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May 10, 2017

Re: Support of 2016 RES-649 to create a Dane County Healthy Farms, Healthy Lakes Task Force

Dear Dane County Representatives:

Seven years ago, this community came together and formed an alliance to improve the condition of our lakes and beaches. Today, citizens, businesses, government agencies, scientists, policymakers, and farmers are working as one to advance effective and often innovative solutions, and are doing so by following a shared roadmap called the *Yahara CLEAN Strategic Action Plan for Phosphorus Reduction*. If the recommended urban and rural actions are fully realized, including farmland management actions that target 70% of the problem, scientists forecast more days when our lakes are clear and our beaches are open. As of today, we are 29% of the way toward achieving the annual phosphorus reduction goal, eliminating an estimated 3,400 tons of unwanted, lake-choking algae.

Building on this momentum, the Clean Lakes Alliance Community Board—a 40-member advisory body of leaders representing local businesses, nonprofits and government entities—unanimously adopted a 4-year strategic framework called *Plan 2020: A Clear Path Forward*, capping over a year of priority setting with the guidance of numerous partners and donors. At least two of our eight focus areas align with the objectives of the Healthy Farms, Healthy Lakes Task Force, including facilitating improved farmland management to reduce soil and phosphorus loss to the lakes, and to raise better public awareness of the issues and opportunities pertaining to improving watershed health.

We see the formation of a Healthy Farms, Healthy Lakes Task Force as an opportunity to initiate a public process to review current and proposed policies, practices, and initiatives that impact our farms and the quality of our lakes. A task force would be expected to seek out and operate under the consultation of experts, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and effected agricultural interests in developing any advisory recommendations. It should help policymakers and cost-share providers make more informed decisions when it comes to supporting farmers in improving soil health. It offers an opportunity to take what we know and further our common desire to support a vibrant agricultural industry AND cleaner lakes, two things that are mutually reliant and not mutually exclusive. And, significantly, it supports Clean Lakes Alliance's mission to continue building a community of people, businesses, organizations, and government agencies dedicated to improving and protecting water quality in the Yahara River watershed.

Most importantly, we see this task force as a good faith, public process bringing key partners, government officials, and elected representatives to the table to hear from the experts and serve as advisors to the County Board. The anticipated result will be a greater, shared understanding of the current and proposed programs, policies and initiatives aimed at achieving needed phosphorus reductions. Further, we feel it will help generate well-considered recommendations for how we should move forward in a common-sense way that best protects our lakes and the livelihoods of our farmers.

Thank you for voting yes on this resolution.

In Partnership,

James Tye
Executive Director