

# Ontario

## Top policy recommendations to reduce runoff pollution

Based on the policy landscape analysis conducted by the Alliance for the Great Lakes and Freshwater Future, the following key recommendations are necessary to advance toward the province of Ontario's phosphorus reduction goal:

- 1. Ban application on frozen, snow-covered and saturated ground:** Ontario restricts the application of manure and fertilizer from December 31 to March 31 and anytime the ground is frozen or snow-covered. Ontario does not restrict application on saturated ground, and current policies include several other loopholes that allow this practice to continue. Ontario should completely eliminate the practice of spreading manure and fertilizer on frozen, snow-covered and saturated ground, as this increases the likelihood of nutrient runoff.
- 2. Require comprehensive nutrient reduction planning:** Ontario only requires nutrient reduction planning for livestock farms of a certain size – leaving a large portion of farms unaffected by legislation – including all field crop operations. Nutrient reduction planning, including best management practices for fertilizer application and land management, is integral to the reduction of runoff pollution from agricultural lands and should be required by all farms.
- 3. Improve water quality monitoring:** Ontario's water quality program is administered by the federal government and implemented by the province, aggregating data from various streams and tributaries that feed into Lake Erie and issuing an annual report, which includes phosphorus loadings. Though Ontario's monitoring network is significant, recent reports indicate that 35 percent of watersheds in the province are not currently being monitored under this system. Ontario should expand its water quality monitoring to the entire watershed – including annual and spring loadings – and identify the source of those loadings to inform further policy improvements.



- 4. Expand wastewater infrastructure requirements to include green infrastructure:** With changing weather patterns and increased rainfall, current wastewater infrastructure is not well equipped to handle the volume of water it sees. Ontario does not mandate combined sewer overflow reporting or wastewater innovation, such as the use of green infrastructure and new treatment technologies. Instead, this work is taken on at the local level at varying degrees of success across municipalities. Ontario should require incorporation of green infrastructure and other innovative technologies as a means to mitigate the failings of dated wastewater infrastructure, such as combined sewer overflows.
- 5. Implement jurisdiction-wide septic codes:** Ontario's province-wide septic code mandates requirements for installation and maintenance. Requirements for connection to public sewer systems - the preferred outcome - are delegated to municipalities. Ontario should improve province-wide policies to ensure installation, maintenance, and connection to public sewers are regulated uniformly across municipalities.
- 6. Expand wetland restoration efforts:** Ontario has taken some steps toward the preservation of its wetlands, including the recently finalized Wetland Conservation Strategy (2016-2030), but wetlands continue to diminish. Ontario should expand its wetland preservation and restoration efforts to combat their continued loss, including implementation of a more aggressive timeline for the Wetland Conservation Strategy, halting loss and degradation at a much faster rate.

## Status of runoff reduction policies



### Non-existent

Assigned to areas that have no policy directive **or** policy directives are so narrow in scope and application they are for all intents and purposes, non-existent



### Incomplete

Assigned to areas that have substantive policy directives but lack completeness due to loopholes or limited oversight or enforcement (e.g., winter spreading restrictions)



### Complete

Assigned to areas that have substantial policy directives without loopholes and/or significant oversight or enforcement

### \* Urgent Priority

Assigned to policy areas that require immediate attention across the region (12-24 months)

While Ontario has taken some steps toward reducing nutrient and runoff pollution in Lake Erie, significant improvements are needed to achieve the goal of a 40% phosphorus reduction. The Alliance for the Great Lakes and Freshwater Future conducted a landscape analysis of the most crucial policy areas related to phosphorous pollution. Below is a summary of findings:

## Agricultural Policies

	Status
Nutrient reduction planning *	
Winter spreading *	
Cover crop adoption	
Wetland restoration and natural filtration	
Monitoring and enforcement	

## Urban Source Policies

	Status
Wastewater treatment	
Septic system management	
Combined sewer overflows	
Green infrastructure adoption	

## Watershed Monitoring and Reporting

	Status
Phosphorus monitoring and reporting *	

## About

The Alliance for the Great Lakes works to protect the Great Lakes for today and tomorrow. We involve tens of thousands of people each year in advocacy, volunteering, education, and research to ensure the lakes are healthy and safe for all. The Alliance is headquartered in Chicago with offices in Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Muskegon, and Milwaukee. For more information visit [www.greatlakes.org](http://www.greatlakes.org).

Since 1996, Freshwater Future has worked to build effective, community-based citizen action to protect and restore the waters and habitats of the Great Lakes region. We provide grants and professional development services to over 2,000 community groups in both the U.S. and Canada, as well as elevate the voices of grassroots groups and local communities in policy debates on the state, provincial, and federal levels. Learn more at [www.freshwaterfuture.org](http://www.freshwaterfuture.org).