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EPA Awards Grants in Michigan and Ohio to Improve Water Quality and Reduce Algal Blooms in the Great Lakes

TOLEDO – (Sept. 27, 2012) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency today announced 11 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grants for projects in Michigan and Ohio to improve water quality and reduce excess nutrients that contribute to harmful algal blooms in Great Lakes watersheds.

Cameron Davis, Senior Advisor to the EPA Administrator for the Great Lakes, highlighted seven GLRI grants for projects to reduce nutrients in the Lake Erie basin at an event today at the University of Toledo-Lake Erie Center.

“Harmful algal blooms occur when fertilizer and other nutrients wash into our waterways,” Davis said. “Today’s EPA grants will reduce nutrient runoff and in the process will reduce algal blooms, prevent erosion, protect public health and save money.”

“Lake Erie is a major economic driver for our state—from the Port of Toledo to Cedar Point to Geneva on the Lake — and is responsible for thousands of fishing, boating and recreation jobs,” U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown said. “The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has helped keep Lake Erie healthy for Ohioans to enjoy, has helped preserve the lake’s natural biological diversity, and has ensured that Lake Erie and its tributaries can continue to be utilized for commerce and shipping. We must do all we can to protect and preserve Lake Erie.”

“Sustaining a healthy Lake Erie is a key to economic prosperity in our region. From the Western Basin to the Cleveland lakefront, GLRI programs represent investments in our future,” U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur said. “This is especially true of programs to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff. I will continue to support efforts to improve water quality and safeguard Lake Erie, our greatest natural asset.”

“Reducing nutrient pollution begins on land,” said Patty Birkholz, Director of the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes. “Working with our farmers to decrease agricultural sources of nitrogen and phosphorous will lead to healthier rivers and lakes, and in turn stronger coastal communities. The Michigan Office of the Great Lakes and the Department of

Environmental Quality are elated that the EPA recognizes the extraordinary opportunity in these areas, and are thankful for its leadership on this critical issue.”

"This is another example of the benefits of a federal-state-local partnership working together to improve Lake Erie," said Ohio EPA Director Scott Nally.

The Lake Erie projects announced today are:

\$780,745 to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for a Lucas County Stormwater Demonstration Project: This project expands ongoing efforts to improve urban stormwater management throughout the Ohio portion of the Lake Erie watershed. This project will demonstrate the use of green infrastructure (bioswales, pervious pavement, community rain gardens and bio-retention cells) at nine highly visible locations and assess the effectiveness of these measures to reduce nutrient and sediment loads in the Maumee River watershed.

\$350,000 to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality For Nutrient Reduction in the River Raisin and Lake Erie Basin: This project will reduce agricultural sources of nitrogen and phosphorus by 30 -50 percent through the installation of 133 water control structures on 4,000 – 5,000 acres of tilled cropland. Environmental benefits will include a reduction in nitrate and dissolved reactive phosphorus loadings from the treated areas to the River Raisin watershed and the Western Lake Erie Basin. This project builds on an earlier GLRI project which promoted voluntary best management practices designed to reduce nutrients from agricultural operations in the Raisin River watershed.

\$414,765 to the Nature Conservancy for Nutrient Reduction in the South Findlay Area of the Upper Blanchard Watershed: The project will reduce nutrient loading to the Upper Blanchard River Watershed, south of Findlay, Ohio, through the use of two-stage ditches, buffer strips and cropping systems which will filter nutrients and trap sediment. This project is expected to prevent 1,644 tons of sediment, 5,647 pounds of nitrogen and 3,406 pounds of phosphorus from reaching Lake Erie during the first three years after the erosion control measures are implemented.

\$472,491 to the University of Toledo for Reduction in Nutrient, Sediment and Bacterial Loading in Maumee Bay State Park: The project will make Maumee State Park Beach safer by reducing bacteria, sediment and nutrient loading from Wolf Creek. A bed-load sediment collector and a sedimentation pond will be installed adjacent to Wolf Creek. A wetland will also be constructed to restore riparian habitat.

