

News From:
Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie

For Immediate Release March 23, 2017



LAKE ADVOCATES TO PICKET OEPA'S GEBHARDT PRIOR TO IJC HEARING
"Farm Bureau Runs OEPA" "Big Ag = Big Algae"

TOLEDO – Advocates for a Clean Lake Erie will offer testimony at [A Public Meeting: Your Voice](#), sponsored by the [International Joint Commission](#), 6:00pm tonight, at the UT Lake Erie Center, 6200 Bayshore Rd., in Oregon.

Prior to the hearing, ACLE members will picket in front of the Center to focus on the role of [Karl Gebhardt](#) in the IJC.

Gebhardt, Deputy Director of the Ohio EPA, Executive Director of the [Ohio Great Lakes Commission](#) and a member of the IJC's [Great Lakes Water Quality Board](#), was a staff lobbyist for the Ohio Farm Bureau for 19 years and a registered lobbyist for the first dairy CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operation) in NW Ohio, owned by [Vreba-Hoff Inc.](#)

"For two decades, Mr. Gebhardt lobbied for the interests that shield polluters from accountability. It's hard to believe he is the most qualified person to wield so much influence in so many positions related to Lake Erie," said Mike Ferner, a coordinator for [ACLE](#).

"It was the Farm Bureau and its Big Ag allies that [sued the U.S. EPA](#), saying it didn't have authority to enforce key provisions of the Clean Water Act. It's the Ohio Farm Bureau that [buys influence](#) with the state legislature and insists that only voluntary measures are used to reduce excess nutrients going into the lake, [85% of which come from agriculture](#). We can begin to see why Lake Erie has languished for so long, given the politics working to protect its polluters," Ferner concluded.

Just beginning its second year, ACLE highlights the role that CAFOs play in the nutrient overload that fuels annual toxic algae blooms in the lake. There are over 140 of the industrial feedlots registered in the Western Lake Erie watershed, plus an unknown number of unregistered operations that are kept just under the number of animals requiring them to register with the EPA.

Just the 140+ registered facilities generate over [700 million gallons](#) of animal feces and urine annually which is spread, untreated on the fields draining into Lake Erie – more than the combined sewage output from Chicago and Los Angeles.

#####