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AWWA PRESS RELEASE

AWWA to Congress: Controlling nutrient pollution key to preventing cyanotoxins in drinking water

February 5, 2015

(DENVER) - In [testimony today](#) before the U.S. House Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy, American Water Works Association Water Utility Council Chair Aurel Arndt stressed that the solution to keeping drinking water safe from cyanotoxins begins with better managing nutrient pollution.

The [subcommittee hearings](#) are in response to an event in August 2014 when the City of Toledo, Ohio, found the cyanotoxin microcystin in finished water and issued a "do not drink" advisory for more than 400,000 people. The contamination was the result of an algal bloom in Lake Erie.

"We recommend that Congress consider ways to greatly increase the effectiveness of nonpoint source pollution programs, including the question of whether nonpoint sources of pollution should be brought under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act," said Arndt, who is also CEO of Lehigh County Authority in Allentown, Pa.

Speaking on behalf of AWWA's 50,000 water professionals, Arndt noted that cyanotoxin contamination is always associated with excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus in water. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, nonpoint sources – predominantly runoff and air deposition – account for 90 percent of the nitrogen and 75 percent of the phosphorus in U.S. waterways.

Arndt commended the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's use of the Contaminant Candidate Lists to begin the regulation process of cyanotoxins to protect public health, but he stated that "federal agencies, including EPA and USDA, should use existing authorities to give much higher priority to nutrient reduction projects that protect downstream drinking water supplies and therefore, public health."

The subcommittee hearing focused on H.R. 212, the Drinking Water Protection Act, a bill introduced by Rep. Bob Latta (R-Ohio). The bill would require EPA to develop a strategic plan for dealing with cyanotoxins within 90 days of the bill's passage.

The testimony also highlighted the continuous and proactive work AWWA has undertaken to address this issue, including development of materials on protecting against algal blooms, training on protocols for responding to drinking water emergencies, and a creation of a soon-to-be-published cyanotoxins guide for utility managers.

AWWA President John Donahue testified on the same topic in November 2014 in a hearing in front of the U.S. House Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy.

Other witnesses at the hearing were Dr. Peter Grevatt, director of the Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water at EPA; Mike Baker, chief of the Division of Drinking Water and Ground Waters at Ohio EPA; and Kristy Meyer, managing director at the Agricultural, Health, and Clean Water Programs at the Ohio Environmental Council.






Chaired by U.S. Rep. John Shimkus (R-Ill.), the Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy resides under the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

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Established in 1881, the American Water Works Association is the largest nonprofit, scientific and educational association dedicated to managing and treating water, the world's most important resource. With approximately 50,000 members, AWWA provides solutions to improve public health,

protect the environment, strengthen the economy and enhance our quality of life.

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