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Statement regarding the Northwest Ohio Water poll

NEW ALBANY, OHIO – *The following statement was issued today in response to the Northwest Ohio Water Poll. The statement can be attributed to Cheryl Day, executive vice president, Ohio Pork Council.*

The Environmental Law and Policy Group (ELPC) has a clear anti-agriculture bias. In commissioning a survey and touting the results as justification for targeting livestock and crop production as the sole contributors to Lake Erie's water quality issues, they are at best misleading and at worst setting the stage to devastate agricultural production. ELPC does not mention the consequences of industry and urbanization to the West Lake Erie Basin where, in the four counties surveyed, people outnumber pigs 65 to 1 (US Census of Agriculture, 2017). And of the 601,657 people (July 2019 estimate, US Census Bureau) who live in the four counties surveyed, just 506 persons – 0.08% - were surveyed. Is that representative?

Ohio pork producers are forward looking and aware of the challenges facing their farms, including the spread of misinformation. Our pig farmers maintain a sincere commitment to sustainability and interest in preserving the natural resources making their work possible, including stewardship of water and soil. Their families live, work, and play here, making the preservation and protection of these resources a paramount concern.

The majority of Ohio's pig farmers take part in the We Care Initiative, a pork-producer developed program encouraging, supporting, and leading on being responsible actors. We Care includes six ethical principles: food safety, animal well-being, environment, public health, our people, and our community. Pork producers' mission is to produce safe, nutritious food responsibly while addressing each of these principles. No matter the size or type of pig farm, the basic tenets of livestock production are constant.

In addition to We Care, a highly successful voluntary initiative, Ohio pig farmers are also intensely regulated by local, state, and federal mandates. ELPC presents each livestock production site as a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) when the numbers paint a much different picture of pork production in the four counties they are targeting. In Erie, Lucas, Ottawa, and Sandusky Counties there are a total of 9220 pigs spread over 1256 square miles (density of 7.3 pigs per square mile). The human population has a density of 479 persons per square mile in the same area. Only six pig farms in the four counties have more than 1000 head of hogs or pigs in their operations; 43 include fewer and 20 of those have fewer than 49 pigs on their farms. Don't be misled by ELPC's misuse of terminology. Not all livestock farms are CAFOs. Those meeting the criteria to be considered a CAFO then have related requirements to meet including permitting. Any bad actors are subject to penalties.

Ohio pig farmers certainly want to be partners in any process to improve and protect Lake Erie and water quality as their livelihoods, health, and well-being are also impacted. Scapegoating the livestock industry for a decades-long issue with innumerable contributors is irresponsible and ineffective.

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