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Farmers, Agriculture Suppliers, and Clean Water Advocates Mark Five Years of Partnership in Nutrient Research and Loss Reduction

Peoria, IL – Farmers and environmentalists celebrated the first five years of the Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council (NREC) this week, a unique partnership aimed at supporting research and farmer education on fertilizer practices that improve water quality and economics. Since its inception in 2012, Illinois NREC has invested nearly \$9.8 Million into nutrient related research efforts.

The celebration, held during the Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association's annual convention at the Peoria Civic Center, featured remarks from Illinois State Treasurer Michael Frerichs, who sponsored the original legislation as a State Senator in 2012. The legislation enacted a \$1 per ton fee on agricultural fertilizer sales to fund Illinois NREC and related programs of the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

"Clean water is essential for our health and our environment, and agriculture is Illinois' number one industry," said State Treasurer Michael Frerichs. "I applaud the collaboration between environmental and agricultural interests to create NREC and build consensus on strategies that protect our water supply and work for farmers."

"Limited state resources, combined with serious water quality challenges, inspired us to reinvent the way we fund and deliver nutrient research in Illinois, and it took everyone working together with the legislature to accomplish this," said Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association President Jean Payne.

"This partnership with farmers is critical in implementing the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy and to clean up nutrient pollution in our lakes, streams and rivers," said Dr. Cynthia Skrukud, Clean Water Program Director for the Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter. "NREC's research identifies science-based strategies that will protect our water supply and work on the farm."

Jeff Kirwan, Chairman of Illinois NREC, Illinois Farm Bureau Director and Mercer County Farmer "NREC has proven to be a great opportunity for Illinois agriculture and our environmental partners to collaborate and learn from one another about nutrient stewardship – an issue of critical interest to both groups. NREC has provided the venue for us to work together, share successes and concerns and work together to move the needle towards increased nutrient efficiency. Everyone wins when we effectively manage nutrients – it adds to farmer bottom line and decreases the potential for unwanted nutrients making their way into our water systems."

More information about the Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council is available at <https://illinoisnrec.org/>