



*Working together for Ohio farmers to advance
agriculture and strengthen our communities.*

Over its 100-year history, the Ohio Farm Bureau has defended the right to farm and given members a voice in their communities. Recently, government leaders in Lucas County made disparaging claims against farmers, prompting the Farm Bureau once again to take a stand on behalf of farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

Ohio Farm Bureau Executive Vice President Adam Sharp, with the support of multiple Ohio agriculture leaders, submitted the following op-ed to the Toledo Blade in response to several recent attacks on Ohio agriculture by Toledo-area leaders.

To put it bluntly, the recent talk about manure from leaders in Lucas County is nothing short of absurd. The latest round of unfounded and uneducated jabs at Ohio agriculture stems from a new lawsuit being filed against the Environmental Protection Agency by Lucas County Commissioners and Toledo City Council members. For years, they were all screaming for the EPA to establish a new TMDL for the Maumee River Watershed to further regulate farmers upstream. Now they're claiming it isn't enough.

The Ohio agriculture community has said for years that a TMDL is not the right path for timely, effective water quality progress and knew that whatever came from these new EPA rules would not satisfy some government officials and organizations that want to regulate livestock farmers, and quite frankly all of Ohio agriculture, into non-existence.

The rhetoric coming from those suing the EPA couldn't be further from the truth.

The commissioners, council members, and the organizations bringing this lawsuit claim farmers are unregulated, when Ohio has one of the most stringent regulatory systems in the nation. Those regulations include extensive ag pollution abatement laws, states that anyone who applies fertilizer on more than 50 acres be certified to do so and restricts farmers from applying manure and fertilizer on frozen, snow-covered or saturated ground in the Western Lake Erie Basin.

They say farmers are unpermitted, when Ohio requires permits for concentrated animal feeding facilities that allow for zero discharge to waters of the state.

They allege that farmers are doing nothing for water quality, when thousands of farmers have enrolled millions of acres in the Lake Erie Watershed into Ohio's H2Ohio water quality program, as well as other federal voluntary, science-based programs to do their part and more for clean water. In addition, agricultural retailers have stepped up to become 4R Certified, being voluntarily audited to ensure they are providing sound nutrient recommendations to farmers.

It is amazing that the ones bringing on this lawsuit can point fingers at all, when they themselves have been sitting on their hands when it comes to making their own water infrastructure improvements. As farmers in the Western Lake Erie Basin and beyond have made major investments to improve and enhance the way they farm to better manage nutrients they use for crop production, Toledo officials stood still as the city's Bay View Wastewater Treatment Plant has not been upgraded since

DEFIANCE – FULTON – HENRY – WILLIAMS COUNTY FARM BUREAU

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the mid-1980s and uses outdated systems in critical need of repair in order to maintain a healthy water supply for their citizens.

It makes you wonder how many other northwest Ohio municipalities have let crumbling water infrastructures go. Did the City of Maumee's troublesome 2021 discovery of dumping as much as 150 million gallons of sewage into the Maumee River for each of the past 20 years serve as a wake-up call for neighboring water treatment facilities built in the same time frame, or is it just easier to move the blame further up the river? Not to mention the other industry facilities that have just recently been found contributing unaccounted-for nutrients into the basin.

Yet, the discharge allowance for agriculture is still at zero, zilch, nada.

There is no denying that farmers are doing their part to move water quality in the right direction. The same can't be said for elected officials who choose to extract taxpayer dollars to fight losing court battles, like the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, just to push an anti-agriculture agenda. Those funds would be much better utilized finding holistic solutions to our water challenges.

Agriculture is a proud community. We aren't too proud to admit when we are part of the water quality challenges Ohio is facing, but our pride will not let blatant lies about our industry go without responding with the truth. That pride extends to what we have accomplished, so far, in our efforts to find balanced solutions to provide both healthy water and affordable food for our families, our neighbors and everyone downstream.

Signed: Ohio Farm Bureau – Adam Sharp, Executive Vice President

We ask you to join us in our fight to acknowledge all the progress farmers have made to improve the Western Lake Erie Basin and help your Ohio Farm Bureau keep regulations reasonable for farmers.

Please enclose a check for \$120 made out to the Fulton County Farm Bureau in the enclosed envelope so that we can work together to keep farming viable in Ohio.

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