

Meeting Agenda/Brief Recap and Updates
8pm Monday April 7, 2014



Marion Township Library -Chickasaw, OH

1. **Jim Keller – Welcome, meeting purpose.** Since some new attendees were present Jim advised the group of the mission of Ag Solutions which is: *“To identify and eliminate, through the use of technology and environmentally sound farming practices, agricultural factors that are negatively impacting the environmental health of Grand Lake St. Marys, while also enhancing the vibrant prosperous farming economy that is an integral part of the local community.”*
2. **Terry Mescher, Bill Knapke, Bro Nick, Jim Keller & group**
 - **Senator Portman Panel discussion** - Bill Knapke and I attended a panel discussion concerning the lake hosted by US Senator Rob Portman on March 15th at the Lake Campus. Senator Portman is sponsoring a federal bill which addresses algae blooms nationwide. Members of the panel included EPA, ODNR and political representatives; county commissioners, mayors and a state senator. These folks advised Senator Portman of the critical importance GLSM has regarding the local tourist economy. Dr. Robert Hiskey a limnologist (a freshwater scientist) at the branch campus advised that the problem was a long time developing and it will take a long time to get fixed. Milt Miller pleaded with Senator Portman to lobby the army core of engineers to allow them to build islands from the dredge material. A major challenge in cleaning out the bottom of the lake is having space to place the dredged slurry. Bill K added that the bill is focused primarily on larger bodies of water. It also needs to look at the smaller ones like GLSM. I advised the senator that we need an Ag Development Director in the water shed to work with our farmers to try and implement ideas. Senator Portman took many notes so it will be interesting to see what outcomes there might be.
 - **Separation/Treatment Technologies – Mark Minnix, ElectroCell, Pickett Enterprises, Agriment Solutions, others.** - Mark Minnix is working on a new proposal and Bill be getting together with him in the next couple of weeks. ElectroCell uses a specialized current to originally reduce/eliminate odor but a byproduct is that solids and nutrients settled rapidly to the bottom. This project still has life although Terry hasn't discussed local involvement with them for some time. Terry has fears that the cost of this approach will be prohibitive. The same holds true for Agriment Solutions. They use a permeable bag which allows the liquid to separate from the solids in swine manure. This approach holds the potential to concentrate the nutrients in a much smaller volume making it economical to transport the manure longer distances. The bags are expensive and can only be

Meeting Agenda/Brief Recap and Updates

8pm Monday April 7, 2014

used once so not sure how economically viable the approach is for our farmers. It holds promise however since they use this approach extensively in North Carolina and the swine farmers there compete in the same market as we do. Don Pickett reported that they will starting some tests with his product at a local farmer.

All of these ideas and others have some merit but someone needs to organize trials, track results and render decisions. Until we acquire such an individual or someone comes with an alternative effective approach, these ideas will mostly just be “out there”.

- **Bio Town visit** - Gene Marshall advised the group that he has been following manure digesters in Europe for some time. They are used extensively there for the generation of electricity. They are using a system in BioTown (Reynolds, Indiana) in the same manner and have added equipment from Livestock Water Recycling (LWR) to deal with the nutrient laden effluent coming out of the digester. Gene wants a local group to visit. 4,500 steers and 600 sows daily generate 218,000 gal of manure that feeds BioTown's system. The system is not working as expected so the folks at BioTown are modifying the equipment. They are optimistic that they can get it working to the point that the water will be pure enough to be discharged into a stream. A first in the US! When the timing is right, Ag Solutions will send some folks to investigate their approach.
- **ADAPT test plots** – All the framers attending were invited to learn more and get involved in this program since it is so scientifically based. Lou Brown asked if there was some way we could results from other states which might provide insight into approaches as yet untried in this area.
- **Glen Arnold's manure plots** - Glen applies liquid manure to growing crops and has proven this approach to be cost effective providing yields as good as or better than commercial fertilizer (nitrogen) approaches. Brother Nick explained his approach and invited those attending to sign up for a trial.
- **Kevin King P tests** – Kevin's test sites are providing great insights into how P leaches from soil both through surface water and drainage tile. While insightful the nature of these tests are such that they will not provide significant insights for several years.
- **Transfer manure out of watershed.** Primary issue here is getting the nutrients in swine manure more concentrated making it cost effective to transfer out of the water shed. Some farmers are hauling manure of all types out of the watershed. These folks are commended for their efforts.
- **Organic Pond progress** – Terry has discussed their proprietary technology which has the potential to remove P directly from water. Construction being provided in the treatment trains will allow for tests of technology such as this. Terry has made Organic Pond aware of this opportunity.

