

Water Quality Status Report

Ohio farmers are natural stewards of soil and water. We know we play a significant role in protecting Ohio's water resources for Ohio's families, schools, businesses and communities. Because we take this responsibility seriously, Ohio Farm Bureau's Water Quality Action Plan helps farmers proactively step up our historic efforts to improve and protect water quality for the good of all. This document represents our status report to the public regarding Ohio farmers' commitment to protecting water resources.

The Ohio Farm Bureau Water Quality Action Plan:

- Commits \$1 million in member funds to water quality efforts.
- Encourages farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB) to complete fertilizer application certification two years ahead of what state law requires and complete nutrient management plans.
- Hires additional Farm Bureau staff to help farmers and members improve water quality.
- Creates demonstration farms to showcase new farming techniques that are healthier for our water.
- Strengthens partnerships with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ohio State University, conservation groups and other farm organizations that are working on water quality measures.
- Increases commitment to Healthy Water Ohio, a statewide coalition of water and environmental interests.
- Supports meaningful state legislation that aims to reduce farm runoff.

Ongoing Actions & Accomplishments

Support state legislation that protects Ohio's water

- **Senate Bill 1** (now signed into law) restricts the application of manure and fertilizer on frozen, snow covered or saturated 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 members of the Ohio General Assembly to invest in helping farmers come into compliance.
- **Senate Bill 150**, the first legislation of its kind in the nation, created a fertilizer applicator certification program. The certification helps farmers keep fertilizer from getting into lakes and waterways. 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 6,237 farmers statewide who have completed fertilizer applicator certification classes.



OHIO FARMERS ON HOW THEY PROTECT OHIO'S WATERWAYS

TONY FAETH

Seneca County

Citing his belief that he is simply a steward of the land, Faeth has planted cover crops for decades, which have helped improve soil health and prevent runoff.

"That is what we are in it for, to make the world a better place than when we came to it. It's simple," he said.

DON RALPH

Marion County

Years ago, farmer Don Ralph took nearly 200 acres of land out of production to plant protective filter strips near his farm's waterways. This controls runoff from land that eventually drains into Lake Erie, where Ralph is an avid fisherman.



By using cover crops to enhance organic matter in the soil, Jeff and Carla Wagner hope to improve their land in Seneca County.

Help farmers in the WLEB develop nutrient management plans

Ohio Farm Bureau, Ohio State University and other partners are funding a project that establishes a team of nutrient management experts to help WLEB farmers develop nutrient management plans. Through this effort, thousands of farmers will be encouraged to develop nutrient management plans that exceed state requirements.

Establish a network of demonstration farms through collaboration

Demonstration farms will display established conservation practices and innovative technologies that can achieve sustainable, environmentally responsible food production. The farms are being created through a partnership among the Ohio Farm Bureau, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and others.

Commit additional funding to Ohio State University's edge-of-field study

Research from Ohio State and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to measure phosphorus levels from farms will help identify water quality and conservation practices to address runoff issues across Ohio. Many partners are funding this effort, led by Ohio Small Grains Marketing Program, Ohio Corn Marketing Program and Ohio Soybean Council.

Provide Ohio farmers with expert water quality support

Ohio Farm Bureau is investing member dollars into hiring additional staff, including water quality and research experts, to expand outreach and assist farmers with nutrient management programs and new legal requirements that will aide in protecting water quality.

Increase commitment to Healthy Water Ohio (HwO)

Through the input from hundreds of stakeholders across the state, Ohio Farm Bureau, conservation groups, business and industry, universities, water suppliers, agriculture and others are moving forward with this 20- to 30-year comprehensive, sustainable water resources management plan.



For me to go (to the lake) and look at those guys and say 'I'm the guy that messed up your livelihood,' I never want to have to say that. Ever.

Don Ralph, Marion County farmer

Support county Farm Bureaus' development of water quality programming

Financial and technical support will enable county-level water quality programs, including development of projects such as rain gardens, nutrient management smartphone apps and community outreach programs.

Promote 4-R Nutrient Stewardship program and other conservation practices

Hundreds of thousands of acres across Ohio have been voluntarily enrolled in conservation programs and are managed using conservation practices such as filter strips, no till, or reduced tillage. 4-R means choosing the right nutrient source to apply at the right rate in the right place at the right time.

Work with legislators to secure state funding for water quality initiatives

Farm Bureau will work to ensure that state funding will continue to support Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences' Field to Faucet initiative, OSU Sea Grant, Heidelberg University's National Center of Water Quality Research and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Secure federal funds that will help improve water quality

Ohio Farm Bureau supported a multi-state initiative to secure a Regional Conservation Partnership Program grant worth more than \$12 million that will help Ohio farmers implement conservation practices.

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DAVE BRANDT

Fairfield County

Through his extensive use of cover crops, farmer Dave Brandt has been able to reduce fertilizer use and tillage while improving the ability of his soil to hold water. He regularly hosts workshops where other farmers come to learn his techniques.

"My philosophy is to leave the soil better than I started with," he said

TERRY McCLURE

Paulding County

Over the years McClure has changed how and when he applies phosphorus and concentrates on the "4Rs": using the right fertilizer source at the right rate, at the right time and at the right place. McClure is a board member of The Nature Conservancy in Ohio, a group that works to protect ecologically important lands and waters in a non-confrontational, pragmatic way.

"We want to take care of the land the best we can because we want to make sure it continues to be viable for the next generation," he said.



***"We want to take care
of the land the best we can."***

Terry McClure, Paulding County farmer

Terry McClure is working with scientists on a study at his farm where they are collecting rainwater runoff as part of a three-year study to determine how much phosphorus it contains.

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LONNIE PERRY

Lucas County

For years Lonnie Perry has used a certified crop consultant, closely examined soil tests to make necessary adjustments and kept a close eye on the health of his land. It's all about being a good steward of the land, which is why the Lucas County Farm Bureau member took the state's first fertilizer applicator certification class.

"It's about doing the right thing. I'm doing my part to support clean water and a clean environment. It was great to see so many guys taking action to fix the problem," Perry said.

BILL SHININGER

Fulton County

Bill Shininger serves on the board of supervisors of the county Soil and Water Conservation District. He puts his beliefs into practice on his own farm by reducing how much he tills the land and planting grasses along ditches to hold back soil and nutrients.

"I am passionate about it. I think it's the right thing to do," he said. "It's just who I am."



Ohio's farmers will continue their commitment to serve on the front lines of improving safe and healthy water for our state.

The effort is ongoing. In fact, no other state in the nation is doing as much as Ohio is doing. Along with Ohio Farm Bureau, many other Ohio farm organizations, agribusiness professionals and others from the farm community are working to meet your expectations.

The current challenges, such as algae blooms, will not be solved overnight. Improving water quality cannot come at the expense of food production, nor can farming trump the need for clean water. Farmers are pledging to work with experts using advanced methods and technologies, investing their own money and tapping resources from local, state and national organizations to produce good and abundant food while improving water quality for all Ohioans.

Working together to protect water quality and food production in Ohio is just part of the work Ohio Farm Bureau members do every day. That work is supported by membership dollars and member engagement. We invite you to support our effort by joining, renewing or inviting others to join. Visit GrowWithFB.org to learn more.



OHIO FARM BUREAU
280 N. High St.
Columbus, OH 43215
www.ofbf.org



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