



Fall Newsletter

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Lake Erie Toxic Algae Expected to be Worse this Year

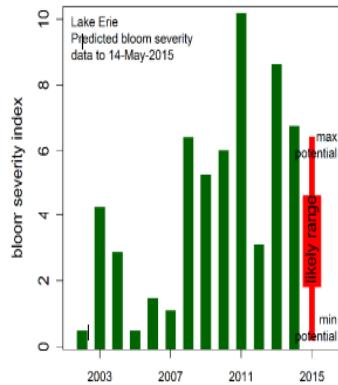


Figure 1. Projected bloom compared to previous years. The wide bar is the likely range of severity based on data from the last 15 years. The narrow bar is the potential range of severity, indicating a 2014 sized event remains possible.

The National Oceanic and Administration (NOAA) predicts that Toxic Algae on Lake Erie to be worse than last year and attributes the growth to the heavy precipitation during the first half of 2015. On 10-point scale, NOAA estimates the algal bloom will range from 8.1 to 9.5; a severity above 5.0 is considered of high concern. Last year, the bloom was rated a 6.5, which was severe enough to force more than 400,000 in the Toledo area to go without water for several days. Last year, beaches were closed across the Lake all the way to Pelee Island in Canada.

In response to the 2015 Lake Erie Algae Forecast, Jen Miller, Director of Sierra Club Ohio, stated the following:

“The combination of unsustainable agricultural practices and climate change is a double whammy for Lake Erie and water systems statewide. With more severe rain events and flash flooding, fertilizer and manure is oozing off of farms and into our watersheds, which is threatening clean water resources and public health.

Governor Kasich and the Ohio General Assembly need to do more. Legislation passed this spring, Senate Bill 1, only placed limits of agricultural run-off during the winter. As we see increasingly wet springs and summers because of climate change, farm run-off needs to be regulated year-round.

Given that water quality issues are not just plaguing Lake Erie but also Buckeye Lake, Grand Lake St. Mary, Hoover Reservoir, and waterways statewide, clean water protections need to be enacted statewide.

The public also deserves the assurance that their tap water is safe, and currently testing for microcystin, a toxin found in cyanobacteria, is only voluntary. Testing for all toxins associated with animal and human waste and toxic algae should be made mandatory for public drinking water providers in Ohio.

At Sierra Club Ohio, we believe all Ohioans deserve swimmable, drinkable, fishable water all year-round.

So Where Do These Chemicals Come From?

- Farm Fertilizer Run-Off
- Livestock Manure Run-off
- Human Raw Sewage Overflows From Cities' Aging Combined Sewer Infrastructure
- Lawn and Garden Fertilizer Run-Off
- Internal existing lake loads of phosphorus and nitrogen, that get resuspended through natural or human impacts

What can I do to help?

- [Join Sierra Club's Ag & Water Committees](#) to help drive policies and actions towards solutions to toxic algae in Ohio and Lake Erie
- Become trained in Citizen's Water Monitoring, otherwise known as [Sierra Club Water Sentinels](#). Water Sentinels raise the first red flags so that the proper agency can research the problem.
- Become trained in [WARN \(Water Alert Reporting Network\)](#) from the Sierra Club. This program teaches citizens how to visually identify and properly report water contamination incidents.

President Dave Scott Returns to Columbus



Ohio Sierran Dave Scott served as President of the National Sierra Club for two years. Besides thanking him for his excellent service, we had a few questions for him about his experiences.

Ohio Chapter: *the last two years have seen a lot of historic moments in our movement. What moment(s) or successes stand out the most to you?*

The most memorable moment? Speaking to the crowd at last September's People's Climate March, which packed Manhattan streets for four miles with an estimated 400,000 people. We made a statement to the world leaders in New York that day.

Other historic moments? Every day the Keystone Pipeline isn't approved. Few people thought we'd win that fight, and it isn't over until it's over, but experts now agree that averting catastrophic warming means we must leave most fossil fuels in the ground. Last year's celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act were fun, too. I gave a keynote speech at the official event in New Mexico.

OC: *any big changes for the Sierra Club during your two years as president?*

In May, we finished two years of work and adopted a strategic plan to guide the organization, a huge accomplishment. We got a \$30 million renewal this year from Bloomberg Philanthropies for our Beyond Coal Campaign, which Michael Bloomberg called "one of the most successful grass-roots environmental efforts in this country's history." One-third of US coal-fired power

plants are already retired or slated to be, and we want to speed the transition to carbon-free energy. We adopted a clear policy flatly opposing natural gas fracking, as our chapters urged us to do. We've had back-to-back annual budgets of \$100 million. Membership is growing, and we've taken strong steps towards making the Sierra Club the more diverse organization that it needs to be.

