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How Giving Legal Rights to Nature Could Help Reduce Toxic Algae Blooms in Lake Erie

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August and September are [peak months](#) for harmful blooms of algae in western Lake Erie. This year's outbreak covered [more than 620 square miles](#) by mid-August. These blooms, which can [kill fish](#) and [pets](#) and [threaten public health](#), are driven [mainly by agricultural pollution](#) and increasingly warm waters due to climate change.

Advocates are looking for new ways to combat this problem. On February 26, 2019, Toledo citizens passed the [Lake Erie Bill of Rights](#), which gives the lake the right to "[exist, flourish, and naturally evolve](#)" and awards citizens the right to a "clean and healthy environment." They join a growing movement – referred to as "Rights of Nature" – providing legal personhood to natural entities.