



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative Applauds H2Ohio Expansion, Partners with H2Ohio to Host Farmer Meetings**

**COLUMBUS, OH** – The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) welcomes the recent expansion of the H2Ohio farmer incentive program into 10 additional Western Lake Erie Basin counties. In an effort to spread awareness of the program and amplify the continued commitment farmers have to preserving Ohio’s lakes, streams and waterways, OACI is partnering with the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) and H2Ohio to host a series of informational meetings for farmers and producers.

ODA and OACI will host four virtual meetings explaining H2Ohio’s expansion in the Maumee Watershed and how agriculture and conservation fit into the program’s goals and priorities. The meetings will be held on the following dates, and full details and access to the links are available at [h2.ohio.gov](https://h2.ohio.gov):

- **July 20**, 6:00 p.m.
- **July 22**, 9:00 a.m.
- **July 28**, 6:00 p.m.
- **July 29**, 1:00 p.m.

“We are committed to reaching as many farmers as possible to spread the word about the expansion of the H2Ohio program and the dedicated work farmers are putting in to improving water quality across the state,” said Kris Swartz, OACI chair and northwest Ohio farmer. “OACI’s partnership with ODA and H2Ohio is an exciting step forward in recognizing farmers for their dedication to advancing science-based practices that improve water quality in Ohio.”

### *OACI Farmer Certification Program*

OACI opened enrollment for the Farmer Certification Program in fall 2020, with certification having launched June 1. Through the program, farmers 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. Farmers completing certification will receive a score and, if below requirements, will be given suggestions for

improvement. For participating farmers earning certification on a whole farm level, some H2Ohio funds will be available to help finance the implementation of conservation and nutrient management practices.

“OACI’s farmer certification program will help increase adoption of best management practices and recognize farmers who demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement,” said Jan Layman, a northwest Ohio farmer. “Through the partnership with H2Ohio and Ohio’s agriculture, conservation, environmental and research communities, we are making the implementation of best practices accessible to every farmer.”

To measure the progress of the certification program, OACI is establishing 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 about OACI, visit [www.OhioACI.org](http://www.OhioACI.org).

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**About OACI:** *The Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative (OACI) is a partnership between agriculture, conservation, environmental and research communities to recognize farmers for their dedication to advancing methods that improve water quality in Ohio and increasing the number of best management practices being implemented on farms. Ohio Agriculture Conservation Initiative partners include: American Farmland Trust, Environmental Defense Fund, National Center for Water Quality Research at Heidelberg University, Ohio AgriBusiness Association, Ohio Cattlemen’s Association, Ohio Conservation Federation, Ohio Corn and Wheat Growers Association, Ohio Dairy Producers Association, Ohio Environmental Council, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Ohio Federation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Ohio Pork Council, Ohio Poultry Association, Ohio Sheep Improvement Association, Ohio Soybean Council, The Fertilizer Institute, The Nature Conservancy, and The Ohio State University College of Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences.*