Volume 13 | Issue 1
July 30th, 2021

Water Spout

ALLEN COUNTY PARTNERSHIP FOR WATER QUALITY

Our Mission

To promote improvement in water quality through collaborative education, engagement, and empowerment of Allen County citizens.

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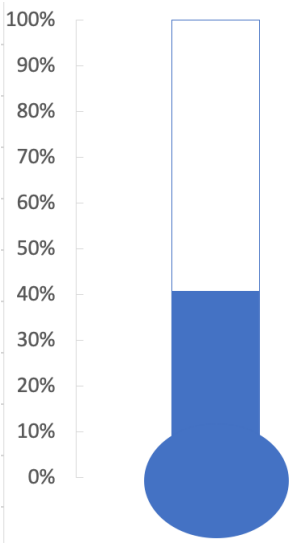
Update from ACPWQ

Allen County Partnership for Water Quality (ACPWQ) has created new content for outreach, including a new interactive stormwater Plinko board, playing cards, and a shoreline erosion handout. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, the partnership worked on having a larger presence on Facebook and has continued that into 2021. In addition to in-person outreach and social media, ACPWQ has published newspaper resources to educate residents about stormwater and water pollution. So far in 2021, we have reached 24,876 residents through in-person outreach, social media, our website, and newspaper articles.

Past Events

Allen County Partnership Water Quality (ACPWQ) created a goal to attend 30 programs and reach 3,375 people during 2021. Though COVID-19 had the partnership off to a slow start, we are optimistic that we will meet our goal this year!

As of July 30th, we have been to 10 events/outreached and engaged 1380 residents of Allen County. (There were six events and outreaches canceled in 2021).



Outreaches since last Water Spout:

- Jan 14th: Little River Wetland Project's Breakfast on the Marsh Speaker
- May 1st: Science Central Earth Day
- May 16th: Eco Fest
- Jun. 10th, 24th, & Jul. 8th, 22nd: Conservation Crew Presentations at Fort Wayne Children Zoo
- July 17th: Three Rivers' Festival-Children's Fest
- Jul 20th: City Safari Day Camp
- Jul 29th: Allen County 4H Fair's Kid Day
- Aug. 1th: Science Central Teacher's Resource Fair

Future Events

- Aug. 12th-14th: Huntertown Heritage Days
- Aug. 14th: Bloom Fest
- Aug. 29th: Open Streets
- Sept. 16th: River Summit Booth
- Sept. 26th: World River Day at Promenade Park
- Oct. 9th: Girl Scouts and FWCS's STEM Event

Water Quality Education Specialist Training and Conferences:

- July 29th: Outreach Advisory Committee
- Aug. 12th: Indiana Water Summit
- Oct. 12th-16th: North American Association for Environmental Education Virtual Conference
- Oct. 26th: MS4 Annual Conference

Water Conservation

In the US, 30-40% of food produced is wasted, with approximately 31% of that food waste happening at retail stores and consumer homes. Food waste is a problem for many reasons, but some of the top issues include hunger, greenhouse gases, and virtual water. In 2019, the USDA estimated that 35 million Americans experienced hunger. Food waste is frequently decomposing in landfills, which are responsible for the emissions of greenhouse gases that are comparable to 32.6 million cars on the road. A commonly overlooked consequence of food waste is the virtual water that is lost.

Virtual water is the hidden water needed to produce a product. A cow will need to consume approximately 1,800 gallons of water throughout its life, through the food and water it consumes, to produce a single pound of beef. Though beef is one of the most water-intensive foods we consume, all of the food we consume has virtual water. Approximately 92% of the virtual water that we interact with is in the food we purchase.

So, if you are looking for a creative way to conserve water, start by reducing food waste!

Keep Grass Clippings Off the Street

By Jacquelyn Buck

With April showers comes May (and for the rest of the growing season) mowing. As a homeowner, I prescribe to this ritual like many others, but as a water educator, seeing grass clippings being bagged or on the street/sidewalk drives me crazy!

Posted on Allen County Partnership for Water Quality's Facebook page on July 8th, 2019 and June 24th, 2020.

My first summer in my position, I went on a walk after work and saw a majority of my neighbors were either bagging their grass clippings or strategically mowing to ensure their clippings ended up off their yard (and on the street). The next day I went to work and looked through old picture files, and decided to post the photo to the right. The picture was old and of bad quality, but I like it. To me, it seemed to scream that putting grass clippings into the street was outdated. As a science-minded person with little social media experience at the time, I assumed that the post would see some traction, maybe reaching 100 people (our page was just shy of 200 followers at the time). After posting it, I continued to work on other tasks and went home.

