

Upper Wabash Nutrient Management Coalition

August 6, 2009

Bluffton, IN

Notes

Participants: Kevin Elder, Laura Walker, John Friedt, Kent Wamsley, Ron Puthoff, Mary Lou Renshaw, Alan Stout, John Kessler, Sara Slater-Atwater, Angie Brown, Stacia Henderson

1. Discussed CTIC's Water Quality Credit Trading market feasibility study in the Wabash River basin. Discussed basics of water quality credit trading.
2. Lou Renshaw shared an Indiana map showing location of BMPs and water quality monitoring sites.

Section 319 awards (IN). Recipients include Wabash River Basin Commission, Limberlost Watershed. Lou can share executive summary of these projects and critical areas identified.

Salamonie and Mississinewa are opportunities for 319 grant.

In OH, Grand Lake/St. Mary's watershed submitted proposal for septic system upgrades and repairs.

Current call for 319 proposals (IN). IDEM looking for planning and implementation of TMDLs, or state wide proposals that address the applicant's mission. Also projects with water quality implications or local capacity building. Local capacity building could cover staffing and could be state-wide; goal is sustainability. Another priority is hydro modification and statewide applicability.

3. Grand Lake watershed lake samples. What is the possibility for toxic algae to develop? No toxin in drinking water at this time. No reports of illness. However, possibility is attracting agency attention. 319 funds restricted to watershed. Developing work plan at state level with local partners. What modifications are needed? What are sources for funding? Take a look at ag/livestock area and what assistance can be provided. Keeping track of where manure is going from permitted operations. Also fate of nutrients. Focus on soil testing, cover crops, buffers, and setbacks.

Discussion of livestock regulation in IN and OH and rules/regulations affecting manure transport across state line.

4. Wabash River Basin Commission received from IDEM implementation grant of \$198,500 which includes \$102,000 for BMPs. Will be hiring watershed coordinator. Held 2 river vision meeting for feedback. Sixteen people have signed up to help with water testing, etc.

Discussed review of Rule 5 plans by SWCDs and 319 funding.

5. Wabash River Flow Restoration Project. Changing the way Salamonie, Mississinewa, and Huntington let water out so the downstream organisms can thrive. Example: KY. Barriers for USACE: not a lot of additional capacity at Huntington (in winter if you hold more there is less you

have to get it out). Temperature issue: Released water comes from bottom of lake (cold water) causes stress to fish and mussels. Mississinewa can draw from lower level but not as much goes out. Lots of research needs to be done. How far will it affect downstream? 10 mi? 20 mi? Not a lot of rare or threatened species so what will we stand to gain? Why would this project be good for USACE? Need to make case if return to natural flow, will be dryer in summer. Would it be positive for water recreation and species? What is to be achieved? Needs to be put on paper. Research is needed as a separate and ongoing activity.

Discussion of flow from Grand Lake to Indiana.

6. Action plan next steps.

If we want to encourage cover crops we need to educate the farmers.

Encourage writers to include stories about cover crops in their publications.

Educate younger kids about cover crops.

How do we prioritize conservation practices on the land? Buy down for new practices? Adams county program to encourage cover crops. Strip till program and other conservation practices. Have to make it affordable to producers.

Lottery. Adams County SWCD. Producers won financial assistance in a lottery—covered costs to a certain point.

Field days help. Staff sales help, but needs to cover financial risk to producer (yield insurance).

Potential action: develop a program that buys down costs.

With cover crops the problem is herbicides. Places restrictions on what you plant when. Have to know which herbicides work with what cover crops. Laura has resource.

Conservation tillage: IN Conservation Consultant Initiative. Was successful in this area. \$1/acre to producer. \$1.50/acre to consultant. State funded through Clean Water Indiana. State wide is it still going on? John will find out.

Mercer SWCD has talked about consultant being paid to broker manure—may not be best suggestion to cross state line. Need to get regulatory people on both sides of state line to get together so program is the same for each state.

ODNR is doing CNMP training and would share w/Indiana. NMPs would cover more producers than CNMPs. OH developed “CNMP light” which expedites planning in areas where it would cause no harm—get higher percentage of producers using the plan. Too soon to know how it would work.

What is forcing action to haul manure from OH to IN? High livestock concentration in Mercer and close proximity to IN. Much going to Muncie area. It is economic to haul poultry manure some 90 miles. Swine manure can be economically moved 5-10 miles. Manure recipients are saving money on

commercial fertilizer even after transportation costs and application costs. Why don't Mercer County producers use the manure? Farmers not used to using manure. How do we handle that problem? Education and \$ incentive to change. Demo plots on farms and guarantee farmer no \$ loss. EQIP can help with soil testing. Problems: farmers don't read/follow soil test recommendations. Dealers are overselling fertilizer. Farmers may not be sharing what manure was applied. Any increase in grid sampling/variable rate technology? EQIP can help fund. Would that rank high enough in this watershed to get funded by EQIP? Kevin—it should and he would push for it.

American Farmland Trust BMP Challenge. Focus on Tillage/nutrients. Producer works directly with consultant doing side-by-side comparisons and covering any financial loss. On tillage no crop consultant is provided—could be provided by this group. Recommend going with independent consultant rather than dealer. The Nature Conservancy provided boots on the ground for the Tippecanoe BMP Challenge which has ended.

Do we prioritize these things? What \$ is available for what? What is most effective for the dollars?

Two stage ditches are approved EQIP practices. \$3.50/foot would be paid by producer. It is an opportunity for this group to cover that cost. What is the benefit to the producer? If the producer is conservation-minded, it is an easy sell. There is less ponding for quicker access to the ground. Good nutrient practices over filter strip. If CRP practice—could get 90% cost share. Kent doesn't think it's necessary to pay for cropland out of production. Farmers will better situate themselves to be ready for the federal dollars that getting greener. If area floods 2 times per year, farmer can't afford to crop anyway. Kent will send us papers/research on 2 stage ditches.

Cover crops=having living roots in the soil all year.

Christa will list the top practices from the collection of watershed plans and include our strategies that relate to them.

Should we bring back our results so far to the larger group?

A new member will be Francis Springer. Laura will send me contact info.

When to get the whole coalition back together? After harvest season, after Thanksgiving.

Christa will ask Shannon Zezula to get back involved in steering committee.