



MIKE DEWINE
GOVERNOR OF OHIO

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Governor DeWine Announces H2Ohio Water Quality Plan

(TOLEDO, Ohio) – Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today unveiled H2Ohio, a comprehensive, data-driven water quality plan to reduce harmful algal blooms, improve wastewater infrastructure, and prevent lead contamination.

“We have a moral obligation to preserve and protect our natural resources,” Governor DeWine said during a speech at the National Museum of the Great Lakes in Toledo. “My H2Ohio plan is a dedicated, holistic water quality strategy with long-lasting solutions to address the causes of Ohio’s water problems, not just the symptoms.”

Governor DeWine’s H2Ohio plan is an investment in targeted solutions to help reduce phosphorus runoff and prevent algal blooms through increased implementation of agricultural best practices and the creation of wetlands; improve wastewater infrastructure; replace failing home septic systems; and prevent lead contamination in high-risk daycare centers and schools. The Ohio General Assembly invested \$172 million in the plan in July, and since then, H2Ohio experts have been developing strategies for long-term, cost-effective, and permanent water quality solutions.

The graphic features a blue vertical banner on the left with the text "H2Ohio Targeted Priorities" and "h2.ohio.gov". Below this is the logo for Mike DeWine, Governor of Ohio, and the website "www.Governor.Ohio.gov". To the right of the banner are four images, each with a corresponding title: a farm with silos and fields for "Reducing Phosphorus", a wetland area for "Creating Wetlands", a septic tank cover for "Addressing Failing Septic Systems", and a water faucet for "Preventing Lead Contamination".

H2Ohio
Targeted
Priorities

h2.ohio.gov

 **MIKE DEWINE**
GOVERNOR OF OHIO

www.Governor.Ohio.gov

Reducing Phosphorus

Creating Wetlands

Addressing Failing Septic Systems

Preventing Lead Contamination

Reducing Agricultural Phosphorus Runoff to Prevent Algal Blooms

The H2Ohio plan will invest substantially to help farmers reduce phosphorus runoff from commercial fertilizer and manure to prevent harmful algal blooms.

Algal blooms in Ohio's lakes, rivers, and streams can threaten drinking water and impact the health of people and animals. Although studies have shown that phosphorus runoff from farms is the primary reason for algal blooms in Lake Erie, Ohio has not previously placed a significant focus on addressing this problem.

"Ohio has supported many programs to help farmers reduce nutrient loss over the years, but the state hasn't done nearly enough, nor have previous plans focused enough, on reducing phosphorus runoff from agriculture," said Governor DeWine. "That changes now."

As a result of intensive scientific and economic studies, H2Ohio identified the 10 most effective and cost-efficient practices that have been proven to reduce agricultural phosphorus runoff. Through a certification process, H2Ohio will provide economic incentives to farmers who develop a nutrient management plan that includes a combination of the best practices listed below:



1

Soil testing:

Testing results give farmers information on where to place fertilizer and fertilizer application rate.



6

Cover crops:

When planted after the main harvest, cover crops reduce erosion, hold nutrients in the soil, and improve soil health.



2

Variable-rate fertilization:

Applying specific fertilizer levels based on the need of each sub-acre to reduce fertilizer application without risk of losing yield.



7

Drainage water management:

Slowing down runoff to give phosphorus more time to settle back in the soil.



3

Subsurface nutrient application:

Applying specific fertilizer below the surface to reduce nutrient loss.



8

Two-stage ditch construction:

Creating modified drainage ditches to slow water flow and allow the phosphorus to settle.



4

Manure incorporation:

Mixing manure into the soil to keep it in place and minimize nutrient loss.



9

Edge-of-field buffers:

When trees, shrubs or strips of grass are planted along farm fields in the right place, the plants hold on to phosphorus and prevent its release into the water.



5

Conservation crop rotation:

Planting certain crops that reduce erosion and enrich the soil thus reducing runoff and sediment delivery.



10

Wetlands:

Wetland vegetation and soils absorb phosphorus, slow down the movement of water, offer a natural filtering process, and allow phosphorus to settle.

The H2Ohio phosphorus reduction plan will focus first on reducing runoff into the Maumee River Watershed and Lake Erie and will eventually be offered to other parts of the state in the

future. Farmers in the Maumee River Watershed will be able to enroll in H2Ohio programs for funding incentives in time for spring 2020 planting.

“For now, we will not mandate the use of these best practices because we believe our strategy will lead to significant changes within our current laws,” said Governor DeWine. “By helping farmers implement these practices today, H2Ohio will ultimately save them money, increase their profits, and reduce their phosphorus runoff in the future. Although a decrease in Lake Erie algal blooms will take time, we must invest now if we want clean water for future generations.”

As part of the H2Ohio plan, counties in the Maumee River Watershed will each have a localized phosphorus target to help ensure accountability. Individualized nutrient management plans will also be developed for participating farms to identify which H2Ohio best practices will reduce the most phosphorus runoff at each location.



