

Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie

Comments Received on the Draft



**Presentation to Agriculture
Sector Working Group
June 16, 2017**

Partnering in Phosphorus Control:

Achieving Phosphorus Reductions in Lake Erie from
Canadian Sources

The Canada-Ontario Draft Action Plan

Gathering Ideas

A discussion document to assist in the engagement of key stakeholders, First Nations and Métis communities, and the public in action plan development.

Prepared by the Canada-Ontario Agreement Partners
February 2017

- Provide an update on input received in response to the proposed Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie posted from March to May 24 on the Environmental Registry
- Discuss potential industry actions and next steps

- On March 10, 2017 Ontario posted for public comment a Policy Proposal Notice on the EBR Registry (closed May 24th) which sought public input on a draft Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie
- Sixty unique written submissions were received:
 - Agricultural (16); Conservation Authorities (6); Municipal (9); Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) (10); and Public (19)
- 2, 066 submissions were received through three campaigns:
 - Campaign #1 – 208 letters; Campaign #2 – 1,677 letters; and Campaign #3 – 181 letters
- All comments are being used to refine the proposed Canada-Ontario Action Plan for Lake Erie; including the background, actions and implementation sections
- Further engagement is expected to be conducted in the Fall 2017 with the final Action Plan in place no later than February 2018

Common Themes

- Widespread support for the action plan and the actions although call for stronger actions to reduce non-point sources and strengthen wetland protection and restoration
- Expect plan to include more details in the actions including those accountable, timelines and resources
- Expect estimates of phosphorus reductions associated with specific actions and timeline that plan could reasonably be expected to reach the 40 percent target
- Need effective monitoring programs to: better understand sources and pathways of phosphorus to water bodies to better target mitigation strategies; and to measure progress
- Support for adaptive management approach and performance measures



Comments Pertaining to Agriculture

General comments

- Agriculture actions were supported by the ag community, non-governmental organizations, conservation authorities and individuals
- Conservation authorities, commodity organizations and farmers are willing to be part of the solution and support the Action Plan
- “Many of the actions and outcomes require proper soil-water management to be successful. One of the key elements in improving water quality is to increase the amount of water that moves through the soil rather than over it”
- Appreciation for the science-based, adaptive and sustainable approach

Comments Pertaining to Agriculture

Reduce Phosphorus Loadings from Agriculture Sources

- Strong support for appropriately resourced, long-term voluntary incentive programs, use of a multi-BMP whole farm approach and expert in-person support for farmers to implement solutions for their fields
 - suggest including eastern basin of Lake Erie as well in any Next Policy Framework (NPF) programming
 - Suggest GLASI-like program and complementary Species at Risk Farm Incentive Program (SARFIP) with local involvement and one-on-one guidance, as a model
- Support for equipment investment for “Right Placement, Rate and Time” and for green infrastructure to better retain water and infiltration on-farm
- Some concern with continuation of voluntary measures as not enough to achieve the significant change needed to make an impact
- CAs willing to leverage their extensive networks, expertise and relationships to deliver outreach
- Support for 4R Nutrient Stewardship

Comments Pertaining to Agriculture

Ensure Effective Policies

- Mixed comments but majority support for regulatory measures for nutrient application and the enforcement of laws preventing run-off pollution from farms
 - focus nutrient application restrictions on frozen/snow-covered ground to more accurately reflect the problem and recognize the need for flexibility
 - support for adding an industry-led resolution process
 - some support for broadening to apply to more farms and for all nutrient sources
 - use 4R terminology
- A few calls for stronger regulatory measures for farmer best practices such as cover crops and no-till practices to ensure targets can be met
- Support for a stormwater review including agricultural drainage
 - desire to use the Drainage Act to reduce/slow P movement from agriculture lands
- Concern with how tile drainage is presented in the plan as contributor (“drainage and organic matter are key to soil aggregate stability required for efficient water infiltration”); suggest focus on management of post-subsurface drainage

Comments Pertaining to Agriculture

Improve the Knowledge Base - Research and Monitoring

- Strong support for enhanced monitoring to better understand sources including contribution of legacy phosphorus to the system and its impacts on reduction
- Support for measuring uptake of phosphorus mitigation strategies on farm
- Support for targeted research and new and innovative technology for wastewater and storm water management

Educate and Build Awareness

- Support for the government and industry to continue to work together to build public trust as it relates to agriculture and the environment
- Caution that creating awareness does not change behaviour; that there is a need to target messaging with specific calls to action
- Support promotion of cover crops and “Right Time” nutrient application and clear messaging to the agriculture community regarding effective BMPs to reduce, retain and remove phosphorus

Other Highlights

- Conservation Authorities indicated high motivation to partner with government and stakeholders to implement local initiatives and implement/improve tracking of actions and tributary monitoring
- Municipalities cited their efforts to develop infrastructure within the basin to reduce community reliance on septic systems and accommodate growing industry needs
- Some NGOs expressed support for stewardship efforts toward the conservation and restoration of wetlands

Suggested Additional Actions for Government

- Commitment to implement water quality trading
- Ontario host North America's Manure Expo in 2019
- Provide policy or program incentives to increase perennial forage crops
- New or improved technologies including end of pipe treatment for drainage systems and "closed loop" implementation for wash water are needed



Industry Actions to be Added to the Plan

- How can industry commitments for action be best incorporated into the final version of the plan?
 - Work together on wording over next few weeks
 - Obtain board approvals for inclusion in the final plan
- Actions cannot be dependant on only the Next Policy Framework (NPF) funding – all partners need to continue to contribute staff time and resources

Domestic Action Plan Timelines

**June to August
2017**

**DAP Revisions
And
Approvals**

September 2017

**Share revised
draft Action Plan
with Key
Stakeholders
before finalizing**

Fall/Winter 2017

**Final Agency
Approvals**

**Release Final
*Canada-Ontario
Action Plan for
Lake Erie***

**Next Policy Framework
Potential nutrient management
regulation**