

Consultations on the Recommended Binational Phosphorus Reduction Targets for Lake Erie:
SUMMARY OF COMMENTS
February 19, 2016

This document has been prepared to summarize public input received during the comment period for the recommended draft binational phosphorus load reduction targets for Lake Erie.

Information about the draft targets was made available both online, through <http://nutrientsbinational.net/>, and respective Environment and Climate Change Canada and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency websites, as well as through a number of binational and domestic face-to-face meetings with interested stakeholders including agricultural commodity groups, municipalities, Conservation Authorities, First Nations, non-government organizations, and others.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency solicited input from June 25 to August 31, 2015. Environment and Climate Change Canada solicited input from June 30 to August 31, 2015.

Feedback received included both technical comments on the targets as well as ideas for action. The following summarizes both the comments received, as well as the Nutrients Annex Subcommittee's recommendations following review and consideration of the feedback:

Consultation Q#1 (Canada and US): What do you think about our recommended phosphorus reduction targets for the western basin and central basin of Lake Erie, as well as for watersheds with significant nearshore cyanobacterial blooms?

- The majority of respondents supported the draft targets.
- A few expressed concerns about whether reaching targets would achieve desired ecosystem responses.
- Many highlighted the severity of the issue in the western basin of Lake Erie and suggested that implementation activities in this basin be given first priority.

The Nutrients Annex subcommittee recommended that these targets be adopted.

Consultation Q#2 (Canada): What do you think about our not recommending a target for the Eastern Basin at this time?

- Commenters were split in their responses.
- Some said more scientific certainty was required before setting a target for the eastern basin.
- Others advised that the precautionary principle should be applied and that a target should be set now in order to drive on-the-ground action to reduce loads from eastern basin while continuing to increase scientific certainty.

The Nutrients Annex subcommittee recommended that a target for the eastern basin be established after additional research is completed.

Consultation Q#3 (US and Canada): What do you think about the nearshore priority watersheds we identified for phosphorus reduction?

- Many commenters concurred with the list of identified watersheds.
- Some questioned why particular watersheds were chosen and not others.

The Nutrients Annex subcommittee recommended that further communication regarding the reasons for selecting priority watersheds (i.e., where there are significant local nearshore algae issues) was needed, and that other priority watersheds for phosphorus reductions would be identified in domestic action plans.

Consultation Q#4: Any ideas for action (US)? Anything else you want to tell us (Canada)?

- Many comments provided suggestions related to the development and implementation of domestic action plans (DAPs) to meet the targets (due in 2018), as well as suggestions related to monitoring, modelling and research. Suggestions included:

DAP Development and Implementation

- Stakeholder engagement in the development of DAPs
- Watershed plans for all watersheds
- Focus on BMPs that reduce dissolved reactive phosphorus
- Use Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the development of DAPs
- Load reduction allocation across and within sectors, sources and regions: How will this be determined?
- Consider return on investment and economic impacts

Monitoring, Modelling, & Research

- Baseline & measuring progress – monitoring
- How to account for uncertainty & set realistic goals?
- Climate change: how will climate change affect our ability to reach targets?
- Zebra mussels: role and how to address?
- Atmospheric deposition, groundwater and dams: role in retaining and releasing phosphorus?

The Nutrients Annex subcommittee noted these comments and referred them to the federal, state and provincial agencies responsible for the development of domestic action plans.