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## Wastewater project diverts sewage from fragile Lake Erie watershed

With nearly 96 percent of the current systems in failure, Erie County Commissioners are using a \$5.95 million USDA Rural Development wastewater loan and grant combination to replace on-site waste treatment systems that have been improperly discharging into and polluting the Sandusky Bay for more than 40 years.

The commissioners also are overseeing the construction of a wastewater collection system for the Village of Bay View and neighboring Bay Bridge area, located about 50 miles east of Toledo in the Lake Erie Watershed. Once completed, wastewater from more than 851 residents and 17 commercial sites will be sent to an existing wastewater treatment facility in the neighboring community of Sandusky.



USDA Photo: Heather Hartley

The Bay View peninsula is a vital ecological and economic region located in the Western Basin of Lake Erie. In recent years, the area increasingly has been plagued by toxic algal blooms believed caused by a combination of nutrient pollution (fertilizer runoff; predominantly phosphorus and manure) and the improper discharge of human waste.

In August 2014, an algal bloom triggered the emergency shutdown of the drinking water intake for the City of Toledo, leaving hundreds of thousands of people in the state's fourth largest city without a safe, reliable source of potable water for three days. Overall, Lake Erie supplies drinking water for an estimated 11 million people in parts of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Canada.

The Bay View project was among nearly \$387 million awarded to 116 recipients in 40 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico during USDA Rural Development's 2014 Earth Day commemoration. The Department provided \$150 million in grants through the Farm Bill plus \$237 million in loans and grants from USDA's Water and Environmental Program.

Earth Day is observed annually on April 22 to raise awareness about the role each person can play to protect vital natural resources and safeguard the environment. Since the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, the event has expanded to include citizens and governments in more than 195 countries.

**Obligation Amount:** Farm Bill-funded \$3,035,000 loan; \$2,911,900 grant

**Date of Obligation:** April 2014

**Congressional District:** Representative Kaptur, District 9; Senators Brown and Portman

**Partners:** Erie County Commissioners

**Demographics:** The Western Basin of Lake Erie; Northwest Ohio

**Impact:** More than 800 residences and 17 area businesses and institutions no longer will discharge raw sewage into Lake Erie's Western Basin, which continues to struggle with harmful algal blooms that render drinking water unsafe.