Illinois Farmers as Nutrient Stewards: Opportunities via the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

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Agricultural Stakeholder Involvement

• Stakeholders met August 2013 - May 2014:
  – Illinois Department of Agriculture
  – Illinois Farm Bureau
  – Illinois Pork Producers Association
  – Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association
  – Illinois Corn Growers Association
  – Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts
  – University of Illinois Extension
  – NRCS
Agricultural Nonpoint Sources

• Includes recommended BMPs shown through peer reviewed research to reduce nutrient losses
  – In-field (split application of N, cover crops, reduced tillage)
  – Edge of field (bioreactors, wetlands)
  – Land use changes (perennial crops)
• Information on costs and estimated reductions/acre for N and P
• Combination scenarios of BMPs to see large scale reductions
Agricultural Nonpoint Sources

- Livestock operations - BMPs included for:
  - Land application of manure
  - Runoff management from production areas
Key Nutrient Reduction Programs for Nonpoint Sources

- Focus on building upon existing programs and resources
- Reinvigoration of voluntary conservation adoption and nutrient management
- New focus on tracking implementation of BMPs and resulting water quality impacts
- No “one size fits all” approach for all of Illinois agriculture
Key Nutrient Reduction Programs for Nonpoint Sources

- **State Programs**
  - IEPA
    - Section 319 grant program
    - Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant
  - IDNR
    - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
  - IDOA
    - Partners for Conservation Cost-Share (allocated annually to SWCDs)
Key Nutrient Reduction Programs for Nonpoint Sources

• Federal Programs
  – NRCS
    • Environmental Quality Incentives Program
    • Conservation Stewardship Program
    • Easement Programs (Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and Healthy Forests Reserve Program)
Key Nutrient Reduction Programs for Nonpoint Sources

• Illinois Agriculture Initiatives
  – Nutrient Research and Education Council
  – Council on Best Management Practices
  – Priority issue for the individual agricultural organizations and agribusinesses in Illinois
NREC

• Established by Illinois agriculture in 2012 - sustainable funding mechanism for nutrient research and education
• Assessment of 75 cents per ton of bulk fertilizer sold in the state. Primarily paid by farmers.
• Support projects and programs that address the role of nutrients in enhancing Illinois crop production while minimizing environmental impact
NREC

- Governed by 9 voting members:
  - 3 from grower organizations (IFB, ISA, ICGA)
  - 3 from fertilizer industry
  - 1 from specialty fertilizer industry
  - 1 from certified agronomy organization
  - IDOA Director or rep

- And 4 non-voting members:
  - 2 from environmental organizations
  - 1 rep from state/federal ag experiment station
  - IEPA Director or rep
NREC

• Annual funding to NREC between $2-2.5 million
• 2014 is second year of funding
• Proposals for 2015 funding are due November 3.
• 2013 - first year projects were funded (7 total projects)
• 2014 - 15 projects funded totaling over $2.55 million.
  - Mix of research and outreach programs
  - Examples -
    • CBMP KIC program
    • Agronomic and Environmental Assessment of Cover Crops
    • Nitrogen Management over Tile Trained Fields to Optimize Yields & Minimize Losses
Illinois Council on Best Management Practices

• Coalition of agricultural organizations and agribusinesses:

• New Executive Director starting this week!
• Mission is to assist and encourage adoption of BMPs to protect and enhance natural resources and the sustainability of agriculture in Illinois
CBMP Goals

- **Information**: Gather current and accurate information on effective/economically viable BMPs and programs
- **Awareness**: Increase awareness of water quality issues and BMPs
- **Participation**: Increase farmer participation in programs and adoption of BMPs
- **Demonstration**: Demonstrate loss reductions and progress on strategy goals
KIC Education and Outreach Program

- CBMP’s overarching educational program focusing on nutrients and water quality
- **Education**: To farmers, agricultural retailers, general public and youth
- **Training**: Cover crop training
- **Demonstration**: On-farm and watershed projects
- **Communication**: Coalition of ag groups working together to share a single message (radio, print, websites - CBMP and individual organizations)
KIC Education and Outreach Program

• Although CBMP’s educational efforts will be statewide, the on-farm demonstrations and watershed projects will focus in 8 priority watersheds:
  • Lake Bloomington watershed
  • Lake Evergreen watershed
  • Lake Decatur watershed
  • Lake Jacksonville watershed
  • Lake Vermilion watershed
  • Salt Fork Vermilion watershed
  • Vermilion River watershed
  • Lake Springfield watershed
KIC Education and Outreach Program

• One component - 4R Program
  – Nutrient stewardship program to reduce nutrient losses from agriculture, focusing on the 4Rs of Nutrient Use: Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time, Right Place
  – Seeks to educate farmers and suppliers to manage nutrients in a systematic approach throughout the growing season, rather than as a single application
KIC Education and Outreach Program

• KIC uses the following programs and tools to better educate farmers on the nitrogen cycle, nutrient uptake and optimum nitrogen rates for individual fields:
  – On-farm nitrogen rate trials
  – N-WATCH soil inventory and tracking program
Cover Crop Training Initiative

• Utilize 3 regional cover crop specialists to provide training, education and outreach to promote use of cover crops for nutrient management in production agriculture

• Cover crop specialists will:
  – Establish demonstration sites
  – Work with ag retailers, local SWCDs and IDOA to identify farmers statewide
  – Partner with Ag Departments at Community Colleges and establish network for education and outreach throughout the state
Ongoing Strategy Work

• Agricultural organizations will continue to be part of the ongoing strategy work:
  – Committees (education and outreach, water quality monitoring, nutrient standards)
  – Public reporting
  – Future meetings of stakeholder group
Thank You

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