Moving from **GREEN** to **CLEAN**

**VOLUNTARY, COLLABRATIVE, FARM PROGRAMS**

“...Clean water cannot come at the expense of food production, nor can farming trump the need for clean water. Fortunately, we can have both. One is not exclusive of the other...” -- OFBF testimony, 2015

Adam J. Sharp, OFBF Vice President, Public Policy
Ohio’s Water Resources
A Statewide/National Challenge
LAKES WITH HEALTH WARNINGS

May 2010

After the discovery of toxic blue-green algae at Grand Lake St. Marys this past summer, state officials issued algae health warnings for additional public lakes and reservoirs. Though farm pollutants are the suspected cause of algae issues at Grand Lake and Lake Erie, the source of pollutants for the other bodies of water has not been identified.

Sources: Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Why the Concern?

Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)

- Taste and Odor – Drinking Water
- Foul Beaches
- Reduce Dissolved Oxygen
- Toxins (Nerve, Liver, Skin)
New Legislation

**SB 1**
Only Applies to Farmers In The Western Lake Erie Basin

**SB 150**
Statewide Fertilizer Applicator Certification

Over 6000 certified
Dear friend,

As a farmer in Ohio you have a significant challenge bearing down quickly. Government, special interest groups, the media and the public all expect you to help clean up the state's water resources.

If farmers don't do this on their own, there will be federal and state laws and regulations that will mandate how you farm.

That is why you're receiving this letter signed by nearly all of Ohio's agricultural organizations – to make it clear that farmers must take seriously their responsibility to manage nutrients.

This isn't just an issue around Grand Lake St. Marys or the western basin of Lake Erie. This affects livestock and crop farmers and those who apply manure or use fertilizer in every Ohio county. The harmful algal blooms that are driving public demands for solutions should not be blamed on farmers alone. Municipalities, homeowners and other industries will be expected to do their share to address the problems. But so, too, will agriculture.

There is still a lot of research to be done on exactly how we can best protect water quality while still farming economically. But the public, lawmakers and regulators won't wait for years of research. They're demanding action now, and we're obliged to deliver. Agriculture must begin immediately to reduce nutrient runoff in a manner that can be documented. If this can't be accomplished voluntarily, it will be imposed mandatorily.

A starting point is to commit to the principles of "4R Nutrient Stewardship," which means using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time and with the right placement.

In coming weeks and months you will have opportunities to attend meetings, read articles and otherwise learn about the "4Rs" and other responses to the challenges agriculture is facing. Your agricultural organizations encourage you to actively seek out information, advice and training.

Farmers must proactively solve this challenge. There's more at risk than higher costs of regulation. Unless farmers make significant reductions in nutrient runoff, they will increasingly take the blame for phosphorus loading and toxic algae.

As an industry committed to doing what's right, agriculture should lead the way in accepting responsibility and acting responsibly.

Sincerely,
Ohio's agriculture community
Extraordinary commitment

$1 million part of OFBF water quality action plan

Ohio Farm Bureau is investing $1 million in a comprehensive water quality action plan that is an unprecedented private sector undertaking to improve the state’s water.

“Preserving Ohio’s water quality is a serious issue, and this is a serious response,” said Ohio Farm Bureau Executive Vice President Jack Fisher. “There are few quick fixes and no inexpensive answers but we have to start now.”

“We know there are municipal overflow issues, residential and commercial runoff, treatment problems and other infrastructure issues, invasive species and weather events and a long list of challenges,” Fisher said. “We have to find solutions that protect our water, preserve our ability to grow food and help our state’s businesses and communities. Farmers are willing to do their fair share, and Farm Bureau is committed to that effort.”

Ohio Farm Bureau’s board of trustees voted during a special meeting to commit significant resources to address agriculture’s role in Ohio’s water quality challenges. The decision was made in the wake of a two-day drinking water ban for Toledo residents in early August because of harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie. The board placed special emphasis on the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB).

The plan includes two aggressive goals: Farm Bureau will help all qualifying farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin obtain required fertilizer certification by Earth Day 2015. This April 22 target date will bring farmers into regulatory compliance a full 29 months ahead of the state required deadline.

Further, Farm Bureau will help farmers in the watershed create nutrient management plans, which detail responsible fertilizer use, by Earth Day 2016. These plans exceed state legal requirements.

With thousands of farms in the WLEB, reaching these aggressive goals will require a high degree of cooperation and collaboration with farmers. The Ohio Department of Agriculture and Ohio State University’s College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences are providing regulatory and educational oversight to the fertilizer certification program.

OFBF plans to hire a second staff member to specialize in water quality and nutrient management and expand OFBF’s outreach and programming efforts. Fifteen years ago, OFBF set a national precedent by hiring a doctorate level expert to work with farmers on these issues.

Other Farm Bureau action steps announced in the plan include:
- Partnering with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service and various state agencies to establish a network of demonstration farms, which will assist in farmer training and show the public how viable farming and resource protection go hand in hand;
- Working to gain additional funding for on-farm research projects and dissemination of the study;
- Developing a comprehensive fertilizer certification program;
- Encouraging the development of a water quality index similar to the air pollution index recently developed by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Ohio Farm Bureau’s investment in supporting farmers’ efforts to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to doing their part to protect water quality in Ohio.

