

News From:
Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie



A Report by Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie
“MONEY DOWN THE TOILET: How politicians spent \$614,971,575 to look good while polluters poisoned Lake Erie”

News Conference Thursday, September 5, 10:30am, Cullen Park in Point Place

Visuals: Dollar amounts for each year written on separate posters, then lit and dropped into a toilet.

On September 5, at Toledo’s Cullen Park on N. Summit St, Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie (ACLE) will release the results of research showing politicians spent over a half-billion dollars since Toledo’s water crisis to supposedly “clean up Lake Erie” that has done nothing to improve the lake.

ACLE researchers combed through state and federal spending from 2014 through Ohio’s recently adopted budget that extends through 2021. *(See two spreadsheets attached)*

“We identified 614,971,575 of our tax dollars that people should seriously question if they’re concerned about Lake Erie,” said ACLE coordinator, Mike Ferner. “Politicians like to say this funding shows they’re doing something, but we say the money went down the toilet because it did absolutely nothing to identify who is responsible for poisoning the lake or to hold them accountable.”

“Lake Erie continues to deteriorate because politicians lack the backbone to even acknowledge what is most likely the biggest source of pollution, the animal factories proliferating in our watershed,” adding that “instead of placing a moratorium on them, [42 additional ones](#) were added since 2014, with only 29 receiving any kind of permit from the state.” *(see fig. 2 in linked EWG report and the attached pdf “Total number...”)*

“Nearly 800 of these factories every year pump out more than twice the amount of waste of Chicago and Los Angeles combined. That tsunami of feces and urine is dumped, untreated, on fields draining directly into our source of drinking water. We not only allow it to happen, we help pay for it. Big Ag lobbyists make sure the animal factory industry is politically insulated from accountability and subsidized, to boot. It’s beyond crazy. It’s criminal!”

The dollars identified by ACLE as misspent went to three Ohio departments, Agriculture, EPA and Natural Resources, plus Ohio’s share of Great Lakes Restoration (GLRI) funds from the U.S.EPA.

“It paid for farmers to practice what are euphemistically called ‘best management practices,’ like buffer strips, that studies show do nothing to keep dissolved Phosphorus out of rural streams. It paid

(more)

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for multiple studies on cyanobacteria; for satellite-enabled systems to tell us when an algal bloom moves towards our water intake; to clean up toxic waste dumps and keep out Asian carp. But none of it – none of it – addressed what’s most likely the root of the problem – the proliferating animal factories. And it’s not because we don’t know enough yet, but because politicians won’t stand up to the Farm Bureau and animal factory operators.”

ACLE recently wrote [to Governor DeWine and legislative leaders](#) documenting 1) that money is being spent on programs which don’t work and 2) that dissolved Phosphorus levels in Lake Erie have risen steadily since the mid-90’s, when animal factories started arriving in the watershed and are now as bad as in 1974.

“It’s plain for all to see, except politicians who don’t want to, that Lake Erie has gotten worse, not better, since 2014. That will only continue until we raise enough hell to make politicians protect public health and Lake Erie instead of polluters,” Ferner concluded.

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Data sources for “Money Down the Toilet”

[Budget in Detail, Main Operating Budget for FY 2014-2015 by Ohio Legislative Services Commission](#)
[Budget in Detail, Main Operating Budget for FY 2018-2019 by Ohio Legislative Services Commission as](#)
[Redbook: LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal, Department of Agriculture, April 2019](#)
[Redbook: LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal, Department of Natural Resources, April 2019](#)
[Redbook: LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, April 2019](#)
[Redbook: LBO Analysis of Executive Budget Proposal, Lake Erie Commission, April 2019](#)
[LSC Greenbook: Analysis of the Enacted Budget, Lake Erie Commission, August 2015](#)
[Excel spreadsheet of all GLRI projects \(thru 9/30/2018\) - corrected 2/21/2019](#)