

**Southern Minnesota Nutrient Efficiency Coalition**  
**Conference Call**  
**June 2, 2009**  
**Notes**

*Vision: We envision a public/private partnership that forms a unified voice for promoting nutrient management in Southern Minnesota.*

*Mission: Draw on our diversity and the knowledge of the farming community to promote nutrient efficiency which is both environmentally responsible and economically viable.*

Participating: Kevin Keuhner, Roger Wilkowske, Dave Ward, Wayne Anderson, Bruce Henningsgaard, Larry Gunderson, Brian Williams, Warren Formo, Donna Rasmussen, Dawn Bernau, Brad Carlson, Christa Jones (notes)

Larry Gunderson presented his ideas for enhanced communication, strategic communication with partners. Kevin agreed that these efforts were important, and Larry had identified the right groups in his outline.

Dawn Bernau: What suggestions do you have to alleviate tension between regulators and producer groups?

Dave Ward: Both groups have said “we need more research.” We know what it takes to feed the world. Nutrient standards are something that it’s easy to get our hands around. Other issues are harder to tackle, carbon emissions, etc.

Warren Formo: Looking at replicating WI’s Discovery Farms network. Will have 2010 water monitoring data, to answer “what is the causal relationship between nutrients and water quality?”

Brian Williams: Lots of work has been done on a small scale...we need to look at whole watersheds. Drainage can vary so much from year to year—making causal relationships hard to define.

Wayne Anderson: Communication is one of the things that as a coalition we can foster. We need to answer: What is our common ground? And why do we have common interests?

Warren Formo: We need to do an education program—there are all different perspectives on whether or not we have a nutrient management problem, and to what extent, and what is the cause. How can we bring all those groups together to figure out how we can make this process work?

Dawn Bernau: It would help for technical assistance people to see news releases that farmers are seeing, especially the ones that make farmers doubt their advisors. Semantics are important. How can we all use the same set of words? Resources are on the website.

Warren: What can we add to the website?

Brian: Research needs to add--\$600,000 to fund a group to look at research needs. .40/ton will go to research projects—review by ag research projects. Several on nutrient research.

Larry is not proposing deletion of the current plan, just an awareness that we need to enhance communication among partners. Keep in mind the communication needs.

Key Result Area #1: An increase in research.

There are groups doing research.

Draft Goal 1A: Advocate for a soils fertility specialist position serving SE Minnesota. (Do we want something as specific as a soils fertility specialist or something more general that could include a wider range of research?)

Discussion: What does a soils fertility specialist do? Do we need to ask the counties if this is actually needed? Include duties of a broader spectrum—from the standpoint of nutrient loading/sedimentation

Question for Brad Carlson: Can existing personnel cover these needs?

Dan Kieser and Jeff Coulter could have these duties; they have other responsibilities too.

Wayne mentioned he doesn't really know what the context of our advocate role is—what and how are we advocating?

The University doesn't have anything proposed; there is no money. Greg Cuomo would be willing to hear a proposal especially if there is funding for it. Is now the right time to propose this?

Warren: The groups he represents will not advocate for an assignment (there are twelve organizations and this would not be a top shelf issue for them)

Dave: We (growers) want to be more efficient in nutrient use. Larry proposed the right question.

Warren talked about the need for education—we've got enough research—how do we do the dialogue that is needed?

Donna Rasmussen: We don't have enough research in the southeast. It may be in the pipeline.

Donna: Someone is needed to coordinate the research findings. Nitrogen impaired streams will also raise the need. Need a research position in place.

It has to come from people in the southeast.

**ACTION: Donna: We could bring this issue to the Alliance for the Lower Mississippi in MN.**

Draft Goal 1B: Develop a list of current research and research needs identified by the University, the farming community, and the conservation agencies.

Discussion: Where are we? University has a list? Comprehensive needs assessment is needed. Goal 1B looks like a needs assessment. Sharing with other universities is important (federal extension dollars require multi-state projects).

Drainage concerns are something that pertains to SE MN.

Are we concerned about soil quality issues? Drainage contributes greatly.

There have been fairly significant changes in plant genetics—yield has gone up—gap growing between practitioner advice and university recommendations?

Powerful to get feedback from farmers on what is needed—can be quite powerful in terms of setting priorities.

We need to take a hard look at the research (plant genetics).

We will be doing fertility research forever with changes in genetics.

If we keep increasing our yields, to what extent do we begin mining ourselves?

A needs assessment is needed.

**ACTION: Dawn (and Adam, if willing) could do a small questionnaire for cooperators).**

Kevin: There is new money through Clean Water Legacy for groundwater. Larger scale surveys (with practices up for discussion) will be administered by the National Ag Statistics Service. This group could influence the types of questions that are asked. Kevin will keep us up to date.

Brad: This would probably be an annual thing to get a sense of what the trends are.

A much simpler way might be to ask the ag groups to survey their members.

**ACTION: Warren will find out who is doing what.**

Draft Goal 1C: Ascertain public concern and interest in nutrient efficiency issues. Share results and interpret those results for decision makers.

Discussion: This goal is the same as 1B except we're asking the general public. What avenues could we use for that?

Could do a web survey to tell us what percentage of respondents think.

Next meeting is July 1 at 1:00 PM Central time.