Mississippi River Gulf of America Watershed Nutrient Task Force

2026 39th Hypoxia Task Force Public Meeting Agenda Washington, D.C.

Thursday, February 5, EPA East, 1201 Constitution Ave NW or Virtual

1:00pm Co-Chairs Opening Remarks
- *Peggy Browne, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water, EPA*
- *Mike Naig, Secretary, Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship*

1:20pm Task Force Publications
- *Katie Flahive, EPA*

1:30pm HTF Federal Support

NOAA Update on Gulf of America Hypoxic Zone
- *David Scheurer, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*

Department of the Interior Update, including USGS Update on Loading Trends
- *Andrea Travnicek, PhD, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, DOI*
- *Gretchen Oelsner, United States Geological Survey*

United States Department of Agriculture Updates
- *Aubrey Bettencourt, Chief, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA*
- *Scott Hutchins, PhD, Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics and Chief Scientist of USDA*

2:00pm State Nutrient Reduction Strategy Outcomes
- *Arkansas, Tate Wentz, Department of Agriculture*
- *Illinois, Trevor Sample, Environmental Protection Agency*
- *Indiana, Julie Harrold and Ophelia Norman, State Department of Agriculture*
- *Iowa, Matt Lechtenberg, Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship*
- *Kentucky, Josiah Frey, Kentucky Division of Water*

2:50pm Break

3:10pm State Nutrient Reduction Strategy Outcomes, Continued
- *Louisiana, Brian Lezina, Louisiana Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority*
- *Minnesota, Katrina Kessler, Pollution Control Agency*
- *Mississippi, Natalie Segrest, Department of Environmental Quality*
- *Missouri, Chris Wieberg, Department of Natural Resources*
- *Ohio, Jessica Frey, Division of Surface Water, Environmental Protection Agency*
- *Tennessee, Sam Marshall, Department of Agriculture*
- *Wisconsin, Brian Weigel, PhD, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*

4:30pm Public Comments

5:00pm Closing/Adjourn

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NOAA Update on Gulf of America Hypoxic Zone

David Scheurer, Ph.D.
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Hypoxia Task Force Meeting
February 2026

SCIENCE SERVING COASTAL COMMUNITIES

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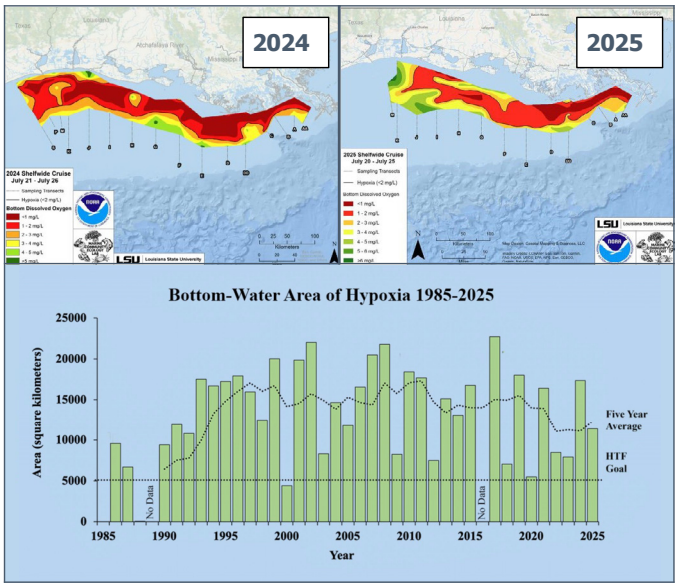
Outline

- Hypoxic Zone Monitoring Results (2024, 2025)
- Retrospective Analysis (2024, 2025)
- Recent Peer-Reviewed Publications
- Emerging Technologies for Hypoxia Monitoring

Hypoxia Zone Monitoring Results



Source: (Rabalais, LSU, NOAA)

Measured mid-summer extent of hypoxic zone – Key metric to assess progress toward the 2035 HTF Coastal Goal (5,000 km^2)

	2024	2025
Predicted Size	15,092 km^2	14,437 km^2
Measured Size	17,366 km^2	11,401 km^2
5-Year Average	11,132 km^2	12,315 km^2

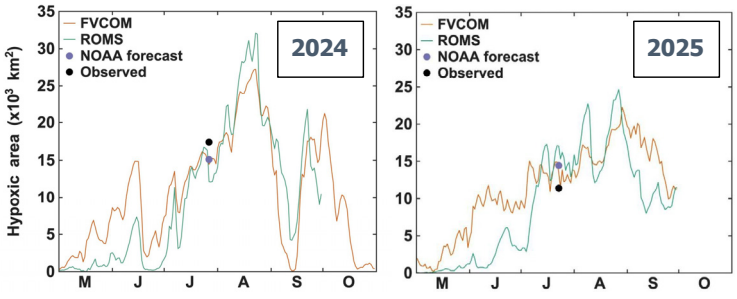
Forecast models within margin of error but overall hypoxic zone was larger than expected in 2024 and smaller than expected in 2025.

