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Ohio EPA Director's Western Basin Stops Highlight Efforts to Address Lake Erie Nutrient, Bacteria Issues

Ohio EPA Director Craig W. Butler is visiting sites and meeting with local officials in Toledo and Oregon today to get an update on local projects and emphasize Ohio's focus on improving and protecting Lake Erie.

"Lake Erie is one of Ohio's most important natural and economic assets. Protecting it is critically important for our future generations," Director Butler said.

Director Butler and his team first stopped in Toledo to tour the Bay View Wastewater Treatment Plant and discuss the city's ongoing Toledo Waterways Initiative. They also visited the Oakdale Miami storage basin construction site.

The city already has eliminated untreated sewage overflows from the wastewater treatment plant. With the addition of the Oakdale Miami storage basin and similar projects, the city will gradually eliminate sewage overflows into local streams and Lake Erie, where they contribute to bacteria and nutrient issues. The city is more than halfway through the 18-year project, a portion of which is being funded through low-interest loans from Ohio EPA. The loan assistance from Ohio EPA is projected to save the city about \$35.6 million in interest payments versus market rate loans.

In Oregon, the city's water treatment plant was featured. The city upgraded its lab to process samples for microcystin, a type of toxin that can be produced by blue-green algae. Ohio EPA will sample public water systems for microcystins in response to a bloom event, but Oregon and several other Lake Erie water systems have taken the initiative to voluntarily sample for them. Oregon now processes its own microcystin samples as well as those for several other area water systems in an effort to ensure area drinking water quality.

Ohio EPA has developed a proactive harmful algal bloom response strategy for public water systems and updates the document annually. The 2014 draft [response strategy](#) calls for voluntary weekly sampling for microcystin and more frequent sampling if microcystin is detected above 5 parts per billion in a water system's untreated water.

Also while in Oregon, the group looked at a section of a larger project to improve stream quality in Wolf Creek, which runs through Oregon municipal property and eventually drains near Maumee Bay State Park. The city, with funding from a federal-state grant, is redesigning the parking areas and storm drainage swales to slow and filter runoff, reducing nutrients, bacteria and sedimentation in the creek.

"Ohio EPA is glad to partner with these communities. They deserve credit for taking ownership of their water resources and working to improve and protect them," Director Butler said.