3. **State Representative Jim Buchy – Ohio Senate Bill 150 and other AG/Lake related issues** - This bill is a result of the algae issues especially in the western basin of Lake Erie. The bill was initiated to address the application of commercial fertilizer in the Lake Erie water shed. Mr. Buchy touched on this issue and others:

Meeting Agenda/Brief Recap and Updates

8pm Monday April 7, 2014

- Commercial fertilizer has not had the scrutiny that manure has had. SB150 will address commercial fertilizer with increased oversight.
- Agriculture is under the microscope from neighbors, environmentalists and politicians. Jim advises that no one should criticize a farmer with their mouth full. Farming is a vital undertaking. Mercer County is very successful in Ag.
- Ag is accused of being the primary lake polluters. Much of this is true. Farmers need to stay profitable while being environmentally aware. Need to reduce nutrient flows into all waterways.
- Problems evolved over many years. Jim would like to get the lake sediment completely cleaned out which will increase tourism and allow farmers to expand correctly.
- Some folks want to tax manure.
- Lot of commercial fertilizer used in the Maumee (Lake Erie) watershed since there is more than ample acreage to accommodate the manure produced there. In spite of that fact the city of Toledo wants to slap more stringent regulations on livestock and poultry operations.
- Manure management will be shifted from Soil and Water to Dept. of Agriculture except in the GLSM and Lake Erie watersheds. (See comments on House Bill 490 below)
- EPA wants to punish people while Dept of Ag wants to help correct problems.
- We live in best place in the world and need to keep it that way. Many forces like the HSUS and environmentalists are working against our agrarian lifestyle. Need to focus on good effective management.
- SB 150 will be in place by fall 2014. Will be phased in over the next year. Covers both commercial fertilizer and manure. Local folks with CNMP's are already certified to apply manure and fertilizers so the bill will have little/no impact on their operations.
- GLSM CNMP's are guided by phosphorous (P) rather than nitrogen limitations. Jim asked about local P levels with several attendees noting that they vary considerably.
- Jim asked about our interest in digesters. Joining a number of dairy operations into a coop might work. Jim noted that the high nutrient digester effluent could be used to feed algae. Problem is that markets for algae are not well developed. If markets develop this might be an effective way to approach our issues.
- Jim talked about the effectiveness of high rise hog buildings. The local one in Maria Stein has not worked out so well for a number of reasons.
- Ron Meyer from the floor suggested gasifiers. He noted a successful operation in Pennsylvania. There is also an operation South Charlestown, OH.
- Steve Homan advised that even though he had followed all the rules he had still been accused of questionable practices. In his case applying manure to frozen ground. He asked Jim how such harassment could be eliminated. Bill Knapke noted that this is the world we live in and that we need to use these occasions to educate the public. Terry Mescher added that the farmers have done an excellent job following the rules. He further noted that some folks are beyond education. Mr. Buchy added that some folks have an added agenda. They want to get money from farmers through lawsuits. An attendee noted that the lawyers and some of the folks involved in the lawsuit have no interest in the health of the lake. Their only interest is in the money. He added that this only represents a few people who are under the influence of the lawyers. Mr. Buchy further commented that we need to fight for our freedom to continue to raise animals in the cost effective manner that we've developed. We need to fight to maintain our very way of life here in western Ohio.

Meeting Agenda/Brief Recap and Updates 8pm Monday April 7, 2014

- Jared Ebbing noted that we need to address legacy P in any manner that we can including on the farm and using treatment trains and other means of stopping P from entering the lake.
- Brother Nick advised that a good way to move P out of the ground is to raise and sell hay. Mr. Buchy said that we could sell hay to the horse people at the new Racinos. Mike Bulcher added that selling hay to horse people is not so lucrative. He also added that everyone ought to be doing less and earning more rather than doing more and earning less. Rep. Buchy responded that how someone works in their own business decision. His concern is that we all have the freedom to do this without fiat from government.
- Brother Nick also mentioned that we need to be able to harvest the filter strips. Harvesting the hay will remove built up P from those areas close to the creek.
- The group also asked Mr. Bucky look into acquiring permission to allow the netting of carp and rough fish in GLSM.
- Reemphasized that everyone with a CNMP already is certified under SB150.

4. Updates from the floor –

- Lou Brown noted an article that advised that cover crops have far more benefits than originally thought. NRCS noted that we have 2,000,000 acres in cover crops this year. Goal is to have 20,000,000 acres by 2020.
- Lou has an email covering House Bill 490 which calls for changing Ag jurisdiction from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA). Anyone with additional interest was encouraged to see Lou.
- Lou inquired as to how many attendees have received a nutrient management survey. The survey appears to be oriented to the Maumee water shed but many in the GLSM watershed have received them also.
- Lou handed out business cards printed by the Partnership for AG Resource Management. The cards refer to the four “R’s” and provide brief suggestions for environmentally safe phosphorous application.
- Cover crop webinar was held at the soil and water office. Six local farmers attended but nationwide 6,000 farmers attended. The sponsors were encouraged by the number of those involved.
- Brother Nick asked how much rain we’d received recently. Had to have lost some soil – streams look pretty brown.
- Terry Mescher advised that another manure application field day will be held like the one held in July 2013. Location and the types of equipment to be demonstrated are still being determined. Date of the field day is July 30. Rain out day is next day July 31. More news will be coming.
- Brother Nick informed us that standing water such we had recently absorbs phosphorous.

Adjournment – next meeting date and time will be announced. Watch your email

Submitted by Jim Keller April 22, 2014