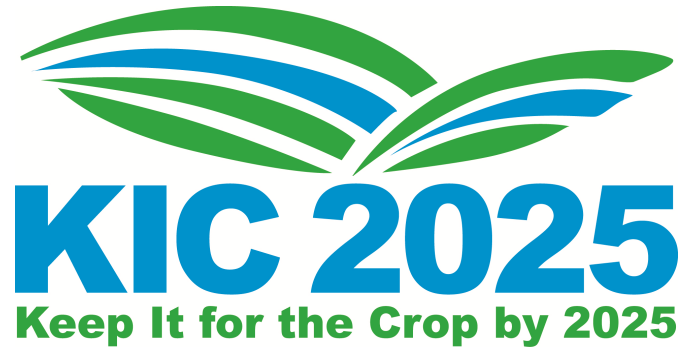




Quarterly Report March 2012



Illinois Agriculture's Commitment to Water Quality



C-BMP
Illinois Council on Best Management Practices

MEMO TO: Illinois Nutrient Stakeholders
FROM: Illinois Council on Best Management Practices
RE: KIC 2025

We are proud to share the first installment of the KIC Quarterly Report with you. The Illinois Council on Best Management Practices launched the "Keep it for the Crop by 2025" initiative on September 1, 2011 at the Farm Progress Show in Decatur. This report will bring you up-to-date on our activities since then, and we hope that it generates interest, ideas and interaction with our fellow nutrient stakeholders. Thank you for your trust in the Illinois agricultural industry and in our collective commitment to ensure that, when it comes to nutrients used for agricultural production, we will work to **"Keep it for the Crop"** and demonstrate progress in this effort to reduce nutrient losses and enhance productivity: a win for farmers and the environment.

CBMP is a 501 (c) 5 organization. Its members include: Illinois Corn Growers Association, Illinois Farm Bureau, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association, Illinois Pork Producers, Illinois Soybean Association and Syngenta.

www.KIC2025.org

Introducing Dan Schaefer, CBMP Director of Nutrient Stewardship



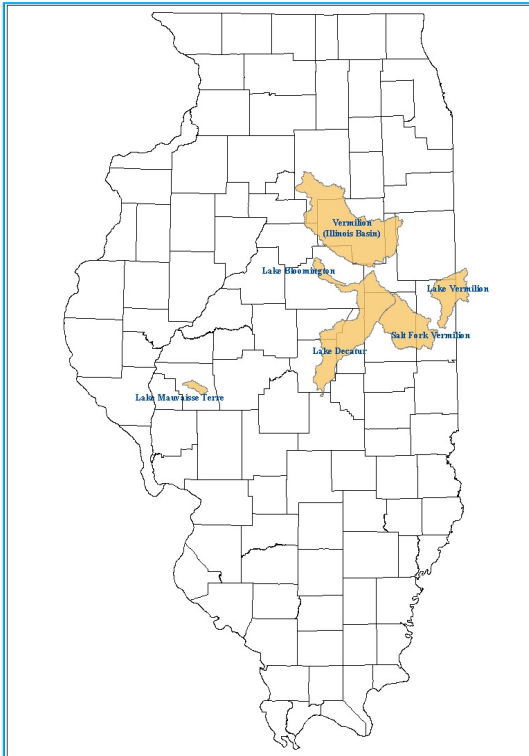
It's hard to believe that two months have passed since I started this new career. Time is passing swiftly and I have had a very enjoyable time visiting with fertilizer retailers and farmers in the KIC priority watersheds. My background as an agronomist in the ag retail industry for nearly 30 years has allowed me a career of working with growers to enhance their productivity through better management of inputs, and to help them solve unique problems on their farm. Now I get to advance this message through the KIC program.

There is a common theme within the agricultural community that I have witnessed, and that is this: **The need to change nutrient management practices has already been accepted and is moving at a rapid pace.** Many crop advisors in the state of Illinois have already begun to split apply nitrogen and the use of nitrification inhibitors is widely accepted. The fertilizer dealers understand the concept of maximizing production, optimizing nutrients and at the same time minimize environmental impact. They see the logistical benefits from a business standpoint of nitrogen as a systems approach rather than just an application. The message to the farmer is one of utilizing nutrients as part of a management system rather than just an application.