OC: what do you want our members to know most about your time as Sierra Club President?

It's an indescribable honor to hold the same position that John Muir first held, and to serve on a board that Ansel Adams, Justice Douglas, Edgar Wayburn and David Brower once served. The quality of people and the level of commitment in this organization are incredibly inspiring. I'm glad to have met with dozens of state chapters in my time as President. And to have spent time in beautiful places like the Mojave Desert, Yosemite, San Francisco's Golden Gate National Recreation Area and many others that our activism helped to protect.

OC: care to tell us a little bit about SC's new President?

Aaron Mair is our first African-American President, and a good friend. He's a big, booming-voiced bear of a guy, a former military leader and a family man who is passionately committed to environmental and social justice. He'll do a great job.

OC: what are the biggest challenges and opportunities for the Club looking forward over the next 2 years?

Internally, we've embarked on a major effort to transform our organization look more like America. We've also created new opportunities for activist engagement with our www.addup.org website. Externally, we've already lost years on climate that we didn't have. EPA action to cut power plant pollution is crucial, and those who seek to block that can't be

allowed to win. A strong US plan will give us credibility in Paris climate negotiations later this year.

We must turn back congressional efforts to give away our public lands, but there are opportunities. As President, I went to a hearing that resulted in President Obama protecting Colorado's Browns Canyon, and Club activism helped persuade him to protect a million more acres in July alone. With our member's help, we'll get a lot more protected before we're done.

OC: So what's next for you?

I'm stepping back for a bit, enjoying time with my three dogs and doing some writing, but I'll re-engage. I started out as a Friday night hike leader over 20 years ago. No organization gives people more opportunities to do good than the Sierra Club does, or the opportunities to get outside and enjoy nature.

Ohio is Ready for the Clean Power Plan

The Clean Power Plan, which was released by President Obama on Monday, August 3rd, is the biggest environmental victory since the Clear Water Act and Clean Air Act. For the first time, the Federal Government will be regulating carbon pollution, specifically targeting power plants, which accounts for about forty percent of emissions. [A recent survey done by Public Policy Polling](#) on the Clean Power Plan shows Ohioans support reducing carbon emissions.

“Ohioans are celebrating this historic action,” said **Samantha Allen, Ohio Sierra Club Federal Policy Coordinator**. “The Clean Power Plan will save lives in Ohio by reducing carbon pollution and moving us beyond coal. Coal, which generates nearly 70 percent of electricity in Ohio, is a dangerous fuel known to cause major air pollution and negatively impact public health while contributing to climate disruption.” Carbon pollution is the single largest driver of climate disruption, which fuels extreme weather conditions that threatens the health and livelihood of Ohio communities, especially low-income communities and people of color. These communities have a harder time escaping, surviving, and recovering from such extreme weather. By reducing carbon pollution and investing more in efficiency, Ohio’s electric grid will become more stable and communities will become healthier.

In Ohio, the owners of these polluting coal-burning plants and their supporters have been committed to preventing Ohio from lowering electricity bills, creating jobs, and protecting the health of our communities through clean energy investments. Earlier this year, the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio rightfully denied Duke Energy’s request to force Ohio’s businesses and homeowners to bailout a number of old and dirty coal-burning power plants. These facilities are struggling to remain profitable as newer, cleaner sources of energy come online. Ohio’s other electric utilities, like AEP and FirstEnergy, are still waiting on a decision, with FirstEnergy’s coal and nuclear plant bailout proposal estimated to cost customers over \$3 billion.



Ohio's 2030 goal is 1,190 pounds per megawatt-hour, which is an achievable and affordable goal. In order to achieve these standards, Ohio will need to bring back its renewable energy standards, which were dismantled in 2014 by Governor Kasich. [Tell your state legislator that Ohio needs to invest in clean, renewable energy.](#)

To get involved contact: samantha.allen@sierraclub.org

Legislative Update! Fighting Dirty Energy, and Protecting Public Lands

We won several victories during the last budget bill, but more work still needs to be done!

Step in the Right Direction! Toxic Algae

Senate Bill 1 (Sponsor: Gardener, Ohio SD 2) is a critical first step towards preventing more toxic algae in Lake Erie, such as the now infamous toxic algae crisis in late July last year that prevented access to clean drinking water for hundreds of thousands of Ohioans and shut down Toledo businesses for several weeks. The bill prevents the application of fertilizer on frozen farm grounds in the Maumee River Watershed, where phosphorous was running off into Lake Erie and feeding the toxic cyanobacteria.

More work to do: but we still have a long way to go – and farmers are our best hope for a solution. The new law places limits on fertilizer and manure application on fields on frozen ground in the Lake Erie watershed, which is a critical first step. Given our increasingly soggy springs and summers, however, SB1 should be amended to also consider rainsoaked ground, which is the main cause of the increased toxic algae this year in Lake Erie.

