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### **Water Quality Report Issued for Small Tributaries to Lake Erie, Maumee River**

A water quality [report](#) issued by Ohio EPA this week details findings on tributary streams to the Maumee River and Lake Erie. The Agency is accepting public comments on the draft report until June 11, 2012.

Stream data was collected in 2006 and 2008 and an independent contractor began data analysis in 2010. The draft report includes conclusions from the data analysis and suggestions for improving water quality. A study of the Maumee River mainstem by Ohio EPA staff begins this year.

In both watersheds, the leading causes of water quality impairment were caused by nutrient enrichment and sedimentation. Sources of nutrient and sediment loadings vary with the mixed land use in the region. Approximately 56 percent of the land is in cultivated row crops and 29 percent is developed urban land.

In the lower Maumee River tributaries, most of the impairments are tied to urban runoff and storm sewers as well as channelization of streams. In the direct Lake Erie tributaries, the impairments are tied to crop production, channelization, urban runoff and storm sewers, failing home septic systems, industrial runoff and landfills and contaminated sediments.

These streams are part of the Maumee Area of Concern. Combined, streams in the two watersheds drain approximately 282 square miles in Lucas, Wood and Ottawa counties.

Public comments on the report are important because a water quality restoration plan is community driven, relying on local officials, watershed groups and landowners to implement many strategies for improving their watershed.

A number of government, community and conservation groups already are working on water quality improvement projects. These include Partners for Clean Streams, Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, University of Toledo, The Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper.

The report suggests a number of actions that can improve water quality.

- Repairing or replacing failing home septic systems and investigating the feasibility of connecting unsewered communities to existing public sewer systems.
- Installing grassed waterways and vegetated buffers to slow sheet runoff and filter sediment.
- Promoting decentralized storm water practices to reduce sediment in storm water runoff and improve infiltration of storm water into the ground.

Ohio is required by the federal Clean Water Act to identify waters that do not meet water quality standards and develop methods to bring the affected waters into compliance. This is known as the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program, which calculates the maximum amount of pollutants a water body can receive on a daily basis without violating water quality standards. The TMDL program can improve the quality of a stream by taking a comprehensive look at all pollution sources. This includes point sources such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial facilities as well as nonpoint sources, including runoff from urban and agricultural areas.

Comments on the draft report may be mailed to Cherie Blair, Ohio EPA Northwest District Office, 347 N. Dunbridge Road, Bowling Green, OH 43402, or emailed to [cherie.blair@epa.state.oh.us](mailto:cherie.blair@epa.state.oh.us) by the close of business on June 11, 2012. Comments received after this date may be considered as time permits. After consideration of comments, Ohio EPA will submit the document to U.S. EPA for approval.

