

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW STATE NUTRIENT REDUCTION STRATEGIES CAN ADDRESS
NUTRIENT POLLUTION FROM CROPLAND
APRIL 2014**

**Prepared by the Mississippi River Collaborative's Agriculture Workgroup and
Endorsed by Iowa Environmental Council, Kentucky Waterways Alliance, Midwest
Environmental Advocates, and Prairie Rivers Network**

The following are cropland policy recommendations developed by the Mississippi River Collaborative's Agriculture Workgroup. The list is a compilation of recommendations from workgroup members, but individual workgroup members do not necessarily agree that every recommendation listed is appropriate for their state. Because each state is unique, not all policies will be appropriate. Members of the Collaborative are encouraged to use any of the following recommendations when commenting on their State Nutrient Reduction Strategies.

1. State agencies should pursue legislation, regulations, and/or programs that result in broad adoption of riparian buffers, filter strips, cover crops, split application of fertilizer, ephemeral gully erosion control, end-of-tile wetlands, conservation tillage, no fertilizer application on top of frozen ground or when soil phosphorus is above maintenance levels
 2. Regulate fall application such that fertilizer cannot be applied when losses are likely (e.g., soil temperature >50F, fertilizer contains nitrate, fertilizer is unincorporated, the ground is frozen, ice-covered, or snow-covered); elimination or rate restriction of fall fertilizer application should be considered
 3. The state water quality agency should seek authority to regulate non-point source pollution so as to ensure that load allocations in TMDLs are met, and should provide greater assistance in the implementation of plans in watersheds with nutrient TMDLs
 4. The state agriculture agency should develop and execute a plan to work with farmers to ensure fields do not continue to erode above the tolerable loss rate
 5. The agricultural associations should conduct nutrient stewardship education programs statewide to achieve broad adoption of practices that reduce fertilizer loss
 6. Certified crop advisors should receive mandatory training on effective strategies for reducing nutrient losses from farm fields
 7. Watershed plans should be developed that target the most effective practices where they are most needed
 8. Incorporate lessons learned from successful agricultural initiatives in other states
 9. Include additional incentives or mandatory programs, so that the strategy does not consist only of existing programs
 10. Rank existing programs for their effectiveness in reducing non-point source pollution and make future planning decisions based on what is most effective
 11. Determine the scale of conservation and fertilizer application practices currently in place, so that progress can be assessed based on this baseline
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12. Provide a plan to increase the effectiveness of current programs in watershed areas that are underachieving
13. Assess the ability of current programs to compensate for loss of acreage enrolled in easement programs and/or that will shift to corn
14. Revise the NRCS 590 nutrient management conservation practice standard to include more nutrient stewardship requirements, including: use of a Nitrogen Loss Risk Assessment Tool, use of a winter nutrient spreading risk assessment tool, soil testing criteria for phosphorus, analysis of manure for nutrient content, analysis of potential for nutrient loss via tile drainage, incorporation of adaptive nutrient management, ensure adequate acreage is available for manure application
15. Use existing authority to achieve proposed actions
16. Require nutrient management plans on all agricultural lands of 10+ acres
17. Create an initiative to address nitrogen loss from tile-drained fields
18. Require soil testing laboratories to indicate on test results whether nutrient levels are above optimum
19. Promote the inclusion of nutrient stewardship practices in farm leases
20. Educate absentee landowners on the importance of nutrient stewardship
21. Support research and development of continuous living cover systems
22. Discourage farming in sensitive areas prone to flooding, erosion, and groundwater contamination
23. Increase natural habitat on farms by promoting the associated ecosystem services and economic opportunities (e.g., timber sales, beekeeping, value added products)
24. Agencies should focus state and federal funding sources to meet nutrient goals in priority watersheds, and develop a plan for directing funding to priority watersheds
25. Include innovative financing approaches such as nutrient trading, property tax breaks, increased taxes or fees to fund clean water projects
26. Describe the funding sources that will be used to maintain and expand existing programs and estimate the need for additional funds to achieve load reduction goals.