Toxic algae occurs all over Ohio, in drinking water sources far beyond Lake Erie, such as Hoover Reservoir, Grand Lake St Mary, Buckeye Lake, and water resources statewide. Banning the application of fertilizer and manure on frozen or rain-soaked farm grounds must be a statewide policy to match the statewide problem. Also, there is still no legal requirement on the books for notifying citizens when microcystin, a toxin from algae, shows up in public drinking water - so now is the time for strong action from the Ohio legislature.

Victory! Stopping Tax Incentives for Dirty Energy

In what seemed eerily familiar to the [bailout requests at PUCO](#), a last minute Senate amendment would have allowed dirty power plants like coal and nuclear to pass off their property taxes on to electric customers in Ohio. According to the Legislative Service Commission, this could have been up to a **\$95B impact** to Ohio electric customers, and a massive handout to dirty energy companies. With just a short timeframe to work with, we developed a rapid-response along with our friends at Ohio Citizen Action to reach out to members as well as the Governor calling for this complicated issue to be discussed during a more deliberate process in the fall. [The Governor line-item vetoed the amendment](#), and [his justification](#) is almost word-for-word the language from a memo sent to legislators by the Ohio Sierra Club.

Victory! No Fracking on Our Favorite Public Lands

A sneaky bill was introduced in the House Natural Resources Committee that would have allowed drillers interested in fracking in state parks, forests, and preserves to bypass a committee, thus “fast-tracking” the process. We worked to educate members of the committee and were successfully able to have those devilish details of the bill taken out of the final version. To date, thanks to our members’ tireless activism on this issue, Ohio’s parks, forests, and nature preserves are still not being fracked.

What were they thinking? Public Transportation funding

We asked repeatedly during the transportation budget and during HB64 for a very modest \$1M addition from state General Revenue Funds to help cover the needs outlined in ODOT's own Transit Needs Study which stated that public transit funding needs to double over the next decade to meet demand. Ohio spends just 63 cents per person annually on public transportation, ranking 47th in the nation. The House added the \$1M in funding, and the

Senate took it back out. However, we will continue to educate legislators on the need for green transportation as Ohio is so far behind most of the rest of the country in that area.

What were they thinking? Riparian Buffer Zones

A bizarre amendment in the state budget allows landowners adjacent to public drinking water reservoirs to trespass, mow and cut trees and vegetation. We asked the Governor to veto this provision as he had done in the past, but he didn't. There is now a proposed bill to overturn the provision, as Cities like Columbus try to figure out how to deal with people cutting down vegetation that is the last line of defense to filter pollutants before they reach public water sources.

This fall promises to have a ton of action at the statehouse particularly on toxic algae and clean energy. If you'd like to get involved with our legislative campaign, please e-mail brian.kunkemoeller@sierraclub.org

Coming to a Forest Near You!

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry's Management Work



Plan for State Forests was released, and just like in years past, includes commercial logging in State Forests across Ohio. This year the Nexus pipeline is proposed to carry fracked gas through Maumee State Forest, and the Division plans to burn tens of thousands of acres – even in places that are enjoyed for

recreation or provides habitat for rare species.

Forests are an important factor in our fight against climate change for multiple reasons. It is a well-known fact that trees absorb carbon dioxide, making forests one of our greatest assets in climate change mitigation. A paper published last year found that, "natural CO₂ sinks...absorb more than half of all anthropogenically emitted CO₂ represent a massive ecosystem service to humankind" (M. R. Raupach et al.: The declining uptake rate of atmospheric CO₂ by land and ocean sinks)

Second, there is an argument to be made that older trees, with their larger mass can hold more carbon than younger, smaller trees. According to a paper published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science, "large, old trees do not act simply as senescent carbon reservoirs but actively fix large amounts of carbon compared to smaller trees; at the extreme, a single big tree can add the same amount of carbon to the forest within a year as is contained in an entire mid-sized tree." Therefore, conducting prescribed burns, in a region where the practice is controversial at best, will limit our state forests ability to absorb larger amounts of carbon in the future.

And while replanting the forest will increase carbon storage in the biota, replacing an older, forest to a younger one, adds more carbon to the atmosphere, through harvesting and timber processing.

State forests, which account for only 1 % of Ohio's land, provide not only an area for recreation and enjoyment, but a carbon sink for emissions. Every bit counts, especially when deforestation is a cause of climate change, and the process of burning and logging releases

carbon pollution into the atmosphere. So do your part today and take action to protect Ohio's forests!

To get involved contact: jen.miller@sierraclub.org