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Hypoxia Task Force Highlights

The Hypoxia Task Force will host a virtual public meeting the week of September 27, 2020. The dates and time will be announced on our website at epa.gov/ms-htf.

State Activities

This newsletter highlights state actions that are working to reduce nutrient loading in the Mississippi River Basin. Each of the twelve state members of the Hypoxia Task Force provide periodic updates on progress towards the goals of state nutrient reduction strategies and this issue features reports released over the past few months by Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin.

Read more about state nutrient reduction strategies here

2019 Annual Report Released by the Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council (NREC)

Since 2013, Illinois NREC has invested nearly $23 million into researching ways to maximize nutrient efficiency, minimize nutrient losses, and mitigate possible negative environmental impacts. The report summarizes phosphorus-reducing best management practices—ranging from cover crops to biochar.

Read more

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy Annual Report

The 2018-2019 Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy (INRS) annual report was released on July 1, 2020 in coordination with Iowa State University, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Findings show meaningful progress in increasing farmer, landowner, and community engagement as well as more widespread use of conservation practices and funding invested in soil health and water quality projects.

The data from the report also show that the growing number of installed conservation practices reduced phosphorous losses by an estimated 18.5 percent during the 2006-2010 time period,

compared to the 1980-1996 baseline of the INRS. The state has made continuous progress in reducing phosphorous losses from farm fields because of the increased adoption of soil conservation practices—including no-till and conservation tillage, cover crops and terraces—over the last two decades.

Read more

Indiana's 2019 Conservation Accomplishments

The Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) consists of eight Indiana agencies and organizations working under the leadership of the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to implement the Indiana State Nutrient Reduction Strategy. In 2019, Indiana landowners supported by the ICP implemented over 26,000 new conservation practices. The report provides reduction estimates of sediment and nutrients entering Indiana's waterways as well as carbon sequestration by cover crops.

Read more

Missouri Releases Annual Report on its Nutrient Reduction Strategy

The Missouri Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) uses an adaptive approach to reduce excess nutrients from both point and nonpoint sources and improve Missouri's water quality while also reducing nutrients transported downstream to the Gulf of Mexico. Among the state's accomplishments, FY 2019 saw $36.5 million in tax funds generated through the Missouri Parks, Soils and Water Sales tax go toward conservation practices. Through the State Cost-Share Program, Missouri landowners covered 286,685 acres (448 square miles) in cover crops in 2019. After receiving a grant to monitor edge-of-field conservation practices on commercial row crop farms, Missouri Corn and Soybean Merchandising Councils found that up to 75% of the annual nutrient and sediment loss from fields can be attributed to storms that occur in the spring. Cover crops during this period can greatly reduce annual nutrient loss.

Read more

Wisconsin Releases its Nutrient Reduction Strategy Implementation Progress Report for 2017-2019

Wisconsin's Implementation Progress report provides a comprehensive description of the substantial and widespread efforts to reduce nutrient losses to the state's rivers, lakes, and streams. Nutrient reduction is being accomplished through existing programs at the local, state, and federal level that either regulate point sources or promote conservation practices by agricultural non-point sources. Most importantly, implementation is occurring at the watershed-scale through partnerships between municipalities/sanitary districts, county land and water conservation departments, farmers, environmental/watershed groups, University of Wisconsin Extension, and state/federal agencies. With partners working together, outreach and education are provided, planning is accomplished, and practices are implemented that lead to measurable reductions in nutrient losses.

Read more

Louisiana House Passes Concurrent Resolution 64

The Louisiana House passed Concurrent Resolution 64 to express support for the annual Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Mapping Cruise conducted by the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium and recognize the important role the cruise plays in understanding and conserving our coastal resources.

Read the resolution

Federal Activities

EPA Provides Additional Funding to States to Help Reduce Excess Nutrients in the Gulf of Mexico Watershed

On June 22, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it is providing an additional $840 thousand to the 12 state members of the Hypoxia Task Force (HTF)—augmenting the $1.2 million that the agency announced in August 2019. The HTF states are using this EPA funding to implement state plans that accelerate progress reducing excess nutrients in the Mississippi River/Atchafalaya River Basin.

