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allegedly responsible for not letting go of the matter. Furthermore, after 30 years, his case has very, very deep roots and you know how it goes with deep-rooted weeds.

Mr. Brace could have caved in to the government's demands years ago. Any person of lesser conviction and fortitude likely would have. But the Erie County grain farmer is convinced he's right and has therefore stuck to his convictions. Meanwhile, the Feds have literally stuck to their guns with a little Hitler here and a little Stalin there calling the shots. It's the kind of story that should have made national news years ago, but never has. Who would believe it? This is America; not North Korea.

As I write this, I'm learning that efforts are underway to bring Mr. Brace's case before a broad audience, such as "60 Minutes" or Fox News. According to Mr. Brace himself, this may be his last and only chance to have his 30-year nightmare end. Meanwhile, the sternest of court hearings still await him. And everything he and his family have worked for is on the line.

Mrs. Brace observed as she left my office one day: "We came into this world with nothing and we'll leave it with nothing."

Well, that's true for all of us. However, Mr. and Mrs. Brace are facing the very real possibility of actually seeing it happen before their eyes ... like a fire consuming their belongings, but much worse. Risking all they've worked for because of their strong convictions brings to mind the words of another stubborn patriot of long ago: Patrick Henry. "Give me liberty or give me death!"

For the record, and as one who has seen and walked on the Brace's properties, let me



Brace Farms is in good hands with Robert Brace and his family, as this photograph clearly shows. Environmental stewardship is taken very seriously by the Erie County, Pennsylvania farmers, but some federal authorities have trouble seeing it.

Photo by Dieter Krieg

state that the Queen of England could not place it under better care. Neither can any agency of the United States government. The Braces are first-class stewards of their land and it is high time that their rights be recognized and respected.

You know, there is a saying that if you won't stand and speak up on behalf of your wrongly accused neighbor, it won't be long before you're the one who's being accused. And yes, it can happen here in the good old United States of America. It already has! In our opinion, it's a true crisis.

As individuals, or better yet as members of farm organizations such as the Pennsylvania

Farm Bureau, we urge you to voice concern and take action. Coincidentally, the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau reported the following in its most recent edition of their *Country Focus*, a monthly member publication. Please be sure to absorb the comments from American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) President Zippy Duvall and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) President Rick Ebert.

Trump dumps WOTUS

The executive order, signed in late February, directs the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to review the WOTUS rule. The rule, which took effect in 2015, gives the federal government sweep-

ing authority over small ditches and streams.

American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall said Trump's decision brings welcomed relief to farm families across the country.

"The flawed WOTUS rule has proven to be nothing more than a federal land grab, aimed at telling farmers and ranchers how to run their businesses," Duvall said. "The Environmental Protection Agency failed to listen to farmers' and ranchers' concerns when drafting the rule and instead created widespread confusion for agriculture. Under the rule, the smallest pond or ditch could be declared a federal waterway."

Under the WOTUS rule, farmers would have needed to acquire a permit from the federal government to perform routine farm tasks near ditches, or small streams, such as crop treatment or building fences.

EPA officials were using the WOTUS rule to clarify their jurisdiction under the Clean Water Act, which gives the federal government authority over the "navigable waters."

Throughout the rule making process, farmers aired concerns that extending Clean Water Act jurisdiction to small bodies of water - and even dry ditches - was a significant, and unnecessary, federal overreach. PFB President Rick Ebert thanked the administration for listening to the concerns of farm families.

"The executive order demonstrates that the President and his administration understand that the final WOTUS rule is clearly flawed and needs to be revised with input from farmers, builders, county governments and other stakeholders, who care about water quality and are interested in securing a new policy in a fair and transparent manner," Ebert said.

It would be nice if AFBF and PFB would sign on as friends of the Brace Family, as more than 30 other organizations have already done.

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