

Ohio

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 state of Ohio's phosphorus reduction goal:

- 1. Ban spreading on frozen and saturated ground:** Ohio restricts spreading of manure and fertilizer on frozen, saturated and snow-covered ground, but significant loopholes exist, allowing for this practice to continue. This increases the likelihood of runoff and nutrient loss since nutrients are not absorbed while snowmelt and rainfall carry remaining nutrients into nearby waterways.
- 2. Comprehensive nutrient reduction planning:** Ohio requires nutrient reduction planning for medium to large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), but does not require it for other agricultural producers, including small CAFOs. Nutrient reduction planning, including best management practices for fertilizer application and land management, is integral to the reduction of runoff pollution from agriculture lands and should be required by all farms.
- 3. Water quality monitoring:** Ohio monitors phosphorus discharge into Lake Erie at several points within the watershed and releases an annual report containing data monitored by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, and Heidelberg University. While this approach is significant, it leaves several areas without monitoring. The state should increase monitoring to include both annual and spring loadings and identify sources of phosphorus loadings to inform further policy reform.



4. **Expand wastewater infrastructure requirements to include green infrastructure:** With changing weather patterns and increased rainfall, current infrastructure is not well-equipped to handle the large volume of water produced. The state of Ohio 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. Ohio should require incorporation of green infrastructure as a means to mitigate the failings of dated wastewater infrastructure, such as combined sewer overflows.

5. **Statewide septic codes:** Ohio's statewide septic code mandates requirements for installation and maintenance, but delegates requirements to connect to public sewer – the preferred outcome – to municipalities. Ohio should adopt statewide requirements for public sewer connection to ensure uniform standards across the state.

6. **Expand wetland restoration efforts:** Ohio has several provisions to protect wetlands written into its state law, however, wetlands continue to diminish and suffer. Ohio's wetlands protection work depends on the designation of the wetland into one of several categories. Ohio should revise its wetland policies to provide further protections for this natural filtration system to help reduce phosphorus loadings into the western Lake Erie basin.

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 Ohio 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.

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.