



News Release

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Ohio Public-Private Partnership Delivers Data on Grand Lake St. Marys

To assist in the ongoing battle against harmful algal blooms in Grand Lake St. Marys, Ohio EPA and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) have partnered with an Ohio-based manufacturer of water monitoring systems to collect water quality data from four stations strategically positioned in the 13,000-acre lake.

The water monitoring stations from YSI Incorporated send the data back to managers at Ohio EPA and ODNR so they can see what is transpiring below the surface of the lake. The live data is available to the public at livelakedata.com. The announcement was made this afternoon at Grand Lake St. Marys State Park.

“We have created a strategic partnership with an Ohio-based company that saves the state money while providing timely data on the lake’s water quality,” Ohio EPA Director Scott J. Nally said. “This has saved Ohio EPA a lot of time. Without this equipment, staff would have had to travel to the lake for 40 straight days to gather the data.”

“YSI works with professionals around the world to help protect water resources. We definitely wanted to reach out to the professionals in our own state when we learned about the economic impact to the community due to toxic algae issues with the lake,” said Gayle Rominger, executive vice president of the Yellow Springs-based YSI Incorporated.

After discussions with the two Ohio agencies, YSI mounted a quick response to their needs. They designed the four monitoring systems and, along with state personnel, had them installed in less than two weeks. With the systems online and reporting data to shore, managers such as Scott Fletcher, operations manager for Ohio State Parks, put the data to use immediately.

Staff from ODNR said the real-time data from the YSI systems helped them better manage the process of applying the June alum treatments to the lake to reduce phosphorus. The system allowed the department staff to monitor dissolved oxygen (DO) levels during the alum application.

The attempt to reduce the levels of phosphorus, which feeds the algae, is one step in the multi-faceted, multi-year approach at the lake. Continuous data from the YSI systems will feed state officials information throughout the project. In addition to these real-time sites, the U.S. Geological Survey also maintains a monitoring station on the lake, which measures water quality at two points in the water column.

Further afield, Dr. Harry Gibbons, water quality lead at TetraTech, the state's consultant for the alum project, accesses the water quality data for Grand Lake St. Marys from his office in Seattle, Wash.

"I had remote access to the real-time data, which allows me to review one to seven days of data and make recommendations for the next day's alum treatment operation. I was able to base my recommendations on a comprehensive dataset; this is a superior method to manual sampling methods to collect data," Dr. Gibbons said.

"Seeing live dissolved oxygen (DO) and pH levels – and correlating data from cloud cover and wind patterns with the continuous water quality data — allowed for targeted treatment in this dynamic water body. When DO concentration was high enough, we could proceed with applying the alum. Importantly, no fish kills occurred because of the alum treatment," Dr. Gibbons added.

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About algal blooms at Grand Lake St. Marys: Grand Lake St. Marys is Ohio's largest inland lake. Over the years, the lake has become increasingly enriched by phosphates and nitrates from man-made and natural sources. These nutrients, as well as the discovery of algal toxins in 2009, have contributed to the decline of the lake's water quality. Ohio EPA and various federal, state and local partners are working within the lake's watershed to achieve improvements along streams that feed the lake which, in turn, will improve water quality in the lake.

About YSI: [YSI Inc.](#) is a global company that designs sensor instrumentation and real-time data collection systems for professionals who protect natural resources and aquatic life.