Agriculture - The #1 industry in OUR watershed

Farmers Continuing to do Their Part....

With the continuing concern about the algal bloom in Lake Erie, the agriculture industry is stepping up to do their part in the Blanchard River watershed. According to an article in the Toledo Blade, “The Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio State University Extension Service, the Ohio Farmers Union, and 17 other agricultural-related groups are behind the letter campaign and a planned re-education effort to raise greater awareness among farmers about how their methods of using phosphorus and other fertilizers play a part in the growing algae blooms in Lake Erie, Grand Lake St. Mary’s, Buckeye Lake, and other Ohio lakes.

The algal blooms in Lake Erie, which is fed by the Maumee River, have become a growing problem. The algae bloom in 2011 contributed to a “dead zone” where fish cannot live, and state officials warned that the problem could threaten the lake’s tourism industry, valued at $10 billion.”

As a result of The Outlet/Lye Creek and the Riley Creek Watershed Action Plans the BRWP wrote and received full endorsement from the Ohio EPA and Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), nearly 4 million dollar with of money has been made available in the Blanchard River watershed to help the farmers solve the sediment and phosphorus loading to the Blanchard River and eventually to Lake Erie.

The farmers in the Upper Riley Creek watershed, Lower Riley Creek watershed, have embraced money received from a Great Lake Basin grant to address the sediment and phosphorus loading from agriculture practices. So far, there have been nearly 1415 acres of cover crops and 1600 acres of conservation tillage acres enrolled with an estimated load reduction of 2522 tons of sediment per year and 900 pounds of phosphorus per year being prevented from entering the waterways as surface runoff. The farmers have also installed 0.5 acre of filter strips, and 1.43 acres of grassed waterways. For additional information call Phil Martin, cont.
Watershed Coordinator, at 419.422.6487.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced in early June that there was 2.5 million dollars available for the Blanchard River watershed for farmers to installed Best Management Practices (BMPs) as a part of the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). Within three weeks, the NRCS technicians had signed up nearly 4.4 million dollar worth of projects. Fantastic effort on the part of the technicians and the farmers. All of these projects will decrease the amount of sediment and nutrient loading occurring in the watershed.

The Hancock SWCD received and Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) grant to enroll farmers in BMPs in the Lye Creek watershed. So far, over 550 acres have been enrolled in cover crops, 10 linear feet of tile blow-outs repaired, and one controlled drainage project. Other farmer have started the enrollment process.

The BRWP offers a big THANK YOU to the farmers, agencies, and technicians for all their hard work in attacking the sediment and nutrient loading problems in the watershed.

Lake Erie Harmful Algal Bloom to be Major News during the Summer of 2013...

The summer of 2013 appears to be a pivotal summer for attacking the Harmful Algal Bloom in Lake Erie. There have been many news stories in newspapers, magazines, and from other agencies about the problem. Below are three such articles.

- **NOAA, partners predict significant harmful algal bloom in western Lake Erie this summer** - NOAA and its research partners predict that the 2013 western Lake Erie harmful algal bloom (HAB) season will have a significant bloom of cyanobacteria, a toxic blue-green algae, this summer. (July 2, 2013 NOAA website)

- **Spring Rain, Then Foul Algae in Ailing Lake Erie** - Lake Erie is sick. A thick and growing coat of toxic algae appears each summer, so vast that in 2011 it covered a sixth of its waters. (New York Times, March 14, 2013)

- **Lake Erie Algae Blooms Expected To Continue, Threatening Ecosystem, People** - Lake Erie is under attack from noxious algae blooms, and the problem only looks likely to get worse if something isn't done to reverse the trend, new research suggests. (Huffing Post, April 1, 2013)

According to a recent NOAA report, U.S. seafood and tourism industries suffer annual losses of $82 million due to economic impacts of HABs. Visitors to Ohio’s Lake Erie region spend more than $10.7 billion annually. The Harmful Algal Bloom in Lake Erie has been around for several years. The main cause of the HAB is phosphorus entering the lake. The main sources of the phosphorus according to the Lake Erie Task Force 2010 Report are: 1. Wastewater Treatment Plants, 2. Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO), 3. Industrial Point Sources, 4. Failing Home Septic Treatment Systems (HSTS), 5. Agriculture Activities - Manure and Fertilizer, 6. Urban Stormwater Runoff, and 7. Phosphorus trapped in the lake sediment. Why is all the interest directed towards agriculture? The main reason that so much attention is given to the agriculture community is the fact that 70% of the land use in the Lake Erie Basin in agriculture. Wastewater Treatment Plants and Industrial Point Sources are already being monitored and permitted by the EPA already. Most of the CSOs are or have been separated under EPA mandates. Failing HSTS remain a major problem in the basin and are being addressed by many agencies. But, failing HSTS simply do not supply the phosphorus loading that comes from crop production and manure.

Early I mentioned that 2013 would be a pivotal year for the HAB. My reason for saying this is for the first time in Ohio there is a bill in the Ohio Senate (Senate Bill 150) to place some “regulations” on the agriculture producers to help control the nutrient loading. The Farm Bureau along with 19 other groups sent a letter to farmers urging them to get involve and voluntarily reduce nutrient runoff. With the Senate bill and all the other agencies getting involved, this summer becomes a pivotal one in getting a handle on the HAB in Lake Erie.

Join us on facebook to follow updates.
Rain Project... The 2013 Rain Barrel Project was a GREAT success. The Rain Barrel Decorating Contest resulted in 8 schools entering 16 barrels in the contest. Riverdale High School entered the winning barrel.

Sarah Gilbert, President of Riverdale Board of Education, is shown in picture 1 accepting the $100 first place prize and the $50.00 “People’s Choice Award” from Phil Martin, watershed coordinator. Columbus Grove High School finished second, Van Buren High School was third, Pandora Gilboa High School was fourth, and Arlington High School was fifth. Pictures of all the rain barrels can be seen on our web site under the Gallery tab.

Anne Coburn Griffis created a five part information series on Rain Barrels that was published in several of the area newspapers. You can view this series on the BRWP website at www.blanchardriver.org. Click on the Rain Barrel tab. Lesson Plans are being developed for the area teachers.

The BRWP still has a few Rain Barrels for sale at $35.00 each. Call Phil Martin at 419.422.6487 for more details.

Special Thanks to all of Our Rain Barrel Sponsors!!!!!
**BRWP Activities…**

**August**
- August 16-24th - Allen County Fair in Lima. Check out our display in the Conservation Tent.
- August 21st - Board of Directors meeting at Hancock County Engineer’s meeting room from 6-8 p.m.
- August 28th - September 2nd - Hancock County Fair in Findlay. Check out our display in the Farm Bureau Tent by the Dairy Barn.

**September**
- September 3rd - 8th - Hardin County Fair in Kenton. Check out our display at the Hardin SWCD booth.
- September 18th Executive Committee / Organization & Development Committee at Hancock County Engineer’s meeting room from 4-6 p.m.
- Last week - Water Quality monitoring

**October**
- First week - Finish Water Quality monitoring
- October 9th - Education Committee meeting 3-5 p.m. Hancock County Engineer’s meeting room
- October 16th - Board of Directors meeting at Hancock County Engineer’s meeting room from 6-8 p.m.
- October 23rd - Annual Meeting Committee meeting

**November**
- November 20th - Annual Meeting breakfast from 7 till 9 a.m.

**December**
- December 5th - Social Get Together 5:30 p.m.

For additional information call Phil Martin at 419.422.6487.

- **Water Pollution Control Loan Fund (WPCLF):**
  This $56,000 grant was applied for through the Hancock County Commissioners with support from the Hancock Board of Health and the BRWP. The grant is for repairing/replacing failing home septic treatment systems (HSTS) for low income families. To see if you are eligible call Phil Martin at 419.422.6487.

- **Findlay-Hancock Community Foundation:**
  This $30,000 grant is to be used to improve the sustainability of the BRWP by building a stronger supporting relationship with businesses, corporations, governmental agencies, and stakeholders in the watershed.

- **Freshwater Futures - Healing Our Waters:**
  This $15,000 grant is to hire Blanchard Design to do a feasibility study of how to best handle failing HSTS in the Village of Houcktown. The final report will be turned over to the proper agencies for further review.

- **Hancock-Wood Electric Cooperative:**
  This $1591.88 grant is providing money to cover the cost of the Rain Barrel project.

**Membership / Volunteers needed…**
The BRWP is always looking for new members and volunteers to help with maintaining and improving the Water Quality of the Blanchard River watershed. Volunteers are needed for many activities. Call the coordinator for further information. The money from membership is used and needed to help cover the daily operations of the BRWP. Membership rates are:

- $15 - **INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP**
- $25 - **FAMILY MEMBERSHIP**
- $50-$249 - **MEMBERSHIP PLUS!!**
- $250 and up - **CORPORATE/BUSINESS**

Check our web site for more details and options:

**Please consider renewing or joining the BRWP!!!**