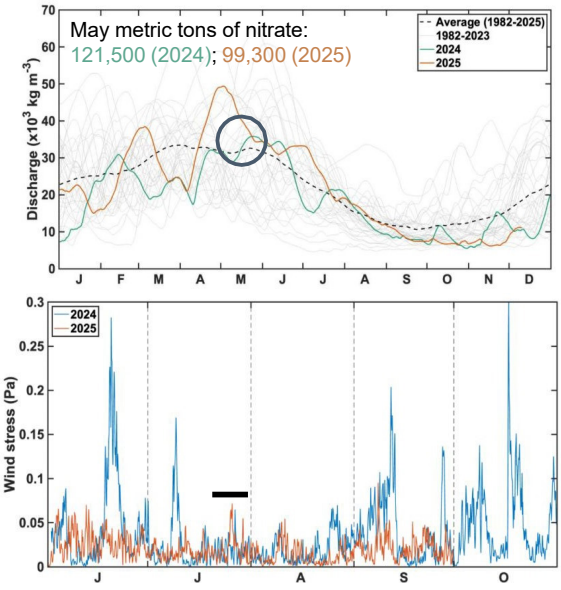
Outreach Efforts

Press Releases and Media Teleconferences
Numerous news articles written with large reach

Retrospective Analysis

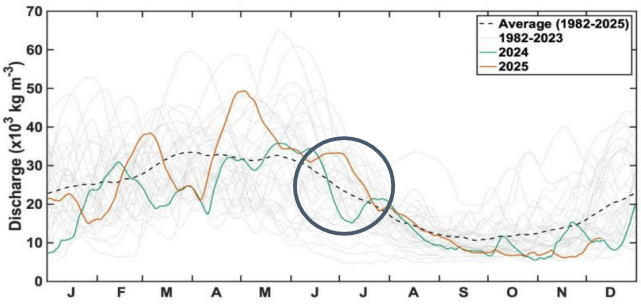
- Models captured seasonal dynamics and had generally good agreement with the forecast and cruise data
- Springtime nutrient loading is a major driver for hypoxia size during the summer
- Wind mixing events, discharge and water column stratification are contributing factors



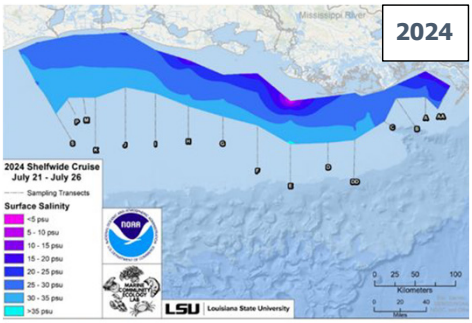


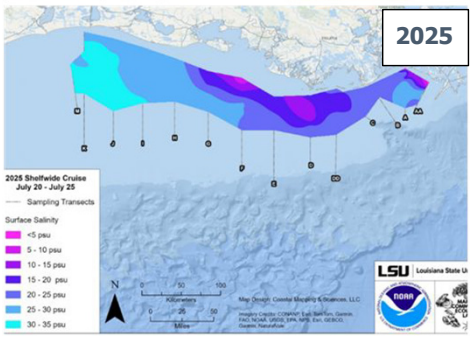
Source: (Fennel, Dalhousie; Justic, LSU)

