



Blue Accounting ErieStat

# TRACKING PROGRESS TOWARD A HEALTHIER LAKE ERIE

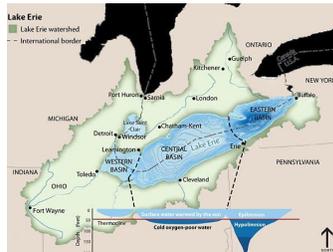
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## PHOSPHORUS AND ITS IMPACT

Nutrient runoff has plagued Lake Erie for more than forty-five years. Phosphorus and other nutrients enter Lake Erie through a range of sources, such as wastewater treatment plants and runoff from agricultural fields. In large amounts phosphorus can fuel harmful algal blooms and contribute to low-oxygen “dead zones” and growth of cladophora, another type of nuisance algae. Poor water quality on Lake Erie threatens the drinking water supply for 11 million people, impacts tourism, and alters the lake ecosystem. In 2014 alone, harmful algal blooms in western Lake Erie cost \$65 million in diminished property values, lost tourism revenue and recreational opportunities, and increased water treatment costs.

## A BINATIONAL COMMITMENT

In 2016, the federal governments of Canada and the United States – along with the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Pennsylvania and province of Ontario - adopted a goal to reduce phosphorus in the lake’s western and central basins by 40 percent. This agreement provides a foundation for coordinating binational actions to manage nutrients in Lake Erie, including phosphorus. Work continues to set reduction targets for the eastern basin, which also affects the state of New York. Achieving a 40 percent reduction requires a collaborative effort across five states, one province, two countries, and dozens of public and private stakeholders — and a system to track progress toward this ambitious goal.



Lake Erie watershed boundary.

## TRACKING PROGRESS AND MEASURING SUCCESS

Blue Accounting created ErieStat to track progress toward the shared 40 percent reduction goal. In 2017, the ErieStat workgroup agreed on a suite of water quality metrics to measure progress in select Lake Erie tributaries. In 2018, the ErieStat website was launched to provide information on current phosphorus levels in major tributaries and share government strategies for achieving needed reductions. Work is continuing to track dollars invested in each individual strategy, as well as develop metrics to track collective progress on the land and in the lake. Over time, this curated data will allow decision-makers to evaluate the impact of current and potential strategies and investments – and ensure a safe and sustainable future for Lake Erie.



Algal bloom, Sept. 2011.  
Courtesy: Michigan Sea Grant.

## LEARN MORE

For more information on Blue Accounting’s ErieStat, please contact Nicole Zacharda, Program Manager at the Great Lakes Commission, at [nzacharda@glc.org](mailto:nzacharda@glc.org).

If you are interested in learning more about other Blue Accounting projects, would like to provide feedback, or want to explore using Blue Accounting for a new issue, please contact Tawny Mata, Director of Strategic Engagement, at [tawny.mata@tnc.org](mailto:tawny.mata@tnc.org).

## WHO’S INVOLVED

### State and Provincial

Indiana Dept. of Agriculture | Indiana Dept. of Environmental Quality | Michigan Dept. of Environmental Quality | Michigan Dept. of Agriculture and Rural Development | Ohio Environmental Protection Agency | Ohio Department of Agriculture | Ohio Lake Erie Commission | Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change | Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

### Federal

US Environmental Protection Agency  
US Department of Agriculture  
US Geological Survey  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

### Academic

Heidelberg University  
University of Michigan  
Michigan State University  
Ohio State University



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