

H2Ohio: Restoring Wetlands for Water Quality in Ohio

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The H2Ohio program is Ohio's statewide water quality initiative designed to address complex issues impacting Ohio's waters. The Western Lake Erie Basin has a large agricultural drainage area and regularly experiences harmful algal blooms caused by excess nutrient runoff. In 2014, the City of Toledo issued a 'Do not Drink' order for several days after an algal bloom contaminated the city's water supply. Launched in 2019 to improve Ohio's drinking water, H2Ohio uses a comprehensive approach guided by science and data to reduce algal blooms, stop pollution, and improve access to clean drinking water. These goals are addressed through a collaboration between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and the Ohio Lake Erie Commission.

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources facilitates the H2Ohio Wetland Grant Program, a strategy to reduce harmful algal blooms by creating and restoring wetlands that store excess nutrient runoff. By restoring natural infrastructure like wetlands to the landscape, the H2Ohio program takes a cost effective and long-term solution to harmful algal blooms while creating additional benefits to wildlife and society.

The H2Ohio Wetlands Administrative team will provide an overview of H2Ohio funding and project selection. We will review several top performing wetlands and discuss the design features that maximize nutrient reduction while creating vital habitat opportunities. This presentation will be useful for organizations looking to gain insight into grant management and natural infrastructure restoration projects that improve water quality.