

GREAT LAKES BUSINESS NETWORK

Dear Governor DeWine, Governor Whitmer and Premier Ford,

On behalf of the Great Lakes Business Network, we support the commitments you have each made for a clean Lake Erie. We ask that you now leverage your individual interests into a regional commitment to work together in addressing the issues facing Lake Erie. A commitment to take results-oriented actions with measurable outcomes will provide leadership for the region and signal a willingness to work together to make definitive progress towards the 40% nutrient reduction target by 2025.

The Great Lakes Business Network (GLBN) is a coalition of over 170 business leaders who help set the agenda for protecting the health and vitality of the Great Lakes along with the economy, businesses, and communities that depend upon them. As business leaders, we understand the ongoing threat to our health, environment and economy caused by harmful algal blooms in the Lake Erie basin and we encourage your administrations, as well as federal leaders, to find systematic solutions that are unified, aggressive and measurable. Inaction will only make the problem worse and more costly for businesses, tax payers and communities. We appreciate and support the interest that has been expressed by each administration in making clean water a priority. The GLBN works to protect the Great Lakes and other inland bodies of water to ensure that every person has access to clean water and our Great Lakes economy continues to thrive.

Much is at stake in protecting Lake Erie.

- In 2011, nearly \$71 million in economic benefits were lost because of the harmful algal bloom event in Toledo, Ohio. Annually, the boating recreation economy in Ohio generates \$3.5 billion while the total tourism-related economy generates \$15 billion, including support for 127,852 jobs and \$1.9 billion in taxes.
- In Michigan's Lake Erie watershed, wildlife recreation creates over 55,000 jobs and adds more than \$2.4 billion to the regional economy.
- Without steps to reduce nutrient reduction, it is estimated that harmful algal blooms could cost Ontario \$272 million over the next 30 years, including a \$110 million hit to the tourism industry.

As business leaders, we respect the inherent responsibility to protect the Great Lakes as a vital resource for all. We are held accountable for our bottom line and are required to meet standards and regulations to ensure that we are not compromising critical resources such as the Great Lakes. This same level of accountability and high standards should be required of any sector found to be contributing to this devastating problem, including to the agricultural industry.

To meet the 40% reduction goal, there should be a combination of policy and incentive-based innovative solutions that are measurable, that result in water quality improvements, and include strong monitoring and accountability. Additionally, we believe results-oriented programming should align public investment with water quality outcomes. Communities and businesses can no longer afford to absorb funding programs with no accountable metrics for improvement in Lake Erie water quality. We need metrics to measure outcomes and the willingness for all to take responsibility for actions that affect the Lake.

Specifically, we encourage you to take the following actions in each of your states and province, respectively:

OHIO

1. Support the Maumee Watershed Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) project to quantify all local nutrient sources and secure local plans to meet nutrient reductions targets for the Maumee River Basin. The Maumee Watershed Nutrient TMDL is an important tool in the Ohio Domestic Action Plan, Ohio's plan intended to meet the Annex 4 phosphorus target for Lake Erie.
2. Support funding for the H2Ohio Program, a statewide water quality program designed to reduce harmful algal blooms, improve wastewater infrastructure, and prevent lead contamination.
3. Support initiatives that track soil test levels for fields utilizing livestock manure application to ensure that manure is applied only to fields with low soil test levels of phosphorous. To meet this objective, Ohio should also prioritize support for handling and transport of manure to fields with low phosphorous levels for application.
4. Support projects that integrate implementation of agricultural best management practices with field to stream monitoring to better connect field practices with water quality outcomes.

MICHIGAN

1. Support strengthening the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) with improvements to tracking and linkages to water quality outcomes.

2. Secure funding for agricultural best management practices that reduce nutrient runoff and ensure farmers adopt practices needed to move along a permanent continuum of the “ladder of conservation” including;
 - a. Prioritizing funding for best management practices in watersheds with approved TMDLs.
 - b. Determining the associated water quality outcomes, tracking the adoption of land management practices and monitoring how they impact downstream nutrient reductions to ensure targets are being met.
3. Develop projections, benchmarks and thresholds in the Michigan Adaptive Management Plan to prompt evaluation of progress towards meeting nutrient reduction goals.
4. Collaborate with Ohio in the development of the Maumee Watershed Nutrient TMDL for the Michigan portion of the Maumee River Basin and the River Raisin for a basin wide TMDL that quantifies all local nutrient sources and secures local plans to meet nutrient reductions. Apply the methodology being used for the Maumee Watershed TMDL to establish the total phosphorus TMDL for the River Raisin tributary.
5. Ensure that the state is doing all it can to stop animal waste from polluting Michigan waters including banning all manure application on frozen, snow covered or saturated ground.

ONTARIO

1. Develop and release the long-overdue workplan that spells out how the Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie will meet the 40% reduction target for harmful algal blooms. The detailed workplan was promised for February 2019, and is now more than two years overdue. Without a clearly defined workplan with clear measurables, it is not possible to track progress and know if the necessary steps are being taken to meet Ontario’s 40% reduction by 2025 commitment.
2. Invest in financial and educational programs that assist Ontario farmers with implementing agricultural best management practices that mitigate nutrient losses, with additional components that track, monitor and report progress in the public realm to ensure the funds lead to positive results.

Cleaning up Lake Erie is a regional and national priority. We encourage you to work together to uphold the regional commitment to restore Lake Erie and accelerate actions to stop harmful algal blooms so that we can protect our drinking water, public health, fish and wildlife and economy.

We look forward to working with your administrations and fellow businesses to protect Lake Erie and our economy. We are excited about the possibilities in forging a new path to clean water.