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

Ohio AgriBusiness Association

Ohio Cattlemen's Association

Ohio Corn Marketing Program

Ohio Corn & Wheat Growers Association

Ohio Dairy Producers Association

Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association

Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

Ohio Farmers Union

Conservation Districts

Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

Ohio Livestock Coalition

Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association

Ohio Pork Producers Council

Ohio Poultry Association

Ohio Produce Growers & Marketers Association

Ohio Sheep Improvement Association

Ohio Small Grains Marketing Program

Ohio Soybean Association

Ohio Soybean Council

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

The Ohio State University

United Producers, Inc.

United Producers, Inc.