Chairman Hoagland, Vice Chairman Schaffer, Ranking Member O’Brien and members of the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, my name is Matt Fisher and I am with Lake Erie Foundation. I appreciate you allowing me to present to you today, and again the Lake Erie Foundation applauds the leadership of the Governor and his Directors to take key steps to improve Lake Erie and Ohio waterways. We also thank Senator Peterson and Senator Dolan for taking the lead with Senate Bill 2.

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.

In my testimony in front of you last month, I referred to the idea of using a portion of Senate Bill 2 funds towards a specific geographic area rather than spreading all of these valuable and limited resources across the state. I am going to give you more specifics of this idea as it has gained good support in the last 30 days.

The primary goal of a targeted geographic approach is to focus on a sub watershed that eventually flows into the Maumee River and creates a project that helps farmers adopt practices that reduce nutrient run off and the impact of those practices can be measured. If 25% of farms use practices that reduce nutrient run off – that is an estimate -- we would want to work with the farms in that sub watershed so that 70-80% of the farms would implement these practices. This is a field by field undertaking, and not a ‘one-practice-fits-all approach’. But when the pilot study is complete, we should be able to determine the cost, compliance, and effectiveness of these practices. We can further educate and share our data with the farmers and agriculture community throughout Ohio that we know how to reduce run off. If for some reason this approach did not work, then we would have at least only focused on 3% of the total region, rather than the entire state. However, if this approach does work, which we anticipate it will, then we will have verifiable data that the legislature and other key leaders in the State can utilize to make decisions about next steps.

We are working through Senator Dolan’s office on language that would specify a sub watershed and allocated resources for that pilot program. This is a work in progress and we look forward to working with this Committee on modifications. Here are the key concepts:

1. Reimburse farmers and retailers for practices that cost more than the return on production.
2. Protect farmers, retailers, and other participants with confidentiality of all data that is collected before during and after the pilot study is completed.
3. Select a sub watershed where there is existing technology that will provide a baseline of downstream water quality before the practices are implemented. Between Heidelberg University and Ohio EPA there are many locations that we can select and also obviously have a nearby control watershed that does not receive as many new practices.

Researchers from Ohio State and Heidelberg have shown 4 sub watersheds that are potential candidates for the pilot. We will turn the selection of the area into a positive so that this area will not be perceived to have been selected because of high nutrient run off.

This has been a consistent question as to how the sub watershed is selected. Lake Erie Foundation will not be selecting this location – a discussion between Ohio Department of Agriculture, the County Soil and Water regional managers, the Retailers, certified fertilizer applicators, other crop consultants and Ohio State Extension, will meet to discuss where the best location for adoption of these practice is.

1. These same groups that will help select the location will be helping farmers implement these practices.
2. We anticipate that – depending on how quickly the percent of fields can adopt new practices – this pilot will run anywhere from 2 years to 4 years. At that point we will know the degree of success and a much better estimate to adopt these practices throughout the region.

It is important that we target these resources in an effective way so that we are confident in the performance of the pilot.

Thank you for your time and I will answer any questions.