erie Foundation web site at [lakeeriefoudnation.org](http://lakeeriefoudnation.org)

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*The Lake Erie Foundation advocates for sustainable Lake Erie water quality.*

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*The Lake Erie Foundation seeks to create and maintain a healthy  
Lake Erie now and forever as defined by drinkable water,  
recreational contact and edible fish.*