

Western Lake Erie Harmful Algal Bloom Early Season Projection

29 May 2019, Projection 04



The severity of the western Lake Erie cyanobacterial harmful algal bloom (HAB) is dependent on input of bioavailable phosphorus from the Maumee River during the loading season (March 1-July 31). This product gives an estimate of potential bloom severity based on a combination of measurements to date and forecasts of phosphorus loads into July. The projection will be updated weekly with new data and weather models through the end of June. The final seasonal forecast will be made on July 11 using the measured phosphorus loads for the spring.



We project that the bloom will have a severity greater than 6.5 (much greater than 2018). The increase from last week reflects a new forecast of yet another heavy rain this week in the Maumee River basin. There is still uncertainty in the forecasts of the locally-heavy rainfall events in June, and the maximum severity includes the possible occurrence of rain over the next several weeks. Any bloom that develops will change with time and move with the wind. Severity forecasts do not indicate toxicity.

Total bioavailable phosphorus (TBP) is the sum of dissolved phosphorus and the portion of particulate phosphorus available for HAB development. The TBP loads are projected based on Heidelberg University data, river forecasts from the National Weather Service Ohio River Forecast Center (through early July), and previous years to the end of July.

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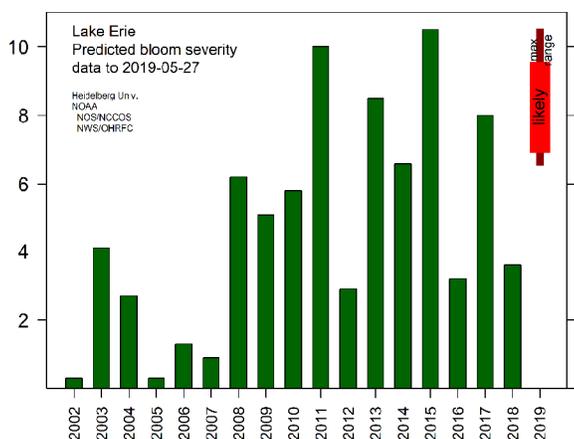


Figure 1. Projected bloom severity compared to previous years. The wide bar is the likely range of severity based on data from the last 15 years. The narrow bar is the potential range of severity. Because the forecast uses modeled discharge for two months, there is uncertainty in maximum bloom severity.

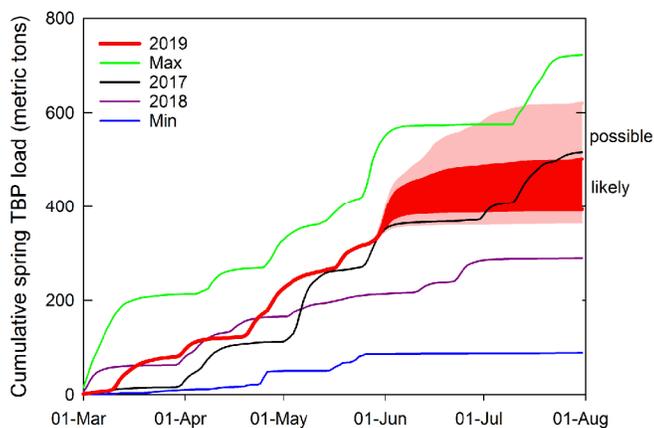


Figure 2. Cumulative total bioavailable phosphorus (TBP) loads for the Maumee River (based on Waterville). Each line denotes a different year. 2019 is in red, the solid line is the measured load to May 27th, the red area shows the likely range for the remainder of the loading season, and the light red shows the possible range..

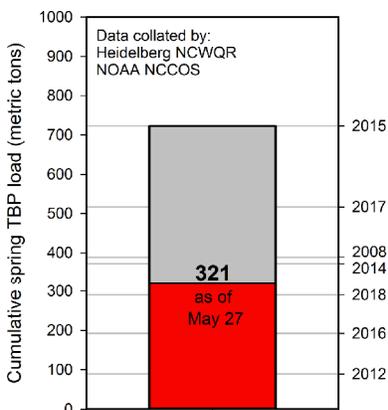


Figure 3. Total bioavailable phosphorus (TBP) load accumulated from the Maumee River near Waterville to date. The right axis denotes the TBP load from selected previous years. Loads through May 27 fall between those for 2018 and 2014.

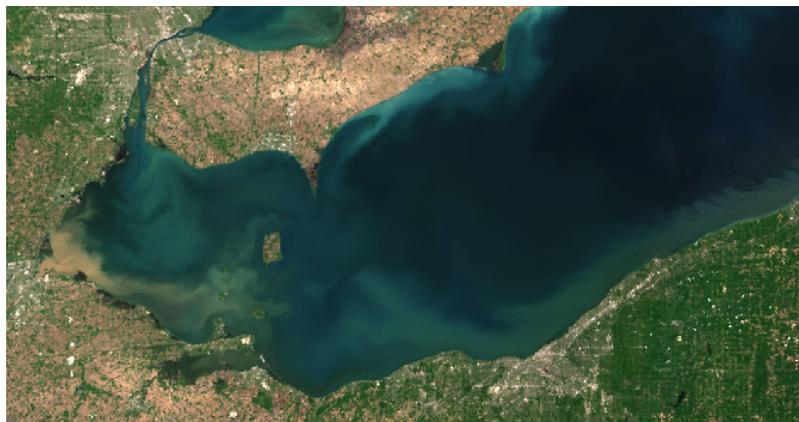


Figure 4. True color image on 27 May 2019 taken by the OLCI on the Copernicus Sentinel-3B satellite. A plume of sediment from the Maumee River causes the tan color in the western basin. Sediment resuspended from near the shore produces gray colors in the central basin.