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STATE AGENCIES RECOMMEND STREAMLINED MANURE PROGRAM

Proposal would create 'one-stop-shop' for agricultural nutrient oversight of Ohio farmers

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Mar. 26, 2014) – In a move designed to reduce regulatory redundancies between their agencies, the directors of the Ohio Departments of Agriculture (ODA) and Natural Resources (ODNR) today announced a proposal to streamline the management of manure in the state to bring all oversight of farmers applying agricultural nutrients under a single agency.

Current law gives oversight of agricultural pollution and manure management responsibility for smaller livestock farms to ODNR while ODA regulates the large livestock farms. Under this proposal, ODNR's authority over manure management on small-scale farms would be transferred to the state agriculture department which already runs a robust manure management program and has authority over other agricultural nutrients. While the proposal does not amend existing manure use regulations, it would create uniformity in how those regulations are enforced by bringing small-scale farmers under the same department as large-scale producers and farmers applying commercial fertilizer.

"Finding ways that state government can streamline our efforts and streamline services has been a priority of Governor Kasich since he first took office," said Ohio Agriculture Director David Daniels. "This proposal will improve efficiencies by reducing the redundancies that currently exist between our agencies regarding the management of manure. More importantly, it also allows us to ensure the management of all agricultural nutrients is fully coordinated within one cabinet agency."

As part of this transition, ODNR would continue to administer the existing manure handling, storage and application requirements within the Grand Lake St. Marys watershed as long as it is still designated a watershed in distress. ODNR would also continue to maintain authority for providing technical programs and services relative to soil health, soil erosion and drainage management and would maintain authority for silviculture and other soil and water conservation programs which have historically been administered by ODNR through the Division of Soil and Water Resources.

"Having one agency oversee livestock farming operations makes sense and eliminates duplicated services," said ODNR Director James Zehringer. "There will be no change to the critical role that Ohio's soil and water conservation districts fulfill in addressing manure-related issues, nor will there be any change to our commitment to partner with SWCDs in conserving our natural resources."

The proposal, originally introduced as part of the Governor's mid-biennium review, is now included as a part of House Bill 490 and is being considered by the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee.

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