Soil and Water Conservation District Offices in each county will lead local efforts to help farmers enroll in the H2Ohio program and to help them implement the H2Ohio best practices.

The overall progress of the H2Ohio phosphorus reduction plan will be regularly assessed and aggregate data will be publicly available.

The plan was developed with input from a broad coalition of agriculture, education, research, conservation, and environmental partners. H2Ohio will be led by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, and Lake Erie Commission with support from the Ohio Agricultural Conservation Initiative, Ohio Farm Bureau, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and others.

Several of the country’s largest agribusiness operations, including Land O’Lakes, Nutrien, and The Andersons, have voiced support for the plan and have agreed to promote H2Ohio to their customers to help increase the number of acres enrolled in best practices.



Creating Wetlands

In addition to reducing phosphorus runoff, wetlands also offer additional environmental benefits by absorbing pollutants, slowing down the movement of water, offering a natural filtering process, and preventing the further movement of contaminated matter.

H2Ohio will develop new wetlands in strategic, targeted areas throughout the Maumee River Watershed and elsewhere to reduce phosphorus runoff and to reduce nitrogen, store carbons, manage flooding, and offer recreation opportunities.

H2Ohio's new wetlands will be monitored and managed but will be primarily self-sustaining once established. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources will announce details of new wetlands projects in the coming weeks.

Ensuring Safe, Clean Water

H2Ohio will address water and sewer needs in Ohio, including failing home septic systems in disadvantaged communities and possible lead contamination in high-risk daycare centers and schools.

"Ohio's communities rely on clean drinking water and wastewater infrastructure to protect public health, provide for a high quality of life, and enable economic vitality," said Governor DeWine. "It is wrong that Ohio children are potentially being exposed to lead in drinking water because of antiquated piping and fixtures in daycare centers or they can't play outside because their backyards are covered in sewage from failing septic systems. H2Ohio is going to help."

Under the direction of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, H2Ohio will fund infrastructure projects in disadvantaged communities to help ensure they have safe drinking water and quality sewer infrastructure.

H2Ohio will also help replace hundreds of failing home sewage treatment systems in low-income households to prevent the release of raw sewage onto property or into waterways.

Additionally, through a combination of state and federal funds, H2Ohio will assess lead exposure in daycare centers and schools in high-risk areas of Ohio and will help replace lead pipes and fixtures.

The Ohio EPA will announce details of new projects in the coming weeks.

For more information on the overall H2Ohio water quality plan, visit <http://h2.ohio.gov>.

H2Ohio Support for H2Ohio

“ Ohio AgriBusiness Association

“Built on the success of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program for agricultural retailers, we believe this program is a logical next step. We know that farmers are willing to invest in what they know will work, and this program will allow each farmer to evaluate their current level of conservation and determine which practices will work the best on their farm.”

– Chris Henney, President and CEO,
Ohio Agribusiness Association

“ Ohio Cattlemen's Association

“Ohio's cattle farmers have been committed to good environmental stewardship, including maintaining healthy waterways, for generations. That's why we proudly support Governor DeWine's new H2Ohio program. It will provide the needed resources to implement science-based practices on our farms and demonstrate continuous improvement in addressing the state's water quality challenges.”

– Elizabeth Harsh, Executive Director,
Ohio Cattlemen's Association

“ Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association

“Farmers have been making significant investments in their farms to do their part to improve Ohio's water quality because it is the right thing to do. By opening up H2Ohio resources to support farmers as they make continuous improvements to their operations, we are making the implementation of best practices accessible to every farmer.”

– Tadd Nicholson, executive director of the
Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association

“ Ohio Environmental Council

“We thank Gov. DeWine for his leadership on H2Ohio. The investment to protect and improve Ohio's water quality is long overdue and H2Ohio is a major advancement in the fight to provide all Ohioans with clean, safe, and affordable water. This is a good next step towards achieving this goal, which will require long-term investment, additional steps and additional collaboration. We look forward to continuing this important work alongside environmental, agricultural, academic and regulatory leaders to develop science-based, forward-thinking solutions that are good for people, good for our environment and good for our economy.”

– Heather Taylor-Miesle, executive director
of the Ohio Environmental Council and
co-chair of OACI

“ Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

“H2Ohio takes on Ohio's water quality issues with an aggressive plan of proven solutions. We appreciate Gov. DeWine stepping up to provide funding to make the implementation of additional best management practices more economically feasible for farmers as they help achieve the overall goal of clean water across the state.”

– Frank Burkett III, President,
Ohio Farm Bureau

“ Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

“An important part of the work that takes place at Ohio's 88 soil and water conservation districts is to provide consultation to farmers and landowners on ways they can adopt conservation best practices. We are eager to bring a new tool, through the OACI app, to work with farmers to continuously enhance their water quality improvement initiatives.”