\$527,152 to the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for a Powell Creek Nutrient Reduction Project: This project will implement nutrient reduction practices recommended in the approved Total Maximum Daily Load for Powell Creek within the Maumee River basin and demonstrate the environmental benefits of targeting nutrient reduction actions in small geographical areas. These practices include replacing failing septic systems, planting 3,600 acres of cover crops, managing controlled drainage on 320 acres, and restoring or installing 20 acres of wetlands. This project is expected to prevent 9,077 pounds of nitrogen, 2,586 pounds of phosphorous and 908 tons of sediment from reaching Lake Erie each year.

\$193,923 to The Ohio State University to Increase Nutrient Management Plan Expertise in the Blanchard Watershed: The project will increase the technical skills of agricultural professionals working in the Blanchard River watershed in Ohio, particularly pertaining to the development of Nutrient Management Plans (NMPs) for farms. NMP implementation will be focused on fields with the greatest potential to address dissolved reactive phosphorus loading in the Blanchard Watershed.

\$265,980 to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to Reduce Sediment and Nutrients Entering the Western Lake Erie Basin: The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development will use this funding to increase implementation of effective conservation practices on farm fields to significantly reduce the quantity of sediment and nutrients discharged into the Western Lake Erie Basin. The project will prevent 30,400 tons of sediment, 42 tons of phosphorus and 67 tons of nitrogen from entering Lake Erie tributaries; 176 acres of wetlands will be restored.

EPA also announced four additional GLRI grants for projects in Michigan that will improve water quality in Lake Huron and Lake Michigan:

\$499,741 to the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Initiative for the Kids Creek Stormwater Reduction Project: This project will improve water quality on a major tributary to Kids Creek, an impaired stream in the Grand Traverse Bay watershed, by replacing underground culverts and channelized ditches with a natural meandering channel. The new stream channel will eliminate 73,000 square feet of impervious area, establish 27,000 square feet of floodplain and create a 15- to 30-foot-wide buffer. Green infrastructure will also be installed to further reduce stormwater and sedimentation impacts to Kids Creek.

\$995,204 to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality for Kawkawlin River Targeted Phosphorus and E. Coli Reduction: This project will implement best management practices (BMPs) identified in the Kawkawlin River Watershed Management Plan. The BMPs include installing six miles of agricultural buffers, 1,700 acres of wind barriers, 1,000 feet of livestock exclusion fencing and planting 6,000 acres of cover crops. This project is expected to prevent E. coli, 15,491 pounds of phosphorus (30 percent of the load reduction goal for the watershed) and 10,921 tons of sediment from reaching Saginaw Bay each year.

\$798,282 to the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly for Restoration of Riparian Areas in the Muskegon River Watershed: This project will reforest more than 400 acres of riparian land, restore 150 acres of streambank using native vegetation, put 150 acres of revegetated or natural riparian land into conservation easements, develop 14 forest stewardship plans and implement proper erosion control best management practices at four riparian sites in high priority sub-watersheds of the Muskegon River. This project is expected to prevent 100 tons of sediment, 1,000 pounds of phosphorus and 6,000 pounds of nitrogen from reaching the Muskegon River, the Muskegon Lake Area of Concern and Lake Michigan each year.

\$189,376 to Michigan State University for Locating and Targeting High-Impact Farm Fields to Reduce Phosphorus Discharges: This project will provide electronic mapping technology to agricultural conservation technicians (such as federal and state natural resource agency employees) that will help the technicians identify and target

farm fields that are especially prone to high rates of phosphorus discharge. The technicians can then begin working with the owners of these targeted fields and encourage the implementation of conservation practices such as cover crops and improved management of phosphorus and drainage water. As a result of this project, conservation practice implementation can be focused on farm fields having the greatest impacts on water quality, ultimately resulting in a reduction of soluble phosphorus loading in the Saginaw basin.

Today's announcement is the most recent in a series of events being held around the Great Lakes region to highlight EPA's 2012 GLRI grants for restoration and protection projects. The GLRI, initially proposed by President Obama in February 2009, is the largest investment in the Great Lakes in more than two decades. More information about the Initiative is available at www.glri.us.