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Let's make water our top priority

Ohio's water quantity and quality are key to Ohio's economy. The Maumee watershed is the Great Lakes' best fish-spawning waters. Algae plague Ohio's waters, with Grand Lake St. Marys as the poster child, and Lake Erie and the Maumee River/ Bay are not far behind.

Testing and research show phosphorus increasing during the past 15 years. Yet Ohio and the nation did little if anything to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the water.

Ohio's latest water-quality report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency shows more than 80 percent of Ohio's waters "unimpaired," yet algae are closing beaches on Ohio's inland lakes and Lake Erie.

The Maumee was excluded from the impaired-water report because required data are too old. Studies by universities show the Maumee River/Bay is the biggest contributor of phosphorus to Lake Erie.

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency is not scheduling needed "total maximum daily loads" for the river until 2013.

Although Ohio says open lake dumping is wrong, the OEPA issues permits for the sediments to be suspended, aiding algae growth.

The Detroit River channels billions of gallons of sewage every year into Lake Erie from the nation's largest wastewater plant. Toledo has a five-year delay on fixing its sewers.

It is time for Ohio, like Florida, to adopt nutrient standards for Lake Erie, the Maumee River, and all of its watersheds. Stop allowing liquid-manure applications. Fund open-lake dumping alternatives. And get Michigan to fix the Detroit sewage overflows.

The green water is already deterring tourists from enjoying our waters, a situation that costs Ohio's economy millions of dollars along with fewer jobs.

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