Retrospective Analysis

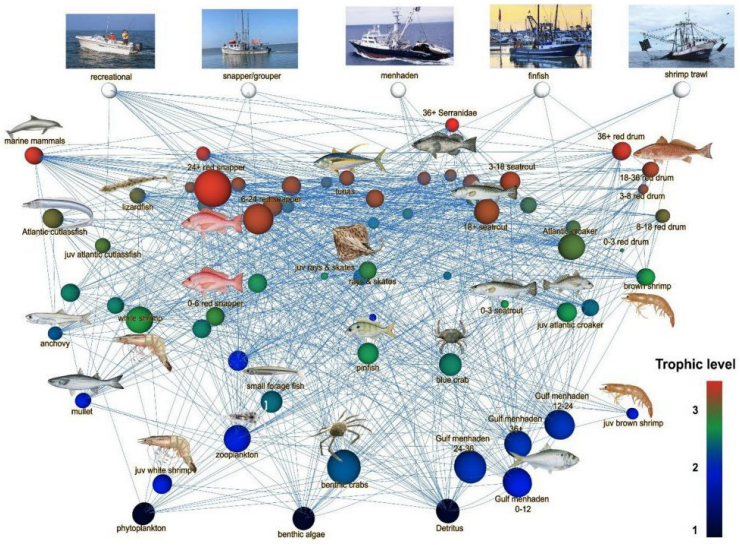


- Summertime discharge was drastically different between years, impacting dynamics seen on the shelf
  - 2024 was characterized by high salinities, water clarity and productivity
  - 2025 had a strong freshwater signal with corresponding higher turbidity and lower productivity
- Likely factors in larger hypoxia area seen in 2024 and smaller area in 2025 verses the predicted size





Recent Peer-Reviewed Publications



Source: de Mustert et al. 2025

A temperature tipping point in hypoxic zone size
Turner et al. 2024, *Limnology and Oceanography*

Bottom water quality plasticity in the northern gulf of mexico hypoxic zone
Turner et al. 2024, *Continental Shelf Research*

Advancing bioenergetics-based modeling to improve climate change projections of marine ecosystems
Rose et al. 2024, *Marine Ecology Progress Series*

Trends and drivers of hypoxic thickness and volume in the northern Gulf of Mexico: 1985–2018
Matli and Obenour 2024, *PLoS ONE*

A flexible modeling approach for evaluating the effects of hypoxia and other factors on the spatial distributions of brown shrimp Farfantepenaeus aztecus and white shrimp Litopenaeus setiferus on the Louisiana shelf
Katin et al. 2025, *Marine and Coastal Fisheries**

Using a coupled ecosystem modeling approach to evaluate effects of reductions in nutrients and hypoxia on living marine resources
De Mustert et al. 2025, *Marine and Coastal Fisheries**

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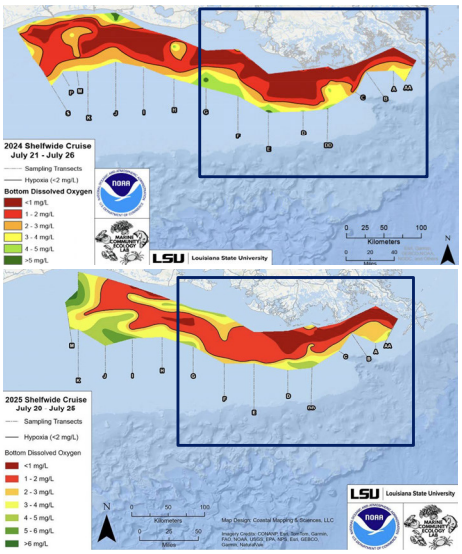
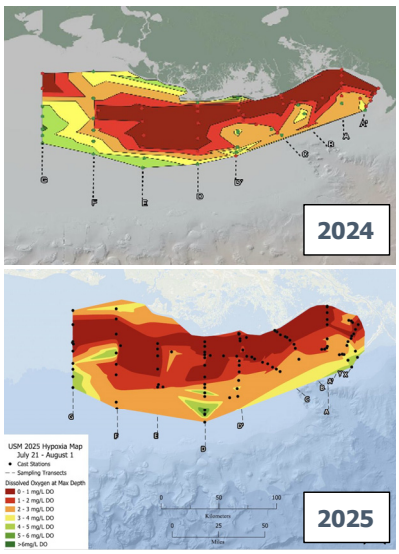
Emerging Technologies for Hypoxia Monitoring

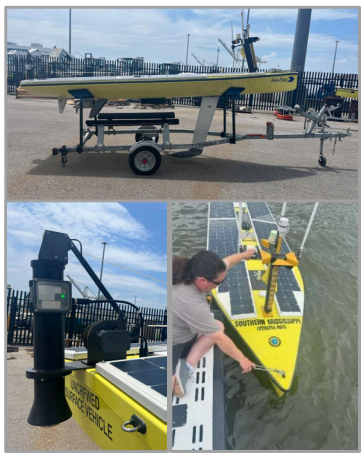
Ship-Based Data Collection Platform



ASV Data Collection Platform



Autonomous Surface Vehicle (ASV)



Source: (Howden, Stephan; USM)

