

Lake Erie Shores & Islands

Ohio EPA Announcement on Western Basin Open Waters Impairment



Talking Points

- The impairment designation does not change anything in terms of the ability for people to access to the lake.
- “This is a next step in helping protect Lake Erie’s water quality.”
- “This designation just means that an assessment will take place to determine where certain nutrients are coming from so an appropriate action plan can be implemented”
- “People can still fish, swim, boat, kayak, and enjoy Lake Erie as they always have.”

Key Things To Remember

- Lake Erie is one of the world’s largest and most productive freshwater natural resources
- Millions of people each year enjoy Lake Erie’s waters for swimming, fishing, boating, etc.
- Algae are natural components of marine and freshwater ecosystems and form the foundation of most aquatic food chains
- Algae is the base of the food chain present in all bodies of water; it is only when nutrients are in excess, and the temperature of the water is elevated enough that potentially-harmful cyanobacteria algal blooms can occur
- Even if an algal bloom is found in one area of Lake Erie, it doesn’t mean that the whole lake is experiencing a bloom
- Isolated rain activity, water depth, wave action and wind can all be factors as to where and when algae may show up
- The same factors that are at play for where and when algae may show up also can quickly disperse algae from an area

Additional Information

- Listing a water body as “impaired” under the Clean Water Act triggers an assessment to determine where nutrients are coming from and in what amounts—information that is then used to create an action plan to help restore water quality.
- Then there is an implementation plan that has periodic reporting requirements as well as an economic assessment of reduction options that yields investments that get the biggest algae reductions at the lowest cost.
- The onus is on the states to follow the recovery steps to make sure nutrient reduction goals are met.
- When Lake Erie recovered in the 1970’s, it did so through a plan that included monitoring results, and accountability.