Upcoming fertilizer certification classes

- Senate Bill 150 requires anyone who plans to apply fertilizer on more than 50 acres to be certified by 2017. The first training class was held Sept. 12 in Archbold and two more will be held this month in northwest Ohio.
- Sept. 25 – The Lighthouse Banquet Facility, 10055 W. US Rt. 224, Findlay, Ohio 45840
- Sept. 26 – OSU Extension Office, 593 Fairgrounds Dr., Paulding, Ohio 45879

To register, visit http://go.osu.edu/fertilizer.
Voluntary: OSU Coordination

- “Field to Facet” - OSU, Soy, Corn, OABA, OFBF coordinating water research and programming

- Fund faculty and students to implement fertilizer training

- Update Soil Fertility Recommendations, fertilizer placement, education, outreach, 4R, and more
Voluntary: Research

P Index & Edge of Field Research & Promotion

- OSU and USDA-ARS
- $2 million + effort
- 3 year baseline setting
- 3 years of measures practices and results
- Corn, Soy, OABA, OFBF, others
- Results could be demo’ed at Blanchard River sites
Voluntary: NMP Project

Nutrient Management Plans Development & 4R

- 4 New OSU staff to work with farmers to develop NMP’s in WLEB for 3 years
- Provide tech support for private NMP development providers
- Plans will meet “affirmative defense” under 150
- 1 New OSU staff to work with retailer 4R certification
- Partners: OFBF, OSU, Nat. Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Soy, Corn, OABA
Voluntary: RCPP

- Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- $17.5 million
- 70% to Ohio
- On-ground conservation practices for sediment and nutrient management
- OFBF – Education and Outreach
- 60+ partners total: includes Ohio, Indiana and Michigan FB’s
- First sign-up complete in Ohio
Voluntary: Demo Farms

- NRCS Collaboration
- 5 year project
- Sites along Blanchard River
- Farmer, policymaker, public, media education
- Research sites
- Full time employee
Voluntary: Farmer Road Trip!
Policy Development
Voluntary: County Programs

- $140,000 in county grants - collaborative
Voluntary: Additional Items

- Educational Displays – Special Thanks to The Fertilizer Institute
- 4R promotion statewide
  Right Fertz, Rate, Time, Place
- Compliance Assistance brochures
- State budget bill – Ag Loan: Ag-LINK Expansion
Media Campaign
Water Quality Status Report

Ohio Farm Bureau Water Quality Status Report

Ongoing Actions & Accomplishments

Support state legislation that protects Ohio's water:

- Senate Bill (SB) 86 was signed into law, restricting the application of manure and fertilizer on frozen, snow-covered or water-impeded ground in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB). It promotes best practices that work for farmers and are effective for safeguarding water quality. Work continues with leadership of the Ohio General Assembly to expand federal grant programs and enhance the effectiveness of the WLEB..

- SB 152 ensures that equipment used by farmers to apply manure and fertilizer meets the standards of quality and performance. The law, which was supported by the Ohio Farm Bureau, ensures that equipment used in the field is reliable and effective in protecting our state's water quality.

- The Ohio Farm Bureau supported a bill that created a fertilizer applicator certification program. The program helps farmers keep better track of applying manure and fertilizer into lakes and watersheds. The law includes an educational component and encourages farmers to adopt and use nutrient management plans. Thousands of farmers in the WLEB are part of the Ohio Farm Bureau members who have completed fertilizer applicator certification classes.

"We Care"

"Proud of what we have accomplished so far, more to do"

http://www.farmersforwater.org/
Media Campaign
Food Dialogues: WATER
Toledo, Ohio, May 2015

USFRA Sponsored Event: Toledo Tourism Director, Manager of Water Treatment Plant Lead Local Environmentalist, Farmers, OSU, TNC
A diverse partnership of stakeholders who are developing a 20- to 30-year water resource management strategy for Ohio.

Report released September 2015

Ohio Water Trust and Bonding $$$
Steering Committee

- **Business and industry** (Anheuser-Busch)
- **Conservation and environmental advocacy** (LCV, TNC)
- **Finance** (Farm Credit Mid-America)
- **Food and farming** (OFBF, Commodities)
- **Lawn, horticultural, turf** (Scott Miracle-Gro)
- **Municipal water systems** (Village of Ottawa)
- **Public health** (Assoc. of Ohio Health Commissioners)
- **Recreation and tourism** (Lake Erie Shores & Islands)
- **Research, education and outreach** (OSU)
Why Ohio Farmers’ Progressive Approach?

- Right thing to do
- Must do our part
- CWA and U.S. EPA
- Lawsuits
- State Politics
- State’s 40% Reduction Goals
Nutrient Management
Sharp Brothers Farms, LLC

- GPS Mapped
- Grid Sampling
- Variable Rate Appl.
- Cover crops
- Spring /Su. appl. vs. Fall
- Buffers and filters
- Covered Manure Storage
Questions

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