UxS Operations Center
Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

ROGER F. WICKER CENTER for OCEAN ENTERPRISE

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Thank you

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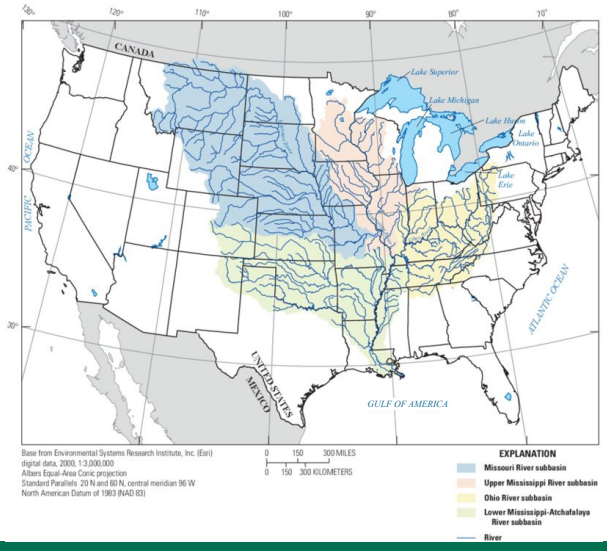
Long-term Monitoring of the Mississippi River and Progress Toward Nutrient Reduction Goals

Gretchen Oelsner
Hydrologist, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Department of the Interior

Progress toward reduction goals



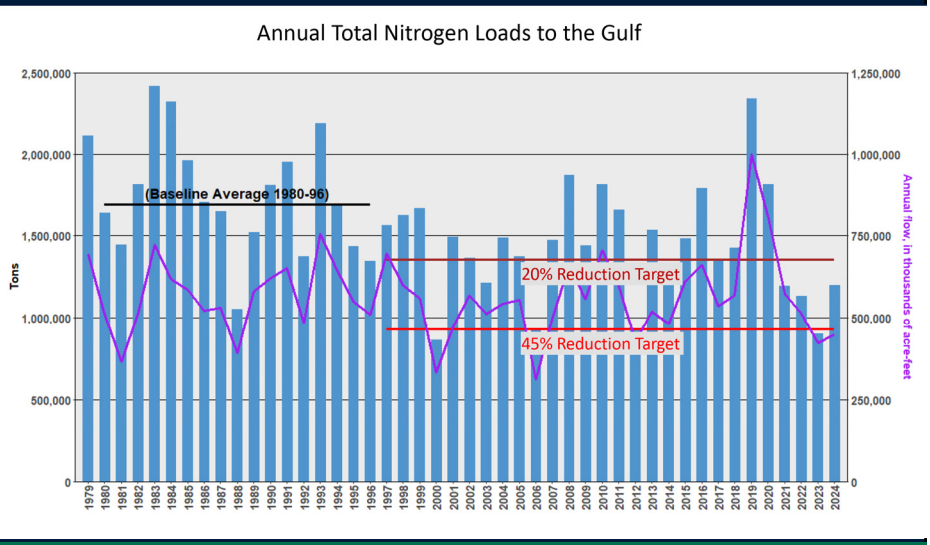
Progress toward reduction goals

Mississippi River Gulf of America Watershed Nutrient Task Force

Basin targets set by the Hypoxia Task Force

Nitrogen and phosphorus loads from the Mississippi River Basin to the Gulf reduced by

- 20% by 2025 (interim)
- 45% by 2035



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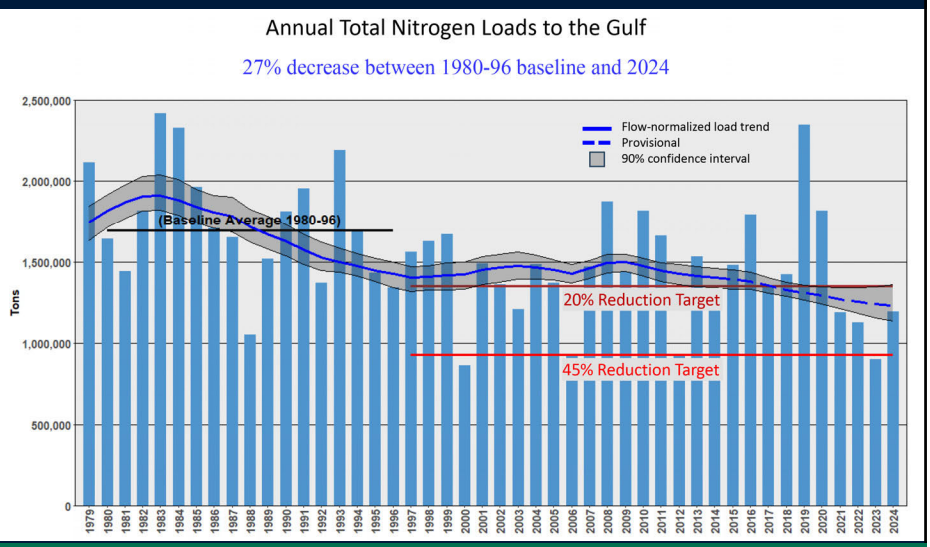