The next day when I opened our Facebook page, I was blown away by how many people had seen this post. The post reached 1,074 people and was shared 28 times. It was the top-performing posts that our small page had in 2019. In 2020, with the COVID pandemic taking place and so many large real-world problems happening, it was hard to imagine this post would see the same success, but I decided to post it again. Though it didn't receive anywhere near the same traction, it was still a high performing post, reaching 512 people.

What I learned from this post is I am not alone in my hatred for seeing grass clippings in the street. People have different motives for wanting clippings to stay off of roads ranging from motorcycle safety to curb appeal to water quality. Whatever your reasons, keep those grass clippings off our streets!

If you are unsure why having grass clippings in the street matters, please look at the points below!

- Having grass clippings mowed or blown onto streets or sidewalks leads to higher concentrations of nutrients in our waterways. Nitrogen and phosphorus that break down in our waterways can lead to algae blooms and poor water quality downstream.
- Grass clippings can take the extra fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides with them. Fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides can cause several issues in waterways.
- Grass clippings can cause storm drains to become clogged, which creates localized flooding. It then takes time and financial resources to unclog the drain or the blockage has to decompose.

Farm Forum

Another mild algae bloom forecast for Lake Erie this summer

John Seewer | Associated Press | Published July 8, 2021

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — The toxic blob of algae that turns western Lake Erie a ghastly shade of green each summer and threatens drinking water and fish should be on the smaller side again this year following another dry spring, scientists predicted Wednesday.

Researchers expect this will be the first time in more than a decade that the shallowest of the Great Lakes will see back-to-back years of relatively mild algae blooms. But they caution that it's not a sign the lake is turning the corner just yet.

That's because they say the rosy outlook this year is mainly due to the lack of heavy rains that typically wash phosphorus-laden livestock manure and chemical fertilizers off farm fields and into the lake where it feeds the algae.

"While this is good news, the concentration of phosphorus still remains the same as recent years," said Rick Stumpf, an oceanographer with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. "Until we begin to see reductions in the concentration of phosphorus, the next year with above-average rainfall will have a more severe bloom."

Ohio's leaders have been under pressure to combat the blooms since algae toxins in left more than 400,000 people around Toledo unable to drink their tap water. Up until now, little progress has been made.

Republican Gov. Mike DeWine is betting on cleaning the lake through an ambitious 10-year plan offering farmers financial incentives to adopt new agriculture practices and creating a network of wetlands to capture and filter runoff from fields.

But those efforts are just getting started. The approach is being watched closely by states struggling with an increasing number of algae outbreaks. Some environmental groups are skeptical, but others that have been at odds with the farming industry are hopeful.

The forecast for this summer released by NOAA predicts the bloom will come in at 3 on its severity index — a mild reading on par with last year. Anything above 5 indicates a severe bloom.

The algae outbreaks have become more frequent and severe since 2008. But if this summer's forecast holds true, three of the last four years will be below a 5 on the ratings scale.

During that time, farmers have been planting more cover crops and using new methods to reduce fertilizer runoff, said Jordan Hoewischer, director of water quality and research for Ohio Farm Bureau.

"It doesn't make sense to give all the credit to the weather on years when there is a smaller bloom and put all the blame on the farmers if there is a big bloom," he said.

The blooms contain blue-green algae or cyanobacteria, which can produce a liver toxin called microcystin that is harmful to people and can be fatal to animals, including dogs. Even in years when there are smaller blooms, they can still produce dangerous toxins.

NOAA and other U.S. and Canadian agencies have set a goal of reducing the Lake Erie bloom to a 3 on the index.

Ohio, Michigan and the Canadian province of Ontario also have pledged to reduce runoff of phosphorus by 40% by 2025 from the 2015 amount.

Measurements this year in the Maumee River, which carries much of the farm runoff from Ohio and Indiana into the lake, show that there are still high concentrations of phosphorus, said Laura Johnson, director of the National Center for Water Quality Research at Heidelberg University in Ohio.

The big difference, she said, is it has been very dry, which has greatly reduced the amount of water flowing in the river.

Until significant and consistent reductions in phosphorus amounts are made in the agricultural heavy Maumee River watershed, the blooms will continue to be a problem, said Don Scavia, a professor emeritus at the University of Michigan and a member of the forecast team.

"We cannot just cross our fingers and hope that drier weather will keep us safe," he said.