



For Immediate Release: December 16, 2020

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Sierra Club Petitions EPA to Clean Up the Ohio River

Sierra Club Petitions U.S. EPA for Numeric Nutrient Standards for the Ohio River – After years of little or no progress, the Trump administration has taken the Clean Water Act in the wrong direction. The Sierra Club and other water quality organizations are filing this petition on the anniversary of the Safe Drinking Water Act to urge the incoming administration to reverse direction and meet the goals of the Clean Water Act

Ohio River – Today, the Sierra Club and nine other organizations filed a petition asking the United States Environmental Protection Agency to take long overdue action to reduce the nutrient pollution loading in the Ohio River. This petition comes after the Trump administration worked to erode the fundamental protections in the Clean Water Act following years of slow progress in cleaning up the Ohio River.

Albert Ettinger, one of the attorneys who drafted the petition, stated: “For decades, EPA’s approach to stopping nutrient pollution and harmful algal blooms consisted mainly of pressuring the states to do something. The last four years there has not even been that pressure. It’s time now for the EPA to take action to reduce pollution harming the Ohio River and its tributaries as well as waters downstream.”

This petition is being filed on the anniversary of the enactment of the Safe Drinking Water Act on December 16, 1974 to help call attention to the serious water quality problems caused by excessive nutrients in the Ohio River watershed. Excessive nutrient loading can cause



Harmful Algae Blooms (HABs) that are a threat to human health, including drinking water. Large HABs occurred in the Ohio River in 2019 (300 miles) and 2015 (700 miles).

Members of the Sierra Club and the other organizations have urged the states, the Ohio River Sanitation Commission (ORSANCO) and EPA to take action to provide better protection against excessive nutrient pollution for many years, with little positive result. In 2008, the Sierra Club joined with other organizations to petition for numeric nutrient limits and a total maximum daily load for the Mississippi River. EPA opposed that petition, stating that it preferred to work regionally and with states. This petition will seek to hold the EPA to its word.

Hank Graddy, Chair of the Sierra Club Mississippi River Issue Team and the Kentucky Water Team explained, "Every three years, Kentucky and other states and ORSANCO are supposed to review their water quality standards and make improvements where necessary. For 20 years, I have been urging Kentucky to adopt numeric nutrient standards. This year, as in past years, I have urged ORSANCO to do the same. In September, ORSANCO and the Army Corps of Engineers finalized their Five Year Plan for the Ohio River, and failed to even mention the need for setting numeric nutrient water quality standards. This failure requires us to file this petition."

Additionally, the petition seeks the establishment of a total maximum daily load limit for nitrogen and phosphorus for the Ohio River.

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About the Sierra Club: The Sierra Club is the nation's largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization. For more information, visit <http://www.sierraclub.org>