– Janelle Mead, CEO, Ohio Federation of
Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Ohio Pork Council

"Ohio's pig farmers are eager to participate in this science-based program that will push them toward their goal of continuously improving on-farm practices to preserve Ohio's waterways. As an Ohio pig farmer, I believe the H2Ohio program will challenge farmers to make positive changes to benefit water quality."

– Dave Shoup, President, Ohio Pork Council

Ohio Soybean Association

"The H2Ohio plan is a comprehensive, positive step forward with input from agriculture, environmental groups, universities, and government agencies. The Ohio Soybean Association is proud to support Governor DeWine and his strategic vision, and look forward to seeing H2Ohio implemented for the benefit of all Ohioans."

– Scott Metzger, Ohio Soybean Association president and soybean farmer from Ross County

Ohio Poultry Association

"Ohio's egg, chicken and turkey farmers have long recognized the important role we play in protecting the environment and addressing water quality issues. We are proud to support Governor DeWine's H2Ohio plan that will provide resources and education that farmers need to implement science-based practices on their farms to support healthy waterways in our state."

– Jim Chakers, Executive Vice President, Ohio Poultry Association

The Nature Conservancy

"H2Ohio represents a huge advancement in addressing the sources of Ohio's water quality problems and we are especially pleased to see included in the plan natural solutions such as wetland creation and floodplain restoration, which will filter out nutrients and sediments that contribute to harmful algal blooms. To be successful, we agree with Governor DeWine that it will take time to achieve goals and that H2Ohio must have a dependable and longer-term source of funding. Monitoring of water quality over time, with accountability of fund recipients to continually improve until goals are reached, will be essential to success. We appreciate that this kind of approach is being discussed."

– Bill Stanley, State Director, The Nature Conservancy in Ohio

Nutrien

"Nutrien congratulates Governor DeWine on today's announcement and looks forward to working with the Administration as a partner in the H2Ohio program. This is an important step to meet our shared goal of improved water quality in the state and particularly in the Western Lake Erie Basin. As an ag retailer in Ohio, we recognize our role in helping solve crucial environmental issues. We are proud to support the Ohio 4R Certification program and of our work with growers to increase crop input efficiency using innovative solutions. Through the Governor's leadership and the H2Ohio program, we can expand sustainable farming practices and continue to improve the health of Lake Erie, while enhancing yields and strengthening Ohio's agriculture economy."

– Nutrien



The Andersons

"The Andersons believes that improving and protecting Ohio's waterways requires the collaborative efforts of government agencies, farmers, agribusinesses, universities and environmental groups. From what we've seen so far, we feel H2Ohio is a very promising initiative and will help bring the necessary parties together to find effective solutions."

- The Andersons



Ohio Sheep Improvement Association

"The Ohio Sheep Improvement Association is proud of our growing industry and the need to increase our environmental stewardship as the demand for sheep, lamb and wool increases. Ohio sheep farmers support Governor DeWine and the unique collaboration to bring all agricultural industry groups to the table as we increase the adoption of on-farm best management practices."

- Ohio Sheep Improvement Association



Ohio Dairy Producers Association

"Ohio dairy farmers are firmly committed to protecting Ohio's waterways. We are looking forward to working collaboratively with Governor DeWine and Ohio's agriculture and environmental leaders to identify and provide resources and education that our farmers need to implement science-based practices on their farms to ensure continued water quality improvements over time."

- Scott Higgins, CEO of the Ohio Dairy Producers Association



Environmental Defense Fund

"Since day one, Governor DeWine has made water quality a cornerstone of his administration through the H2Ohio program and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) supports his efforts. For more than 50 years, EDF has been guided by science and economics to find practical solutions to our nation's most serious environmental challenges and we look forward to collaborating with the DeWine administration in implementing H2Ohio to overcome urgent water quality challenges."

- Mark W. Rupp, Environmental Defense Fund



The Fertilizer Institute

"The Fertilizer Institute supports the DeWine Administration's collaborative and comprehensive approach to water quality and soil health. TFI is committed to being more efficient and protective of our natural resources through minimizing nutrient loss, conserving and preserving water, and ensuring our products are properly handled and used. We look forward to being a part of the H2Ohio program as we encourage the widespread adoption of fertilizer best practices, through outreach and education of nutrient stewardship."

- Lara Moody, The Fertilizer Institute



Land O'Lakes, Inc.

"As a farmer-owned cooperative, Land O'Lakes, Inc. believes strong collaboration is critical to address water quality and we applaud Governor DeWine and his Administration for engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including Land O'Lakes, in the H2Ohio Initiative. We look forward to further exploring opportunities to work together with the State of Ohio, with the aim of delivering water quality outcomes while helping Ohio farmers focus on the health of their business into the future."

- Land O'Lakes, Inc.

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