

THE BLADE

Working Together for Clean Water

*By Gary Cooper, Cooper Farms
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Following a recent public forum hosted in Bowling Green by the Ohio EPA regarding its draft Maumee Watershed Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load report, Ohio Poultry Association member Gary Cooper (Cooper Farms, Oakwood) submitted a letter to the editor to The Toledo Blade highlighting his family's longstanding commitment to environmental stewardship.



Northwest Ohio is steeped in strong agricultural tradition that has shaped and strengthened our local communities and the area economy for generations.

For nearly 85 years, my family's company, Cooper Farms, has been a proud piece of the farming fabric that has touched so many lives throughout the area, and our appreciation for and dedication to the precious land and waters that make this tradition possible is unwavering.

[As reported by The Blade](#), last week the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency hosted a forum in Bowling Green to provide an update on its Maumee Watershed Nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load report. For many years, our company has been an active partner in the ongoing efforts to protect and improve the quality of waterways throughout the Maumee Watershed, and we appreciate the opportunity to receive regular updates from the Ohio EPA on this important work.

As our state leaders have increasingly prioritized investments aimed at improving water quality throughout Ohio, including the DeWine Administration's H2Ohio program, so too has Ohio's agricultural industry.

Our company has made caring for the environment a key tenet in all we do, and our more than 2,400 team members and 400 family farm partners know that land stewardship is a top priority for us.

As we raise healthy animals to provide the quality food products that feed America, we utilize modern methods to control nutrient levels in animal manure, starting with quality ingredients in our animal feed and efficient, phased feeding practices.

We also responsibly support grain farmers by supplying the organic carbon and nutrients they need to grow healthier crops.

Through proper collection, storage and application of animal manure, farms can promote the healthy microbial environment needed in the soil to improve crop quality and yield, decrease atmospheric carbon levels, reduce erosion and runoff, reduce nitrate leaching, and reduce the need for expensive synthetic fertilizers.

The science-backed, environmentally sound practices deployed throughout every step of our animal farming practices limit impacts on the lands and waterways that surround our operations.

Protecting our environment is a responsibility held by all of us, and our family-owned company is dedicated to doing our part to improve water quality throughout the Maumee Watershed and Western Lake Erie Basin.

Only by working together in a positive, constructive way can we ensure Ohio's agricultural economy remains strong and every Ohioan has access to the clean, safe water we all expect and deserve.