By using the 4R approach (see page 3) producers see how nitrogen and phosphorus management fits into their operations. For example, by showing in-field results from trials using different sources of N, lower incremental rates at different times in the cropping season and multiple placements, the farmers can see the increased yields and economic advantage when compared to a one time application. Illinois farmers are stewards of the environment and just need to be kept informed on BMP's and the latest proven technological developments to help them continue to increase crop production and feed the growing world population while protecting the environment. Since my start date on January 5, I have been able to share the message of KIC with over 1,000 people who are engaged in the Illinois ag industry. **To summarize:**

- * I have met with over 20 ag retail facility managers in the priority watersheds to explain the goals of the KIC program and get their commitment to work with their growers to adopt enhanced nutrient practices.
- * I presented the KIC program at the statewide tillage conferences, have met with representatives from Soil & Water Conservation Districts and attended various meetings they organized to promote the program.
- * I was able to participate and spread the word about KIC at conferences and meetings sponsored by the Certified Crop Advisors, SWCDs, the Chicago Farmers, Parkland Junior College, Farm Managers, Illinois Ag Roundtable, the IFCA Convention and the IL Farm Bureau Govt Affairs Conference.
- * One very enjoyable aspect to me are the brainstorming sessions I have with fellow agronomists in the ag industry and researchers at our state Universities. They are assisting me in the development of on-farm nutrient trials in the priority watersheds so that we can directly engage growers in determining the most effective practices they can implement to reduce nutrient losses and enhance productivity. There are so many bright people engaged in this program, we are very fortunate.

I am overwhelmed by the support, open-mindedness, willingness to engage and overall embracement of the KIC approach by ag retailers, growers, conservationists, policy folks and our state agencies. We are off to a fantastic start and I look forward to continuing to share with you our success stories. I welcome your comments, questions and suggestions. **You can reach me at dan.schaefer@illinoiscbmp.org or at 217.202.5173.**



Focusing on Priority Watersheds

Illinois EPA has designated six priority watersheds for reducing nutrient losses from the agricultural sector. To view these watersheds in detail, go to KIC2025.org and click on “maps.” These waters are impaired due to nitrogen, phosphorus, or both. Now that we know where to start, how do we start?

1. By assessing current ag nutrient practices in the watersheds
2. Accomplishing this by meeting with fertilizer dealers and growers in the watersheds to learn of their current N & P management strategies
3. Identifying the N & P management practices that are considered 4R compliant (right source, right rate, right time, right place)
4. Requesting data from fertilizer dealers in the watersheds regarding date of application, rate of application and use of stabilizers in the watersheds.
5. Developing software for industry to track acres in the watersheds that are under 4R management approach, and identify areas for improvement.
6. Working with growers in the watersheds to conduct on-farm nitrogen rate trials in Spring 2012 with goal of establishing “right rate” for that farm.

What are the 4R’s for Illinois?

4R stands for Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time and Right Place. These nutrient stewardship principles were developed by the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI). How the 4Rs are used locally varies depending on the field and site specific characteristics such as soil, cropping system, management techniques and climate.


Right Source: Ensure a balanced supply of essential nutrients, considering both naturally available sources and the characteristics of specific products, in plant available forms.

Right Rate: Assess and make decisions based on soil nutrient supply and plant demand.

Right Time: Assess and make decisions based on the dynamics of crop uptake, soil supply, nutrient loss risks and field operation logistics.

Right Place: Address root-soil dynamics and nutrient movement, and manage spatial variability within the field to meet site-specific crop needs and limit potential losses.

With input from agronomists, university researchers and growers, the KIC program will establish a suite of 4R practices for Illinois agriculture and work to assure their utilization in the priority watersheds and beyond.



How are we Funding KIC?

The ag industry, in a coalition with environmental groups, has introduced legislation in Illinois to provide a steady and significant source of industry-based funds for KIC and for nutrient research/education/water quality programs.

