



Thames River

PHOSPHORUS REDUCTION COLLABORATIVE

December 7, 2018

Projects identified to address Lake Erie algae

Funding awarded for testing phosphorus reduction technology

London, Ontario - The Thames River Phosphorus Reduction Collaborative (PRC) has chosen five projects from 11 proposals to develop and test technologies that intercept and remove phosphorus from agricultural runoff. Phosphorus entering the system contributes to the growth of harmful algal blooms in the Thames River and Lake Erie.

“Our Government is fully committed to supporting initiatives which improve the environmental health of our lakes and rivers, including the Lake Erie Basin,” said Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. “These products show ingenuity and are a step forward in finding innovative solutions to help agriculture be more sustainable and contribute to the health of our waterways.”

“Our government understands the importance of protecting our waters, as do farmers and other stewards of the land, such as those behind these innovative local projects to benefit the Lake Erie watershed,” said Ernie Hardeman, Ontario’s Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. “This is one of several promising water quality improvement efforts our government is supporting through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership.”

“We are encouraged by the progress we’re making and grateful for the support we’ve received as we work toward finding practical, affordable options to better protect the quality of water in our streams, rivers and lakes,” said Mark Reusser, co-chair of the collaborative and Vice-President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA).

A total of \$400,000 has been awarded to projects that will gauge how efficiently each technology works in removing phosphorus from water that is leaving agricultural fields and drains.

Testing sites will be set up in several agricultural fields in the Thames River watershed, the Lake Erie Basin and in two municipal pumping stations near Chatham and London. The testing will continue through the next three years.

Agricultural researchers and farmers have made great strides in identifying better practices to retain phosphorus on the land, including applying fertilizer more efficiently, improving soil health and reducing erosion. These best practices are the first line of defence in reducing phosphorus loss into waterways. However, as big storms and snow melts become more intense and more frequent, some phosphorus will be washed away.

.../2

The Thames River PRC focuses on the last line of defence: intercepting and removing phosphorus from runoff at the edge of fields and in the drainage system during and following large rain and snow melts. Scientific studies have shown that phosphorus loss spikes during the winter and early spring.

“The Mayors of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative look forward to working with all partners on the installation and testing of these innovative technologies. These measures hold great potential to help reduce phosphorus loads into our rivers and lakes, and so help ensure a healthy Lake Erie, for this and future generations.” said John Dickert, President and CEO of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (GLSLCI).

More than \$130,000 in cash and in-kind contributions are being invested in the project from the OFA, GLSLCI, local OFA chapters, the cities of London and Chatham-Kent, Bluewater Pipe and Ontario Pork.

The Thames River PRC is a voluntary initiative cited in the Canada Ontario Lake Erie Action Plan aimed at contributing to the commitment made in 2016 between Canada and the U.S. to a 40 per cent reduction in the total and soluble reactive phosphorus entering Lake Erie from the Thames in spring.

The group represents agricultural producers, municipalities, conservation authorities, First Nations, agribusinesses, the drainage sector, and environmental non-governmental organizations. Details of the collaborative, its work and a full list of steering committee members are at www.thamesriverprc.com

The Thames River PRC is administered by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative (www.glslicities.org).

This project is funded through Environment and Climate Change Canada’s Great Lakes Protection Initiative and through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership (the Partnership), a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council assists in the delivery of the Partnership in Ontario.

Additional information on project participants and their technologies is available in the attached backgrounder.

Contact:

Mark Reusser
Vice-President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture
Phone: 519-821-8883
Email: Mark.Reusser@ofa.on.ca

Charlie Lalonde
Project Co-ordinator
Phone: (519) 993-0877
Email: Charles.Lalonde73@gmail.com

Sarah Rang
Deputy Director,
Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative
Phone: 647-521-6718
Email: sarah.rang@glslcities.org

