



Partnering to Mitigate Harmful Algal Blooms

Background

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), or blue green algae, are naturally occurring; however, their frequency and intensity are increasing. The rises in frequency are tightly linked to anthropogenic activities influencing nutrient delivery to surface water resources. Excess nutrients create a “greening” effect with the growth of algae, which challenges healthy ecosystem functionality. Local water impairments, such as the Toledo, Ohio drinking water crisis in 2014, demonstrate the significant water damages that can occur if the issue is left without scientific remediation.

In a preliminary review of Extension programs in North Central Region Water Network’s 12-state partnership, HABs related information availability varies from state to state. Additionally, because HABs are a multi-faceted threat, multiple state agencies are involved in public-facing HABs activity. This variability demonstrates the need for uniform up-to-date HAB information and resources based on the latest research to be available across the region.

Extension and Water Resources Research Institutes (WRRIs) are located at Land-grant universities. With Extension on the frontlines of making change and WRRIs focused on research related to local water issues, their partnership is critical to providing the best public service. This project is an Extension-driven effort taking the results from research, including WRI sponsored research, and transforming it into accessible information and tangible

tools for the public through extension and outreach in concert with state-based harmful algal bloom prevention, monitoring, and response efforts.

Goals/Action

This project is working to:

- Document existing state programming responses to harmful algal bloom related issues
- Assess outreach programming needs in the North Central Region
- Develop recommendations for strengthening harmful algal bloom research and outreach throughout the region

As a part of this work, the team will host a working session in conjunction with the 2018 North Central Region One Water Action Forum in December 2018 to discuss current state responses and programming needs and a whitepaper will be developed as a result, outlining next steps to address Extension needs related to HABs.

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The North Central Region Water Network comprises 12 Land-grant colleges and universities:

