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Agricultural Outlook Forum  
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WATER TRADING - PRODUCER PERSPECTIVE

Tom Spellmire  
Producer, Warren County, Ohio

Greetings from Ohio

My name is Tom Spellmire. I am a farmer. I was asked to give some testimony about the Water Quality Credit Trading Program that our farming operation is participating in. I was asked to give a farmers perspective of what I think of such programs. Our farming operation is an Ohio partnership using the name Spellmire Bros. My brother Bill and I are the legal partners and other family members work for the partnerships. We are currently farming about 2400 acres of which about 600 of these acres are in the Great Miami River Watershed. We plant corn, soybeans, wheat and hay. We are utilizing a rye cover crop to achieve the desired results for this program.

What do I think of this program? My first reaction to this proposal was why I should clean up a mess that a sewage treatment plant is creating. The Ohio EPA should just raise the standards for the discharge from the treatment plants and the problem would be addressed. Then I thought about it. I remembered a cover of The Ohio Farmer magazine that had the quote “Is it good for the resource?” now the article featured this guy from Ohio by the name of Gary Mast but that is a different story. “Is it good for the resource?” I thought about that quote and said to myself, you know, the farming practice of utilizing a cover crop would be good for the water quality of the Great Miami River, so if it is “good for the resource” why not participate in a program that gets results rather than wait for the next sewage treatment plant upgrade, which could take years. I guess it is hard to admit that our farming practices might be part of the problem and that care has

to taken to ensure that our farming practices have a minimal impact on the environment of the water quality of the river. I am a supervisor on the Warren County Soil and Water Conservation District board and one of the current issues facing our county is the expansion of a sewage treatment plant. I was amazed at the attitude of the head of our sewer and water department and how at public meetings he blamed all the degradation to the Little Miami River on the agricultural community even though he was proposing doubling the pollutant discharge into the river. It is because of this on going conflict of the development community verses the agricultural community that I am now an avid supporter of this “Trading Credits” program. If the sewage treatment plant community is adamant about saying that all the river degradation is from the agricultural community then now, because of the “Trading Credits Program” the response can be, ok, for the benefit of the River, the Agricultural community will modify farming practice at a cost much lower than the Sewage Treatment Plant Community says they need to address the problem. The Sewage Treatment Plant community is still the community with the deep pockets of tax payer monies so some of the cost of these programs should come from their budgets. In the meantime while all this squabbling is going on the River is benefiting.

Is it good for the Resource? A resounding Yes !!!!!

Thank You for your attention and I would be happy to answer any questions and again, Thank You.