

# City takes action to protect water quality



Andy Ouriel Sandusky Register March 29, 2021

SANDUSKY - Sandusky officials took action to protect Ohio's greatest natural resource.

During a recent public meeting, city commissioners signed an executive order to push for a reduction of toxic algal blooms in Lake Erie, which includes Sandusky Bay.

But how can signing a piece of paper and taking a vote, on land no less, enhance water quality?

Dennis Murray Jr., the city commissioner sponsoring this legislation, explained:

- The reasoning: "It is part of a broader, multi-state, multi-county and multi-city effort, spearheaded by the (nonprofit advocacy organization) Lake Erie Waterkeeper, to persuade the Biden administration to take a leading role in addressing algal blooms."
- The partnerships: "These are not state issues or local issues, and therefore, ultimately, require the leadership of the federal government to collaboratively lead the region to a solution."
- The assistance: "Acting on our own, Ohio has been unsuccessful in making a significant difference. This is a complex chemistry problem that involves many contributors, with a range of different solutions, but we ultimately need federal leadership so that we are rolling in the same direction."
- The desired result: "Whether that means additional standards or the investment of federal dollars to address the many sources of nutrients - wastewater treatment plants, regular farming, concentrated animal feeding operations or solutions designed to absorb the nutrients - the answers will be both more refined and effective as a result of greater federal leadership."
- The importance: "The health of Lake Erie is of critical importance to our local economy and plays a direct role in both the city's revenues and our expenses. As the pandemic has painfully highlighted, we are dependent, I would say overdependent, on lodging and admissions taxes. If people do not come to our area because the lake is polluted, we lose those revenues. In addition, the algal blooms increase our water treatment expenses both in terms of equipment to detect the blooms and additional chemicals to treat them. And, at the wastewater treatment plant, as ratepayers, we pay a significant price to contribute to the reduction in nutrients discharged into Lake Erie which spawn the blooms."

What is a harmful algal bloom?

Harmful algal blooms result from the rapid growth, or bloom, of algae that can cause harm to animals, people or the local environment.

They can look like foam, scum or mats on the surface of water and can be different colors.

Harmful algal blooms can occur in warm fresh, marine or brackish waters with abundant nutrients. There are many organisms that produce harmful algal blooms.

A harmful algal bloom can cause harm by:

- Producing toxins that can poison humans, fish, seabirds, aquatic animals, livestock, wildlife and household pets, such as dogs, that are near the water, drink the water or swim in the water
- Causing illness when a person or animal eats fish or shellfish contaminated with algal toxins
- Becoming dense enough to keep sunlight from reaching the lower depths of the water
- Removing the oxygen from the water as it decomposes, starving fish and plants of oxygen, and damaging the local ecology

Source: CDC