BEFORE THE  

OHIO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

In the Matter of:

Thomas Farms of  
Stark County, LLC  
10881 Georgetown Street NE  
Louisville, Ohio 44641  

Respondent  

Director's Final Findings and Orders

I. JURISDICTION

These Director's Final Findings and Orders ("Orders") are issued to Thomas Farms of Stark County, LLC ("Respondent") pursuant to the authority vested in the Director of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency ("Ohio EPA") under Ohio Revised Code ("ORC") 6111.03 and 3745.01.

II. PARTIES BOUND

These Orders shall apply to and be binding upon Respondent and successors in interest liable under Ohio law. No change in the composition of Respondent shall in any way alter Respondent's obligations under these Orders.

III. DEFINITIONS

Unless otherwise stated, all terms used in these Orders shall have the same meaning as defined in ORC Chapters 6111 and 3745, and the rules promulgated thereunder.

IV. FINDINGS

1. Respondent owns and operates a farm ("Site") located at 10810 Georgetown Street NE in Louisville, Ohio. The site includes a manure storage lagoon.

2. On July 26, 2018, a release of an undetermined volume of manure from the manure storage lagoon located on the site occurred and impacted an unnamed tributary to the East Branch of Nimishillen Creek (the creek) and the creek itself.

3. The unnamed tributary and the creek are considered to be "waters of the state" as defined by R.C. Section 6111.01.
4. ORC Section 6111.04(A) prohibits any person from causing pollution or causing any sewage, industrial waste, or other waste to be placed in any location where they cause pollution to waters of the state, except if such discharges occur in accordance with a valid, unexpired NPDES permit issued by the Director or if an application for renewal of such permit is pending.

5. Pursuant to Ohio Administrative Code ("OAC") Section 3745-33-02(A), no person may discharge any pollutant or cause, permit, or allow a discharge of any pollutant without applying for and obtaining an Ohio NPDES permit in accordance with the requirements of this chapter.

6. On July 26, 2018, Stark County Soil and Water Conservation District called the spill reporting hotline about an anonymous complaint of a spill at a local dairy farm. In response, Ohio EPA Emergency Response (OER) mobilized to the site. According to the Respondent, an employee acted alone in an attempt to decant water from the manure lagoon. Ohio Department of Natural Resources also responded to the spill.

7. A Notice of Violation (NOV) was issued by OER on July 26, 2018. The NOV cited the manure release with eight (8) miles of stream being impacted and observed impacts to aquatic life. The NOV cited six (6) initial abatement actions to be taken by the Respondent.

8. On August 7, 2018, OER performed a final inspection of the stream and collected samples. At the time of the final inspection, the stream was clear with some small patches of foam.

9. The Director has given consideration to, and based his determination on, evidence relating to the technical feasibility and economic reasonableness of complying with these Orders and to evidence relating to conditions calculated to result from compliance with these Orders, and its relation to the benefits to the people of the State to be derived from such compliance in accomplishing the purpose of ORC Chapter 6111.

**V. ORDERS**

1. Respondent shall implement measures to prevent future manure releases to the extent possible. If a reportable release should occur, Respondent shall notify Ohio EPA upon discovery of the release.

2. Respondent shall pay the amount of two thousand five hundred dollars ($2,500) in settlement of Ohio EPA's claims for civil penalties, which may be assessed pursuant to ORC Chapter 6111. Within thirty (30) days after the effective date of these Orders, payment to Ohio EPA shall be made by an official check made
payable to: “Treasurer, State of Ohio”. The official check shall be submitted to Carol Butler, or her successor, together with a letter identify the Respondent, to:

Office of Fiscal Administration
Ohio Environmental Protection Agency
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

A copy of the check shall be sent to the Environmental Manager, Enforcement Section, or his successor, at the following address:

Ohio EPA
Division of Surface Water
P.O. Box 1049
Columbus, Ohio 43216-1049

VI. TERMINATION

Respondent’s obligations under these Orders shall terminate when Respondent certifies in writing and demonstrates to the satisfaction of Ohio EPA that Respondent has performed all obligations under these Orders and the Chief of Ohio EPA’s Division of Surface Water acknowledges, in writing, the termination of these Orders. If Ohio EPA does not agree that all obligations have been performed, then Ohio EPA will notify Respondent of the obligations that have not been performed, in which case Respondent shall have an opportunity to address any such deficiencies and seek termination as described above.

The certification shall contain the following attestation: “I certify that the information contained in or accompanying this certification is true, accurate and complete.”

This certification shall be submitted by Respondent to Ohio EPA and shall be signed by a responsible official of the Respondent. For purposes of these Orders, a responsible official is defined in OAC Rule 3745-33-03(F).

VII. OTHER CLAIMS

Nothing in these Orders shall constitute or be construed as a release from any claim, cause of action or demand in law or equity against any person, firm, partnership or corporation, not a party to these Orders, for any liability arising from, or related to activities occurring on or at the site.
VIII. OTHER APPLICABLE LAWS

All actions required to be taken pursuant to these Orders shall be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of all applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations. These Orders do not waive or compromise the applicability and enforcement of any other statutes or regulations applicable to Respondent.

IX. MODIFICATIONS

These Orders may be modified by agreement of the parties hereto. Modifications shall be in writing and shall be effective on the date entered in the journal of the Director of Ohio EPA.

X. NOTICE

All documents required to be submitted by Respondent pursuant to these Orders shall be addressed to:

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency  
Northeast District Office  
Division of Surface Water  
ATTN: DSW Enforcement Unit Supervisor  
2110 E. Aurora Road  
Twinsburg, Ohio 44087

or to such persons and addresses as may hereafter be otherwise specified in writing by Ohio EPA.

XI. RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

Ohio EPA and Respondent each reserve all rights, privileges and causes of action, except as specifically waived in Section XI of these Orders.

XII. WAIVER

In order to resolve disputed claims, without admission of fact, violation or liability, and in lieu of further enforcement action by Ohio EPA for only the violations specifically cited in these Orders, Respondent consents to the issuance of these Orders and agrees to comply with these Orders. Compliance with these Orders shall be a full accord and satisfaction for Respondent’s liability for the violations specifically cited herein.

Respondent hereby waives the right to appeal the issuance, terms and conditions, and service of these Orders, and Respondent hereby waives any and all rights Respondent may have to seek administrative or judicial review of these Orders either in law or equity.
Notwithstanding the preceding, Ohio EPA and Respondent agree that if these Orders are appealed by any other party to the Environmental Review Appeals Commission, or any court, Respondent retains the right to intervene and participate in such appeal. In such an event, Respondent shall continue to comply with these Orders notwithstanding such appeal and intervention unless these Orders are stayed, vacated or modified.

XIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

The effective date of these Orders is the date these Orders are entered into the Ohio EPA Director’s journal.

XIV. SIGNATORY AUTHORITY

Each undersigned representative or party to these Orders certifies that he or she is fully authorized to enter into these Orders and to legally bind such party to these Orders.

IT IS SO ORDERED AND AGREED:

Ohio Environmental Protection Agency

Craig W. Butler, Director

December 21, 2018

Date

IT IS SO AGREED:

Thomas Farms of Stark County, LLC

Signature

Mark Thomas

Printed or Typed Name

President

Title

12-12-18

Date