Read more

USDA Science Shows that Conservation Practices Are Effective in Managing Nutrients

Recently, the collaborative findings of USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) were published in the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation. Contributions were made by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Agricultural Research Service as well as other academic, governmental, and non-governmental partners. The issue includes 15 peer-reviewed research papers and two feature articles, including one article analyzing results from watershed studies spanning 15 years of CEAP assessments. Findings show that conservation practices are working to reduce runoff, improve soil quality, and mitigate contaminants in small watersheds across the country. Practices included drainage management, conservation tillage, cover crops, buffers, irrigation, nutrient management, water management, and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practices and were assessed at plot, field, edge-of-field, and watershed-scale.

Read more

EPA Gulf of Mexico Division Farmer to Farmer Request for Applications

EPA expects to issue a Request for Applications (RFA) this summer to solicit applications from eligible entities for grants to demonstrate innovative practices on working lands through collaboration with farmer-led or farm focused organizations in the Gulf of Mexico watershed within the Continental United States. The projects should demonstrate innovative practices within farming communities, measure the results of those practices, and identify how the practices will be incorporated into farming operations. For the purpose of this RFA the term "farmer" refers to those individuals that make management decisions concerning agriculture lands, including cropland, forestland, and grazing lands.

Once the RFA is released, applicants will have approximately 60 days to respond to the RFA. EPA anticipates that approximately $7.5 million in total funding will be available, awards will range from approximately $250,000 to $1,000,000. More details will be made available once the RFA is released later this summer and a link will be published on epa.gov/ms-htf.

Read more

Resources

Midwest Row Crop Collaborative Launches Report Highlighting Progress

The Midwest Row Crop Collaborative's 2020 Progress Report highlights the impact that members have had and the future direction of the Collaborative. The Collaborative developed a set of joint projects to implement that would drive progress while providing opportunities to learn from innovative approaches. Initiatives ranged from on-the-ground practice adoption in key watersheds in the Midwest, to testing new strategies for engaging farmers and consumers, to building the scientific knowledgebase around soil health and conservation management. Some of these projects are ongoing, and all of them provide valuable insights to guide the Collaborative's continued work and opportunities for further impact.

Read more

New Report Released: *Prioritizing Resources to Meet Water Quality Goals*

The Sand County Foundation—with support from the Noble Research Institute, Farm Foundation, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service—released a report that assesses agricultural practices and strategies to further improve water quality in the United States. Contributions to the report were provided by agriculture and water quality experts from universities, federal agencies, industries, and non-governmental organizations.

This resource for farmers, conservation professionals, watershed managers, policy-makers, local and state government agencies, and others identifies action items or current gaps in: (a) the knowledge and available science on practice performance effectiveness, (b) conservation management approaches for program delivery on a larger and more cost-effective scale, and (c) stakeholder engagement and investment in approaches to improve water quality outcomes.

Read the report

A new Blog Series, Human Capital, to Help Tap Our True Potential for Clean Water

In a new series produced by the North Central Region Water Network, a collaboration of 12 land grant universities and colleges, blogs and stories will highlight the importance of human capital in watershed management. Human capital refers to the inherent power of individual and cumulative knowledge and action. The human element of water resource management spans a wide range of

occupations and stakeholders, including watershed professionals, farmers, farm advisors, landowners, and others who work tirelessly to address pressing water challenges.

Rising to the challenge to meet significant water goals of the 21st century necessitates elevating human capital in watershed management and conservation. This series will provide insights and stories that aim to improve and promote the competencies and confidence needed for effective human capital in watershed management – and to increase investment in it today and into the future.

Read more about the blog, and the inaugural post here

Visit the EPA Hypoxia Task Force Website

To learn more about the work of the Hypoxia Task Force, visit our website, which features recent reports and measurements, important documents, upcoming actions, and learning opportunities. The "In the Spotlight" section of the homepage provides a great introduction.

Check out the HTF Homepage

Sign Up for the HTF Newsletter

The *Mississippi River/Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Task Force Newsletter* is a quarterly publication produced by EPA's Office of Water in partnership with the Hypoxia Task Force. The newsletter provides a snapshot of recent state activities, federal agency activities, publications, and resources.

The mention of trade names, products, or services does not convey and should not be interpreted as conveying official federal approval, endorsement, or recommendation for use.

If you have content to submit for the next newsletter, please email mayer.lauren@epa.gov

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