



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
November 15, 2019

## ***The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative to Partner with DeWine Administration on H2Ohio Phosphorus Reduction Initiative***

*Public-private partnership will focus on farm-specific initiatives and continuous improvement on conservation and nutrient management efforts*

**COLUMBUS, OH** – The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) today announced the framework of its public-private partnership with the DeWine Administration's H2Ohio initiative to ensure funds are provided to farmers at all levels of conservation and nutrient management implementation.

***“OACI’s mission is to achieve meaningful improvement of water quality in Ohio, assure the future viability of Ohio agriculture, and build widespread participation of farmers,” said Heather Taylor-Miesle, executive director of the Ohio Environmental Council and co-chair of OACI. “While there is no silver bullet, we believe this unprecedented partnership will bring meaningful change to Ohio’s water quality over time.”***

OACI will work with the H2Ohio program to ensure funds flow to farmers who demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement through implementation of science-based practices that contribute toward healthier waterways. This initiative will begin in the Maumee watershed.

***“We are bringing together diverse stakeholders to improve Ohio’s water quality through measurement, education, and certification of Ohio’s farmers,” said Scott Higgins, CEO of the Ohio Dairy Producers Association and co-chair of OACI. “The support for implementation of on-farm conservation and nutrient management practices that are unique to each farm makes this initiative different from any other. We believe the partnership with H2Ohio will increase the participation by our farmers.”***

In early 2020 OACI will launch a mobile app for farmers in the Maumee watershed to self-report information about their farm’s soil testing, nutrient application, nutrient placement, on-field management and structural practices, with the number of acres in each category. Participants will be given a score for each category and an aggregated overall score to determine their certification level.

Those not meeting the minimum criteria for certification will be given tools to create an action plan to become certified, and will be eligible for H2Ohio funds to support their work.

For farmers earning certification, on a whole farm level, H2Ohio funds will be available for continuous improvement in the implementation of conservation and nutrient management



practices.

The certification program will be administered by the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. There will be an independent audit of certification requests.

To measure the progress of the certification program, OACI will establish a baseline of current conservation and nutrient management practices taking place on Ohio's farm fields. This data will be used - in the aggregate to maintain confidentiality - as a measurement of the continuous implementation of science-based best management practices.

OACI was created as an innovative, collaborative effort of the agricultural, conservation, environmental and research communities to improve water quality. For more information, visit [www.OhioACI.org](http://www.OhioACI.org).

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*Members of the Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative include the Environmental Defense Fund, the National Center for Water Quality Research at Heidelberg University, Ohio AgriBusiness Association, the Ohio Cattlemen's Association, the Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association, the Ohio Dairy Producers Association, the Ohio Environmental Council, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, the Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Ohio Pork Council, the Ohio Poultry Association, the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association, the Ohio Soybean Council, The Ohio State University College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences, The Fertilizer Institute, and The Nature Conservancy.*