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# Editorial: Ohio owes on roads

THE BLADE EDITORIAL BOARD

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The state of Ohio is failing the citizens of northwest Ohio.

The latest example of bad state government fouling the quality of life for local citizens is well illustrated in the story of destroyed rural roads in southern Wood County by reporter Debbie Rogers. (“Dairy farm dilemma: Roads suffering,” Sunday)

Township roads are crumbling under the weight of semi-trucks delivering feed to the dairy farms established as concentrated animal feeding operations. CAFO permits are approved by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The Ohio EPA must also approve if the manure is discharged into a waterway. There is no consideration at the state level for maintenance of the roads. The result is a welcome mat for businesses that cost much more than they contribute.

The Wood County CAFOs pay a little more than \$100,000 in taxes on their property. The cost of the roads being destroyed is \$700,000 a mile. The Ohio Department of Agriculture should not have the power to permit expenses they aren’t required to pay. Ohio needs legislation forcing CAFO permits to obtain the same county level approval as solar panels or windmills must do.

Moreover, with CAFO manure runoff the leading cause of the annual Lake Erie algal blooms that expand annually as the number of non-EPA regulated CAFO herds grow, the environmental damage to the lake must be added to the permit process by the state Ag department.

Insect and rodent control and odor minimization get more attention from Ohio government regulators than the precious natural resource of Lake Erie. The DeWine Administration persists in the delusion that a voluntary program, H2Ohio, is sufficient to safeguard the drinking water of major north coast cities, including Toledo, while pretending industrial scale agriculture should be regulated like a family farm.

It's bad policy, bad politics, and shortsighted economic development. Fresh water is a precious resource, necessary for growth. The arid western U.S. states are confronting the limits to their growth because they don't have water. Ohio, meanwhile, takes for granted a freshwater resource turned to green goo by inept state government.

The expense for Wood County's rural roads should be paid by Ohio government. It was an all-Columbus decision that should not become an all-Bowling Green bill. Furthermore, it's time to add a local component to CAFO permits, requiring approval from the county commissioners in locations proposing industrial scale animal feeding facilities.

Solar and wind farms should not be more heavily regulated than concentrated animal feeding operations. The local signoffs for environmentally friendly developments should be copied to protect against CAFO's that destroy our roads and foul our waters.