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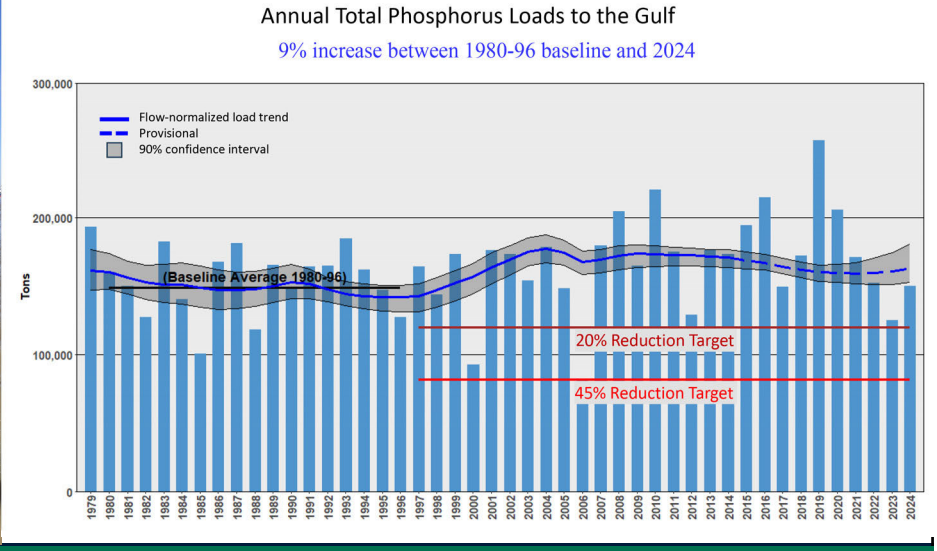
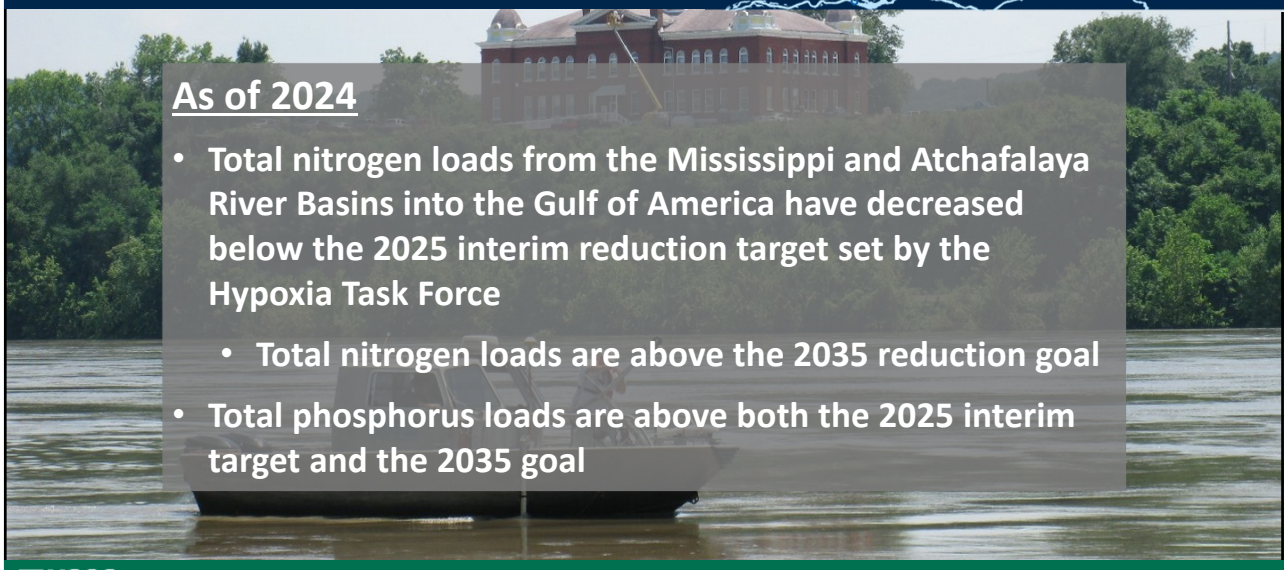


Conclusions



As of 2024

- Total nitrogen loads from the Mississippi and Atchafalaya River Basins into the Gulf of America have decreased below the 2025 interim reduction target set by the Hypoxia Task Force
  - Total nitrogen loads are above the 2035 reduction goal
- Total phosphorus loads are above both the 2025 interim target and the 2035 goal

