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***STATE DIRECTORS OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND OEPA ISSUE CALL
FOR FARMERS TO ADOPT NEW AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES***

Praise farmers for successfully reducing total phosphorus and sedimentation rates

Maumee Bay State Park -- (Oct. 17, 2011) □ Meeting today along the shore of Lake Erie officials from the Ohio departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Environmental Protection Agency announced ongoing efforts towards reducing agriculture-related phosphorus from loading into the western basin, and encouraged farmers to immediately adopt updated best management practices for fertilizer application.

The three agencies also agreed, based on recommendations from a diverse working group that includes research scientists, agribusiness leaders, and environmentalists; to encourage farmers to adopt production guidelines known as 4R Nutrient Stewardship that is effective in reducing soluble forms of phosphorus from impacting waterways across the state.

The 4R concept promotes using the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time, with the right placement.

Recent studies indicate that the timing of fertilizer application, and how well it is incorporated into the soil layer, significantly reduces dissolved phosphorus runoff.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture report issued on October 13 stated that nutrient loss from fields is within acceptable limits when soil erosion control practices are paired with management of rate, form, timing, and method of nutrient application maximizing the availability of nutrients for crop growth while minimizing environmental losses.

“Thirty years ago farmers in the 4 million-acre western basin were challenged to meet aggressive standards for reducing the total amount of phosphorus impacting Lake Erie,” said Ohio Agriculture Director James Zehringer. “We commend those farmers for meeting that challenge and in cutting phosphorus use in half, while also reducing sediment loading into the lake by 50 percent. However, we now know that while those goals of reducing total phosphorus have been met, the dissolved form of phosphorus has increased markedly. The agriculture community needs to work with one voice, and a sense of urgency, to minimize the impact of dissolved phosphorus on Lake Erie and all of Ohio’s waterways.”

“Our goal is to take the best recommendations from our partners in this effort and to provide Governor Kasich, by February 1, a suite of research, production, and regulatory recommendations that can be put into effect immediately to reduce dissolved phosphorus from impacting the waterways of Ohio,” said OEPA Director Scott Nally.

Meeting for the third time with the Ag Nutrients Working Group, which includes participation from more than 25 organizations, government agencies, and private companies, the three agencies participated in developing and recommending new strategies for minimizing environmental impacts caused by agricultural practices. Involved agencies, companies and organizations include: the Ohio AgriBusiness Association, the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, the Nature Conservancy, Environmental Defense, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Fertilizer Institute, Heidelberg University, The Ohio State University, Morral Companies, and the Andersons.

“These approaches just make sense for farmers who can save production costs because in as much as a third of all cropland in the western Lake Erie basin soil tests show that adequate phosphorus levels already exists to produce excellent crops,” said Scott Zody, interim director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. “We encourage farmers to work with their local soil and water conservation districts on moving forward with developing a sound nutrient management plan.”

Specific farm level recommendations made at today’s meeting include:

- Take frequent soil tests and follow soil fertilization rates based on OSU guidelines
- No spreading of fertilizer on frozen or snow covered ground
- Maintain good fertilization records
- As much as possible incorporate fertilizer into the soil layer
- Go to nutrientstewardship.com and review guidelines for 4R Nutrient Stewardship

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