MACA | MID AMERICA CROPLIFE ASSOCIATION

Water Update

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Andrea Rice, MACA Water Consultant

Lake Erie often serves as a "canary in a coalmine" for water quality concerns with its history of harmful algal blooms and visible impact to residents and visitors of its coastline. Lake Eris has been a very public example of the effects of nutrient runoff from municipalities as well as agricultural lands.

Concern has been raised by environmental groups regarding the possible shift in priorities from Senator JD Vance to now Vice President JD Vance. With his new role, he is being criticized for his lack of concern for the Great Lakes and efforts to restore the planet's largest freshwater system.

Vance considered the lakes to be invaluable to his home state of Ohio and supported funding for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative in early 2024. This initiative was to provide stability for the lakes with funding to fight invasive species, algal blooms, pollution, and other threats to the ecosystem.

While Vance was supportive of the Great Lakes Restoration project, he is being criticized for the Trump Administration's new cuts and restrictions, taking away from the efforts Vance previously promoted. Some Great Lakes scientists are concerned about the funding for lab work necessary to meet federal requirements to monitor algal blooms with groups such as the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory division of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Current projections of the algal bloom severity based on Maumee River discharge and phosphorus loads show a mild to moderate bloom condition, which would be similar to 2024 blooms. Cumulative projected loads for 2025 are below totals from 2015 and 2017 while in line with 2024 and 2016 figures.

The bipartisan Great Lakes Task Force reintroduced the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act again for 2025 to reauthorize the initiative before it expires at the end of FY26. The current Great Lakes Restoration Initiative was reauthorized in 2021 during President Trump's first term. Lake Erie not only provides drinking water for many municipalities but also serves a visual reminder for the ag community to remain vigilant in decreasing nutrient runoff and remaining proactive to adopt conservation practices.

Each month Andrea Rice, CCA, Director of Research, Education, and Outreach, CCA Program Administrator for the Missouri Agribusiness Association, which serves as MACA's Water Consultant; provides an update on current water issues. Please share their information with others in your company.

– Rodney Schmidt, MACA Executive Director.