Arkansas Hypoxia Task Force Update

Tate Wentz
Chief, Water Strategy and Conservation
Arkansas Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Division Water Quality Programs

Nonpoint Source Program
319 Program

Arkansas Nutrient Reduction Strategy
Gulf Hypoxia Program

Arkansas Unpaved Roads Program

Wetland and Riparian Zones Tax Credit Program

Gulf Hypoxia Program

Program Goals & Objectives:

- **Tier 1 Watersheds**: Increase or maintain downward nutrient trends
- **Tier 2 Watersheds**: Enhance monitoring and reduce nutrient levels
- **Statewide**: Continue reduction efforts across all watersheds

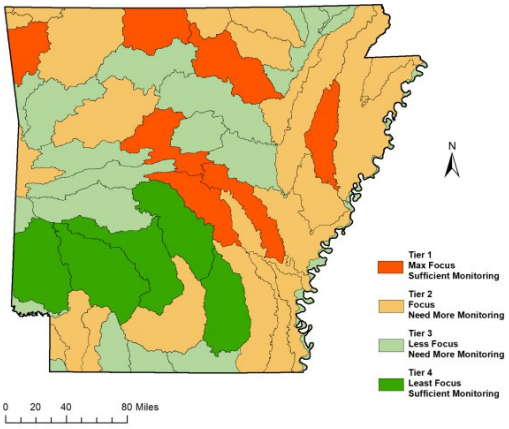
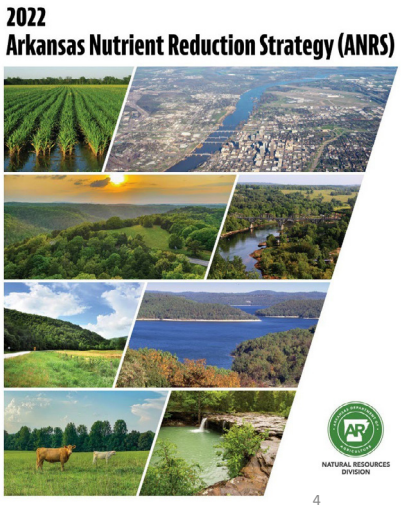


Figure 10. Four Tiers of HUC-8 Watersheds.

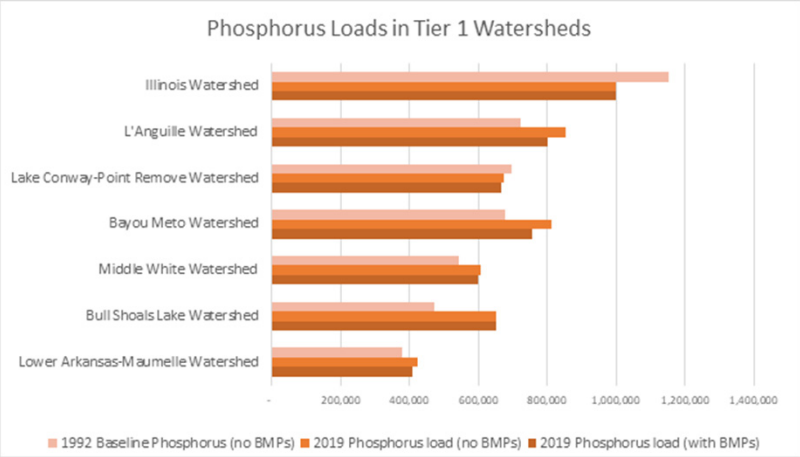
Focus of the Arkansas Nutrient Reduction Strategy (ANRS)

- Grassroots implementation, local partnerships, science-based approach to nutrient reduction
- Strengthening existing programs
- Promoting voluntary, cost-effective practices
- Adapting strategies over time
- Leveraging financial/technical resources
- Pursuing market-based solutions



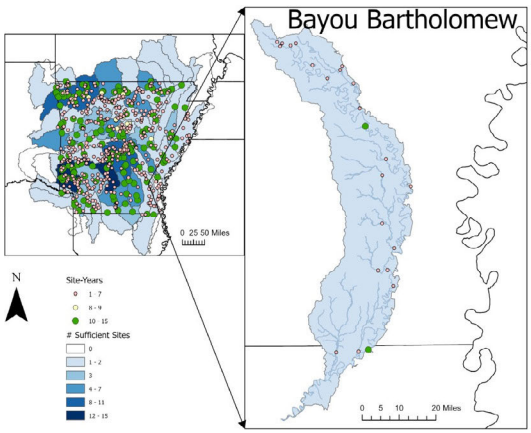
ANRS Progress to Date

1. Increase or maintain downward nutrient trends in Tier 1 watersheds



ANRS Progress to Date

2. Enhance water quality monitoring stations and increase or maintain downward nutrient trends in Tier 2 watersheds



Trend Status: Data Insufficient

- 2 long-term sites were available
- At least 2 additional were needed
- Many limited-data sites as possible candidates for enhanced monitoring
- But none in marginal status

