

ag week

February 15-19, 2021

OHIO FARM BUREAU FEDERATION

WATER QUALITY

Overview

The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) is an innovative, collaborative effort of the agricultural, conservation, environmental, and research communities to improve water quality by establishing a baseline assessment of current conservation and nutrient management efforts and building farmer participation in a new Farmer Certification program.



What is Farmer Certification

- It establishes a certification program that recognizes those farms that demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement in the implementation of conservation and nutrient best management practices.

- It helps applicants determine what conservation practices they can do on their farm to improve water quality. For those applicants who do not initially qualify for Farmer Certification it identifies what practices they can implement to receive Farmer Certification.

What is the Assessment

- Assess and confidentially take inventory of farm practices to establish a baseline of current conservation and nutrient management practice adoption.

How Farmer Certification and the Governor's H2Ohio Work Together

- The OACI Farmer Certification Program is governed in partnership by farmers, along with agriculture, conservation and environmental groups.
- The H2Ohio program collaborates with the Farmer Certification Program to help identify those practices that farmers can implement, then provide the dollars to do so.
- The certification program has begun in the Western Lake Erie Basin but will move statewide. It is administered by local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Funds from H2Ohio are being given to farmers to engage in identified best management and conservation practices.

MORE



WATER QUALITY

Message to Legislators

- We appreciate past support of H2Ohio in the budget.
- We are asking for steps to be taken to expand the reach of the H2Ohio program in the upcoming budget.
- We believe that OACI and H2Ohio together continue to provide farmers the resources, tools, and practices they need to reduce nutrients in the water.
- Thank your representative and senator for supporting the passage of House Bill 7 (sponsored by Reps. Ghanbari and Patterson) that became law last General Assembly.
- HB 7 establishes watershed planning and management coordinators in seven regions of the state who will serve as a “quarterback” for watersheds in their regions by helping to organize water quality efforts and assisting SWCDs to identify sources and areas of water quality impairment.

Other Talking Points

CAFO and Non-Permitted Livestock Operation Mythbusters

- NO livestock operation is allowed to discharge manure into waters of the state.
- Large permitted livestock operations (Concentrated Animal Feeding Facilities/ Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) are highly regulated under the federal Clean Water Act and under state-issued permits.
- Livestock operations that are not large enough to be a CAFO still have to comply with the Ohio Ag Pollution Abatement Law. Those farms that have problems can be named by the Department of Agriculture director as a “small CAFO” and be required to get state-issued permits.
- Manure is important to soil health. It replenishes micronutrients the soil needs and helps the soil retain water and ultimately is beneficial for water quality.

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