

South Branch Root River Watershed Project
May 11, 2005 Meeting Notes

In attendance: Bill Sweetser (Bennington Twp), Lee Ganske (MPCA), Mark Dittrich and Denton Bruening (MDA), Bob and Eloda Wood (Wykoff, stream monitors), Fred Beier (homeowner), Stafford Hansen (Fillmore Co. Commissioner), Keith Voorhees and Bob Hanson (Clayton Twp), Dave Peterson (Bd of Water and Soil Resources), Mike Souhrada (Bloomfield Twp), Donna Rasmussen (Fillmore SWCD)

Introductions

2003 Nutrient Management Assessment of Producers in the South Branch of the Root River:

Denton Bruening, MDA, summarized the final report from the 61 farmer interviews conducted from February to June in 2004 for the 2003 cropping year. The interviews covered 52% (30,500 acres) of the crop acres in the project area (22,000 acres in Fillmore County and 8,000 in Mower County). Most of the crop acres were in a corn and soybean rotation. Of the 1.7 million pounds of commercial nitrogen fertilizer applied, 97% was on corn acres, with 57% of it being applied pre-plant in the spring. Twenty percent is still being applied in the fall. Most of the commercial phosphorus (91%) was applied to corn acres at application rates adequate to cover crop needs for two years. Seventy-two percent of the manure is applied in the fall and only 6% is being applied to frozen ground. Application methods were evenly divided between broadcast, broadcast with incorporation, and sweep injection. Beef accounted for the largest percentage of the manure produced in the watershed (42%) followed by dairy (30%) and hogs (26%). However, hog manure accounted for 71% of the N available from manure in the first year since some of the beef and dairy manure is not collected for land application. Dairy manure supplied an average of 4 lbs. of N per acre, beef averaged 5 lbs./acre and hog manure averaged 69 lbs./acre. Total N application averaged 147 lbs./acre which is 17 lbs. over the U of M recommended rate of 130 lbs./acre. Acres with higher yield goals tended to get the most overapplication, e.g. yield goals over 175 bushels/acre saw average N applications 33 lbs. over the U of M recommendations. On corn fields, 17% of the acres were at or below U of M recommendations, 35% were 20 lbs or less over the recs, 33% were 20 to 40 lbs. over the recs, and 15% were more than 40 lbs. over the recs. Corn/soybean rotations averaged 25 lbs. over the recs, while corn/alfalfa and corn/corn rotations showed no overapplication. More than 70% of the soil tests for phosphorus were in the high to very high range. Fifty percent of the acres surveyed were tilled, 27 fields had streams running through them with about half of those buffered, and 84% of the corn acres were tilled using a chisel/ripper/cultivator. Forty percent of the soybean acres were no-tilled. Regarding pesticide use, atrazine was the most used pesticide being used on 80% of the corn acres at an average rate of 0.75 lbs./acre. Forty percent of the acres were at less than 0.6 lb./acre and 13% were over 1 lb./acre. Most of the atrazine is being applied post-emergence. Eighty-three percent of the soybeans are Round-Up ready. Soybean aphid insecticide use is on the increase.

There was discussion about how to use this information. Ag dealers and consultants are a key audience. Because of the amount of hog manure being applied, this would be good information for a Pork Producers meeting. In a three-year follow-up, the process will be repeated to see if there are any changes. A manure application field day in August will highlight equipment improvements that allow lower application rates. A regional hypoxia meeting in Ames, IA in

September will examine the four tests used to make nitrogen recommendations and try to come to a consensus on consistency between states in the Upper Midwest.

Review of financial assistance program guidelines: These were developed to help SWCD staff answer questions about the programs. Fillmore and Mower SWCD and NRCS staff helped with them, with some input from FSA staff about the CCRP portion. Some changes were suggested which will be incorporated into the next version. Changes may be made as the programs progress to simplify the process or allow more flexibility.

Updates:

The newsletter is printed and will be mailed the end of this week.

The township officers' tour is announced in the newsletter. A separate mailing with an itinerary will be mailed out the week of May 23rd. We will be going through the supper hour, so a decision needs to be made about a meal. I am planning that the midway point will be in Ostrander, so we could take orders ahead and eat in the restaurants, each paying for their own meal. Or we could get sandwiches and have a picnic lunch at the park. An hour-long cave tour is being provided at 2 p.m. by park staff at no charge.

Monitoring activities have begun. Samples are being collected twice a month at the Forestville bridge plus there will be several runoff events sampled. The automated equipment is up and running also. We have \$2500 available from MPCA for monitoring over and above what was budgeted in the 319 grant. We also have begun collecting well water samples. About 15-20 people signed up at the nitrate clinics for bacteria and/or atrazine tests at the reduced cost of \$5 and \$10, respectively.

There is interest from a couple of FFA chapters to help with producing the New Look at Livestock video. Donations for the production have been received from the Fillmore County Pork Producers and Dairyland Cooperative. The FFA chapter with the best product will receive a monetary award and other recognition. An October 1st deadline has been set for submission of their videos.

Applications are being accepted for the CWP loan program for upgrading septic systems. The process is still being tested to see that it works smoothly.