ANRS Progress to Date

3. Continue efforts to reduce nutrients in all watersheds

- Since 2019, BMPs achieved a 2.22% reduction in nitrogen and a 3.85% reduction in phosphorus statewide.
- All 58 HUC-8 watersheds indicated a reduction of total phosphorus after BMP implementation
- 51% of HUC-8 watersheds showing a reduction from baseline.
- Removed 3.89 million pounds of nitrogen and 1.13 million pounds of phosphorus from waterways.

Focusing on EPA Strategic Outcomes

1. Support staff to implement the workplan
2. Reduce nonpoint source nutrient pollution as articulated in state strategies
3. Prioritize and target watersheds with the greatest opportunities for nutrient reductions
4. Collaborate across state boundaries with HTF partners

Ongoing Projects FY22

- FY2022
  - Arkansas State University – Cache River Watershed Monitoring for 2-Stage Ditches, to finish August 2027
  - The Nature Conservancy – Two-stage Ditches: Enhancing Arkansas Ag Drainage in the Upper Cache River Watershed, to finish June 2027
  - ✓University of Arkansas – Using the AWS Program to Achieve State NRS Goals, completed February 2025

Ongoing Projects FY25

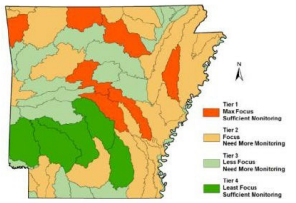
- FY 2025
  - Nine projects underway
    - University, nonprofit, watershed alliance, consulting, and state agency partners
  - Water quality monitoring,
  - ANRS five-year update support,
  - Implementing conservation practices, BMPs, and demonstrations,
  - Farmer outreach campaign, watershed stewardship awareness/education,
  - Wastewater treatment plant optimization plan

Key Accomplishments

- Conservation practice training opportunities aligned with the ANRS to nearly 2,000 participants across 31 counties via the Arkansas Watershed Stewardship Program.

Free Native Tree and Shrub Program for Tier 1 Watershed Landowners

Bare root tree and shrub seedlings used for a streambank erosion problem and associated stream restoration.



Four tiers of watersheds developed using statewide monitoring data.

FARMER LEADERSHIP IN WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
MISSISSIPPI ATCHAFALAYA RIVER BASIN

Become an Arkansas Watershed Steward Today!

Take the online training or request one for the place where you live, scan the QR code or click on the link: https://www.uaex.uada.edu/environment-nature/water/ar-watershed-stewardship.aspx

Free bare-root trees and shrubs are being made available for Tier 1 landowners on a first come first served basis!

Key Accomplishments

- Arkansas 319 funds helped advance key projects in Tier 1 Nutrient Reduction Strategy watersheds, resulting in EPA publication of success stories

NONPOINT SOURCE SUCCESS STORY
Arkansas

Green Infrastructure Improves Water Quality and Changes Public Opinion in Stone Dam Creek Tributary

Figure 1. Aerial site view, before project began in 2021.

Figure 2. Aerial view of site, after project completion.

NONPOINT SOURCE SUCCESS STORY
Arkansas

Green Infrastructure and Low Impact Development Reduce Pathogens in Clear Creek

Figure 3. Clear Creek Raingarden Project

Key Accomplishments

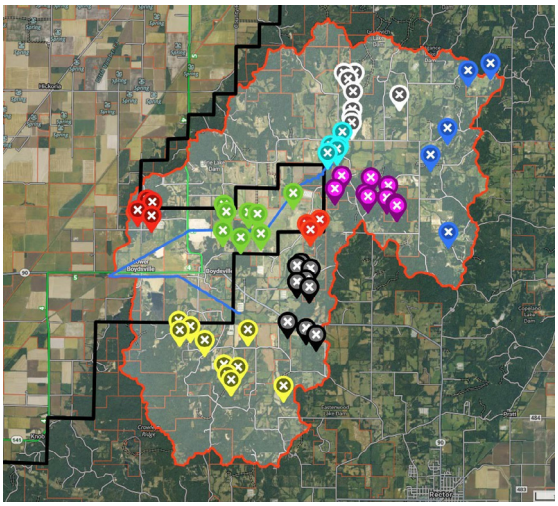
- Construction of over 9,000 linear feet of two-stage ditch in 2025, with an additional 2,600 to 5,200 linear feet planned for 2026.

