



## FOCUS Newsletter

### Red, White & Blue...Algae??!

Sweet Summertime. The days are longer and we get to enjoy spending more time outside soaking up the hot sun. What's better than taking a dip in a pond or lake, or splashing around a local stream to help cool off? Unfortunately, with the increased temperature and hot sun, there is also the risk of harmful algal blooms in our beautiful lakes and rivers that we should all be aware of.

#### Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

Although most blooms on Ohio's lakes and reservoirs are green algae and not harmful, there are some that have the ability to produce toxins called harmful algal blooms (HABs). Algal blooms have become more noticeable in Ohio's lakes, streams, and rivers the last few years and occur most frequently in shallow bodies of fresh water. Under the right conditions of warm weather, sunlight, and excessive amounts of nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), numbers of blue-green algae can dramatically increase or "bloom" in a body of water, producing the toxic results.



#### The Good and the Bad

Blue-green algae is actually not an algae at all, but a type of bacteria, also referred

to as its proper name, cyanobacteria (sigh-an-oh-bak-tee-ree-uh). A natural, microscopic bacteria, found on both land and water, they are very important organisms for the health and growth of many plants. They are one of very few groups of organisms that can convert inert atmospheric nitrogen into an organic form, such as nitrate or ammonia. Although many species of blue-green algae do not produce these toxins, when conditions are right, the blue-green algae can quickly grow, leading to an explosion of harmful blooms and toxin production.

## Nutrients

Occurrence of these harmful algal blooms have been linked to increased runoff and have negative consequences to human health, livestock and fish stocks. The primary sources of excess nitrogen and phosphorus are agriculture, stormwater runoff, wastewater, fossil fuels, and use of certain products in and around the home (source - EPA). Phosphorus and nitrogen are commonly found in fertilizers and animal and human waste.



### Be Alert to Keep Safe! Avoid Water That:

- Looks like spilled paint
- Has surface scum or a thick film
- Is discolored or has colored streaks
- Has green globs floating below the surface



### Don't forget about Pet Safety

Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) can make animals extremely sick, sometimes causing death. Dogs are particularly at risk if they swallow the algae or algal mats when swimming and drinking from rivers and lakes. Symptoms of cyanotoxin poisoning in dogs include panting, lethargy, muscle tremors, twitching and convulsions. These symptoms usually occur within 30 minutes.



**WHEN IN  
DOUBT,  
KEEP PETS  
OUT!**

Don't let your pets swim in, play in, or drink discolored or scummy water.



H2Ohio is a comprehensive water quality initiative that is working to strategically address serious water issues that have been building in Ohio for decades. Such problems include harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie caused by phosphorus runoff from farm fertilizer, failing drinking water, wastewater, and home sewage treatment systems due to aging infrastructure, and lead contamination from old water pipes and fixtures. 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 24 northwest counties will lead local efforts to help farmers enroll in the H2Ohio program and to help them implement the H2Ohio best practices.

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. The H2Ohio program will create, restore, and enhance wetlands and water sources in strategic, targeted areas across Ohio.

[h2.ohio.gov](http://h2.ohio.gov)



## In the Press

[Protecting, Restoring Ohio's Wetlands](#)  
Delaware Gazette



## Upcoming Events

[Olentangy River Clean-up](#)  
**August 21, 2021 9am-Noon**  
Join OWA, KDCB, and FLOW for the annual Olentangy River Clean-up!

Phone: (740) 368-1921

