

My name is Matt Fisher and I am with Lake Erie Foundation. I appreciate you allowing me to present to you today, and Lake Erie Foundation applauds the leadership of the Governor and his Directors to take key steps to improve Lake Erie and Ohio waterways with the H2 Ohio program.

As Jim Stouffer just communicated, Lake Erie Foundation is confident that there can be both clean water and profitable farming. We are very aware of the economic pressures facing farmers today and we want to help form a plan that navigates a path that can benefit both the Lake and agriculture.

There are practices that have almost universal agreement for improving water quality and nutrient conservation. There is science that backs up these practices. We need to make these practices economically viable for our farmers. The 4 Rs are based on these practices. A paper entitled – “Achieving Phosphorus Reduction Targets for Lake Erie “was written by 9 Lake Erie Scientists – several of whom are here – and was recently published and I have a copy for each of you. It is about a 20 minute read, but it outlines not only best practices, but also will tell you the current adoption rates of these practices by Northwest Ohio farmers and what percent are willing to adopt these practices in the future. It also talks about how adoption has changed in the last 3 years. Most importantly, the paper outlines obstacles that we will run into in trying to change the behavior of farmers.

The practices in this paper are very similar to the 4 Rs. I’m going to highlight 2. The first recommendation is to apply all nutrients – commercial fertilizer or manure – at the agronomic rate. The second recommendation is to apply nutrients sub surface and move entirely away from broadcast application. Some of these practices result in costs that are overwhelming to the individual farmer, especially the capital costs for equipment needed for injecting nutrients several inches into the soil. With this initiative, we need to design a project that supports the farmers and the retailers so that we dramatically increase the compliance of these proven practices.

We request 3 guiding principles that should be implemented with this initiative.

1. **Focused Geographic Area.** The program needs to be launched to a smaller, focused geographic area rather than spreading these resources throughout Northwest Ohio or the entire state. It can start with Platters Creek or another small watershed, but we need to focus our limited resources on targeted area so that successful results can be measured easier. We talk about accountability, but a small watershed will improve chances of accountability and commitment on both the farmers and the people responsible for rolling out these practices. The retailers that provide services to these farms have the expertise that can help us focus on fields that need to most attention.
2. **Confidential Data.** All information and data collected to help farmers needs to be kept confidential. As Jim said, we are against all parts of the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, and we will not make progress unless we have this information to improve productivity and water quality, not for increased finger pointing.