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First-of-its-kind report on Lake Erie algal blooms released by Great Lakes Business Network

The Great Lakes Business Network (GLBN) released a [first-of-its-kind report](#) today addressing Lake Erie algal blooms and proposed recommendations for remediation in Ohio, Michigan and Ontario.

The Great Lakes Business Network report is being released ahead of the [Harmful Algal Blooms forecast](#) for Lake Erie.

Algal blooms form as a green, slimy substance in the lake and are caused by nutrient run-off, with the most problematic contributions coming from fertilizer applications and other waste from agri-businesses that fail to properly control runoff or follow best practices.

Failure to control a critical contributor to harmful algal blooms passes the expense from the businesses which produce nutrient pollution to the businesses harmed by it. Tourism, fishing, and outdoor recreation industries, as well as water treatment facilities, face increased operating costs, lost revenue, and decreased value.

Some highlights from the report include:

- Ohio: The 2011 harmful algal bloom cost Ohio \$71 million in economic losses, which could happen again without reducing the nutrients that produce blooms.
- Michigan: In Michigan's Lake Erie watershed, wildlife recreation creates over 55,000 jobs and adds more than \$2.4 billion to the regional economy. Harmful algal blooms put those jobs and economic activity at risk.
- Ontario: Without reducing the nutrients that produce harmful algal blooms, 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.

"If it weren't for Lake Erie, we wouldn't be the place that we are," said **Josh Scott**, owner of the **Cleveland Outpost**. "As the algal blooms continue to occur, the appeal and draw of the lake to outdoor enthusiasts and visitors declines. Although Cleveland hasn't yet had a large algal bloom event with the same impacts as Toledo in recent years, that doesn't mean it's not in our future."

Businesses are recommending practical solutions to reduce harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie, including the collaboration of Ohio, Michigan, and Ontario in meeting their commitments to reducing harmful algal blooms in the western basin of Lake Erie by 40% by 2025.

"There is reputational damage to the area and the lake due to the long-term problems it has been facing," said **Darryl MacMillan**, vice president of business development for **Pelee Island Winery** in Ontario. "When there is a bloom event, some are reluctant to trust drinking water, and monthly water testing is simply a way of life for Pelee Island residents. As a business at the epicenter of this, it has to be dealt with."

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“Our business is heavily dependent on the conditions of the lake and its fish to support the needs of our customers,” said **Mike Briskey**, owner and operator of **Luna Pier Harbour Club** in Michigan. “As perch fishing begins to diminish in quality and quantity, it directly impacts our Marina through reduced occupancy and fewer sales. Many customers of the marina use the nearby beach, but when a harmful algal bloom occurs and the winds are onshore, the beach and shallow waters become unusable and potentially toxic.”

Policy recommendations include:

Ohio:

- Support the Maumee Watershed Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load project to document all local nutrient sources and establish nutrient reduction plans that meet established targets.
- Support H2Ohio funding and accountability, including projects to implement agricultural best management practices that include field to stream monitoring to better connect field practices with water quality outcomes.
- Support initiatives that ensure manure is applied only to fields with low soil test levels of phosphorus.

Michigan:

- Collaborate with Ohio in the development of the Maumee Watershed Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load project for the Michigan portion of the Maumee River Basin to quantify local nutrient sources and establish nutrient reduction plans that meet established targets.
- Support strengthening of the Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assessment Program (MAEAP) with improvements that link practices on the field to water quality outcomes.
- 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:

- 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.
- Invest in financial and educational programs that assist Ontario farmers with implementing agricultural best management practices that mitigate nutrient losses and track, monitor and report progress.

The [Great Lakes Business Network](#) is a network of more than 170 business leaders committed to protecting the Great Lakes region from threats to the natural environment. We strive to be the leading business voice for protecting the health and vitality of the Great Lakes and the economy, businesses and communities that depend upon them.

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