SB 3436 and HB 5539 (companion bills) create a public-private partnership between the IL Dept of Ag and the ag industry, called the Nutrient Research & Education Council (NREC). IDA will assist the industry in collecting a tonnage fee on all fertilizer sales, and the NREC (a private foundation) will manage the funds and administer the research and water quality programs. The NREC will be made up of representatives from grower organizations, the fertilizer industry, university, IDA, IEPA and environmental organizations. There is no opposition to this legislation and it has broad-based support. We truly are working together to ensure Illinois is a leader in efforts to reduce nutrient losses, increase nutrient efficiency and enhance agricultural productivity and water quality.

In the meantime, funding for KIC is provided by IL Corn Growers, IL Fertilizer & Chemical Assoc, IL Soybean Assoc, IL Farm Bureau and Syngenta. We raised \$400,000 for KIC’s first year, enabling us to hire Dan as the full-time Director of Nutrient Stewardship and provide some program funding for the watersheds. But much more is needed and this legislation is essential to accomplish our much larger goals.



A Perspective on KIC From Illinois EPA

Greetings! My name is Trevor Sample and I am serving as the Illinois EPA liaison to the KIC 2025 program.

On March 16, 2011, Nancy Stoner, Acting Assistant Administrator with USEPA, issued a Memo to the States titled *“Working in Partnership with States to Address Phosphorus and Nitrogen Pollution through Use of a Framework for State Nutrient Reductions.”* The memo says in part that “States, EPA and stakeholders, working in partnership, must make greater progress in accelerating the reduction of nitrogen and phosphorus loadings to our nation's waters. Where states are willing to step forward, we can most effectively encourage progress through on-the-ground technical assistance and dialogue with state officials and stakeholders...and to spur improvement in best practices by agriculture and other important sectors.”

The memo also contains a document titled *“Recommended Elements of a State Framework for Managing Nitrogen and Phosphorus Pollution”*. The framework lays out eight steps states may take to address nutrient issues. The **first step** is to prioritize watersheds on a statewide basis for nitrogen and phosphorus loading reductions. The **second step** is to set watershed load reduction goals based upon best available information and the **third step** tells states to ensure effectiveness of point source permits in targeted/priority sub-watersheds. This step is being addressing by several Nutrient Workgroups that are hosted by our agency.

The fourth piece of the framework specifically addresses agriculture by asking states to “develop watershed-scale plans that target the most effective practices where they are needed most.” **The KIC 2025 program fits well with the fourth piece, as it is designed to target nutrient management practices that are appropriate for growers in each priority watershed.** The memo acknowledges this when it mentions that “States need room to innovate and respond to local water quality needs, so a one-size-fits all solution to nitrogen and phosphorus pollution is neither desirable nor necessary.”

IEPA, in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and Illinois Department of Natural Resources, chose the priority watersheds based on the following criteria: (1) the watershed must contain a water body impaired for Public Water Supply use with nitrate listed as the cause of impairment; (2) the water body must also be impaired for Aesthetic Quality or Aquatic Life Use with total phosphorus as the cause of impairment; and (3) the water body must have an approved Total Maximum Daily Load study. These criteria led to the selection of our initial six watersheds to reduce nutrient loss.

Illinois EPA’s role in the KIC 2025 is to provide water quality monitoring support and to report progress and success to USEPA. What is learned in the priority watersheds can then be expanded to other watersheds in the state to help reduce nutrient loss. IEPA believes there are multiple ways of addressing nutrients in waters. Our Statewide Nutrient Strategy will also address other sources of nutrients such as point sources, urban runoff, etc.

KIC 2025 is a voluntary program, and even though we are a regulatory agency, we want to show USEPA and Illinois citizens that one of the ways we can meet our water quality goals is through voluntary implementation. Illinois EPA views the KIC program as a key piece to our statewide nutrient strategy that we continue to develop. However, KIC 2025 is not an Illinois EPA program—it is an agriculture industry initiative. It’s about how we can both reach our goals in relation to nutrients, and allow farmers to efficiently use nutrients for their crops while improving water quality. **Trevor Sample can be reached at Trevor.Sample@Illinois.gov.**