

Western Lake Erie HAB Seasonal Forecast

2026-06-25

Summary: NOAA NCCOS and partners forecast the cyanobacterial harmful algal bloom (HAB) in western Lake Erie this summer to have a severity of 3.5, with a potential range of 3-4.5, which is similar to 2024 but higher than 2025. The forecast bloom severity is likely a moderate bloom. At their peak, moderate blooms tend to impact about a third of the western basin and are likely to have some patches of noticeable scum. The bloom severity depends on the load of total bioavailable phosphorus (TBP) from the Maumee River from March to July. Slightly higher than normal rainfall and river flow are expected through July, which is accounted for in the forecast. The bloom varies in size and location due to wind. We expect a bloom start in July, and a bloom peak in August that likely continues into September. At this severity we expect the bloom to remain mostly in the western basin. While toxicity varies throughout the duration of the bloom, toxins will concentrate in any surface scums that form during calm weather. People and pets should not swim in areas with scum. Information on the location and intensity of the bloom can be found at [NOAA's Lake Erie Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast webpage](#), in collaboration with [NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory \(GLERL\)](#). For additional information on safe recreation, please visit [Ohio EPA's webpage on HABs](#).

The severity is based on the quantity (biomass) of the bloom over a sustained 30 day period. The phosphorous loads were estimated by the Heidelberg University National Center for Water Quality Research. Projected July river discharge for the Maumee River uses forecasts from the National Weather Service - Ohio River Forecast Center. Models used in the forecast are provided by NOAA's NCCOS, the University of Michigan, and North Carolina State University. The forecast will be updated in late July as we have new information on the bloom size and severity.

Predicted Bloom Severity

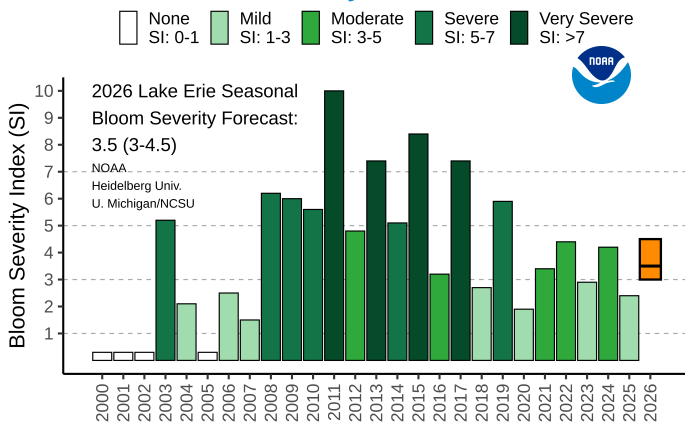


Fig. 1. Predicted bloom severity as compared to previous years. The wide orange bar is the likely range of severity based on current forecast uncertainty (3-4.5; Moderate bloom). The uncertainty in the bloom severity forecast is due to uncertainty in both the bloom severity models and the forecast river flow and TBP loads through the end of July.

Total Bioavailable Phosphorus

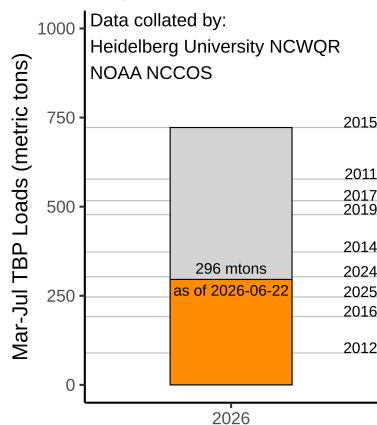


Fig. 3. Estimated total bioavailable phosphorus (TBP) load accumulated from the Maumee River near Waterville, OH to date. The right axis denotes the TBP load from selected previous years.

Cumulative Total Bioavailable Phosphorus

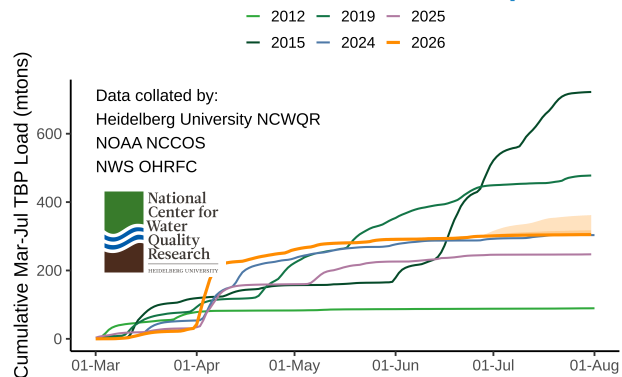


Fig. 2. Estimated cumulative TBP loads for the Maumee River (Waterville, OH). Each line denotes cumulative load for different years. 2026 is in orange: the solid line is the estimated load to June 22 and predicted load for the rest of the loading season (thru July); the darker and lighter orange shading show, respectively, the likely and possible load ranges for the remainder of the season.

Satellite Image - True Color

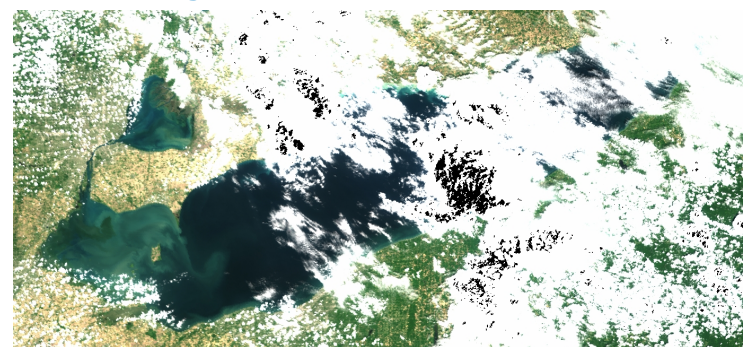


Fig. 4. True color image for 20 June 2026 derived from the Copernicus Sentinel-3a/b satellite. The western basin has substantial suspended sediment (brown color) along the Ohio coast.

For more information visit: coastalscience.noaa.gov/science-areas/habs/hab-forecasts/lake-erie or ncwqr.gov

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