

**Statement of
Douglass R. Busdeker
On Behalf of
Ohio Agribusiness Association (OABA) and The Andersons, Inc.**

**House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment**

Hearing on:

“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative: A Review of the Progress and Challenges in Restoring the Great Lakes”

Wednesday, September 30

**“The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative”
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment**

Testimony by Douglas R. Busdeker

Representing: Ohio AgriBusiness Association and The Andersons, Inc.

Chairman Gibbs, Ranking Member Napolitano and distinguished members of this subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

I am Douglas Busdeker of Pemberville, Ohio in northwest Ohio. I serve as a board member of the Ohio AgriBusiness Association (OABA) and am employed by The Andersons, Inc. in Maumee, Ohio. The Ohio AgriBusiness Association represents the Ohio crop nutrient industry, along with grain, feed, seed and crop protection industries. The Andersons, Inc., my employer, was founded in 1947 by Harold Anderson and built the first grain elevator in Maumee, Ohio. We provide merchandising, production and distribution of products and services to the agribusiness community. We are organized into six business groups: Grain, Ethanol, Turf & Specialty, Plant Nutrient, Retail and Rail. Currently, I serve as Senior Manager for Northern Farm Centers consisting of Ohio, Indiana and Michigan locations.

I am pleased to be here today to relate the many positive agricultural activities occurring in the Western Lake Erie Basin (WLEB). During my career I have been engaged with farmers/customers as one of many agricultural retailers in the region. I have extensive experience with in-field nutrient application. Following the large algal bloom that occurred in 2011 in the WLEB, many in the agricultural community recognized that agricultural retailers and farmers would need to play a bigger role and in finding solutions to address these water quality challenges. Healthy water quality - clean, fishable and drinkable water, is important to everyone including all of agriculture and we recognize that agriculture must be part of the solution.

Following the algal bloom in 2011, The Nature Conservancy partnered with several key agricultural retailers in the WLEB to develop the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification program. This voluntary program was focused on agricultural retailers since agronomists, Certified Crop Advisors, sales personnel and applicators were recognized as having a strong influence on nutrient use. Currently, seventeen key agricultural retailers have been certified representing 1,200,000 acres of crop land and 3,200 farmers in Ohio and Michigan. Another ten agricultural retailers are awaiting confirmation. Since program launch March 18th, 2014, a total of seventy one agricultural retailers are in the process or have indicated interest in becoming certified. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program was founded on the The Fertilizer Institute’s 4R Nutrient Stewardship principles of the **Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time and Right Place** and includes social, economic and environmental best management practices. SCS Global a respected

independent audit development firm was hired to create the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Standard.

Audits include 41 specific objectives that must be achieved to become certified.

1. Initial Training and Ongoing Education
2. Monitoring of 4R Implementation
3. Nutrient Recommendations and Application

The governing body is the Nutrient Stewardship Council consisting of the following:

1. Agricultural Business (5 members, including at least one active grower),
2. Government (2 members),
3. Environmental NGOs (2 members), and
4. Universities/Research (2 members).

Best Management Practices (BMP)

Many newer bmp's are already occurring within the WLEB. Cover crops of cereal rye, annual rye, Austrian winter peas, radish, turnip, crimson clover, buckwheat, oats and others are growing in popularity. Equipment manufacturers are offering several new strip tillage machines to inject crop nutrients below the surface. Strip tillage provide a system that places nutrients 4-6" below the soil surface while not disturbing the complete soil surface structure causing greater erosion. Application of gypsum is quickly being adopted for a calcium and sulfur nutrient source, and to sequester phosphorus reducing dissolved reactive phosphorus run-off.

Conservation Efforts

Use of nutrient management plans to precisely determine the required nutritional balance for each crop is common. Commercial fertilizer nutrients are one of the single largest expense for traditional growers and over-use leads to undesirable financial implications. Improving soil health resonates with all farmers. The number of buffer strips, grass waterways, blind inlets, field tile with control structures, and two stage ditches continues to increase each year. There is still much work to be accomplished but conservation activities advance each year.

Ohio Legislation

On April 2, 2015 the Ohio Governor John Kasich signed Senate Bill 1 into law. SB 1 prohibits manure and fertilizer applications when fields are frozen, snow cover, saturated, or if there is a greater than 50% chance of at least one inch of rainfall in the next 24 hours. In addition, Ohio Senate Bill 150 which requires anyone applying fertilizer on 50 acres or more to become certified was unanimously passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor in May of 2014. The Ohio AgriBusiness Association fully supported passage of SB 1 and SB 150.

Research

Research has shown that algal blooms in the Western Basin of Lake Erie are predominately the result of excess dissolved reactive phosphorus (DRP) in our rivers and streams. While the exact source and why the increasing amounts of DRP is not clearly understood, research has shown that transport from agricultural land plays a significant role. During 2011 and again in 2015, intense rainfall increased surface and subsurface "field tile" flows. As was the case in 1970-80's when Lake Erie was in serious trouble, through research, farmers widely adapted new tillage techniques such as no-till and conservations tillage. These new practices remain in place today and contributed greatly to a reduction in soil erosion and particulate phosphate run-off. Additional research is needed to identify new bmp's that support a reduction of dissolved reactive phosphorus during periods of extreme rainfall. To that end, the fertilizer industry has committed \$7 million

to help establish a 4R Research Fund. The goal of the fund is to establish sustainability indicators and environmental impact data for implementation of 4R nutrient stewardship across North America. The fund provides a much needed resource with a focus on measuring and documenting the economic, social and environmental impacts of 4R nutrient stewardship. This effort will help expand the 4Rs beyond being solely an industry effort and towards becoming a viable strategy embraced by other important stakeholders to address cropping system productivity and concerns for nutrient losses into the environment.

Our Challenge

The challenges to the agricultural community are very complex and involve adapting cultural and nutrient practices that will minimize nutrient loss and maximize crop production. Research “on-the-farm” such as Ohio State/USDA ARS’s ‘Edge of Field” study are critical to finding solutions. Updating the Ohio “P-Risk Index” will be very important for identifying which best management practices will minimize phosphorus transport in this new environment. Farms in our region are legacy farms that have been passed down through several generation and each farmer has the clear intent of leaving our soils and water in better condition for the next generation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide you with an update on the many positive activities and projects occurring in the Western Lake Erie Basin as we seek solutions to improve water quality. We all share the goal of having clean water for many generations to come. I would be happy to answer any questions.