Before and during two-stage ditch construction near Delaplaine, Arkansas. Banks were vegetated with winter oats and brassica

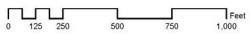
Cache River Watershed Discussion

Key roadmap findings in Clay County

- Maps identified areas of erosion. **Soil erodibility** and **Steepness** were combined to highlight gullies in the watershed, shown in red.
- **Gullies** greater than 0.5-acre inform the placement of gully remediations.
- Longitudinal profiles of main channels shown where **headcuts** are dropping off within the channel.
- These drop offs will inform the placement of grade controls structures to restore grade to the channel.



Overlaying soil erodibility and steepness in ArcGIS Pro allows for the visualization of key sediment sources hidden under tree lines



Large gullies on Crowley's Ridge contribute a high amount of sediment into the drainage networks of the Upper Cache

Tate Wentz
Chief, Water Strategy and Conservation
(501) 682-3962
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Arkansas Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Division
1 Natural Resources Drive
Little Rock, AR 72205

Illinois
Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Update

Hypoxia Task Force Meeting
February 5, 2026

Trevor Sample
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois
Nutrient Loss Reduction Strateg

RELEASED JULY 2015

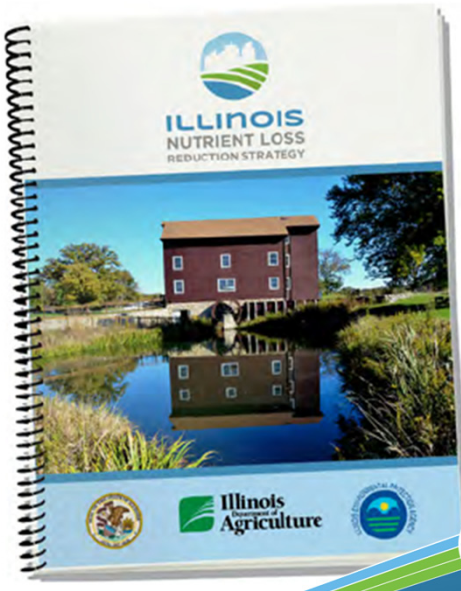
GOALS

45% Reduction of Nitrogen and Phosphorus

Interim Milestone—2025

25% Reduction in Phosphorus Loads

15% Reduction in Nitrate-Nitrogen Loads



ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

Addresses nutrient loads from:

Nonpoint Source
(agriculture, streambank erosion)

Point Sources
(wastewater treatment facilities)

Urban Stormwater

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Water Quality Results 2017-2021 Five Year Average

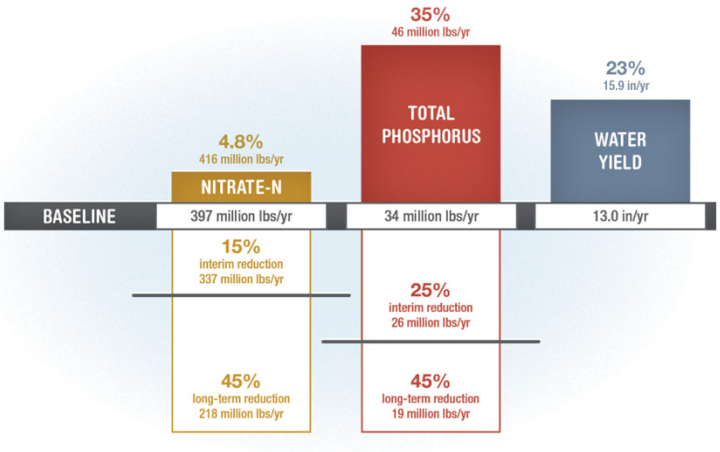


Figure 1.1 *Quantities and percent increases of recent five-year averages (2017–21) of nitrate-nitrogen, total phosphorus, and water yield relative to baseline and to interim and long-term NLRS goals in Illinois.*

Statewide loads based on 8 major river systems

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Water Year 2024 Statewide Nutrient Loads

Relative to the 1980-96 baseline:

- WY24 Loads:
  - Total Phosphorus -7%
  - Nitrate -5%
  - Streamflow -11%

Preliminary information-Subject to Revision. Not for Citation or Distribution.

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Statewide Nutrient Loads--Four and Five year Averages

Relative to the 1980-96 baseline:

- 5-Year Average (2020-2024)
  - Total Phosphorus +12%
  - Nitrate -19%
  - Streamflow +2%

2025 Interim WQ Goals (5 yr avg)
-25% Total Phosphorus
-15% Nitrate

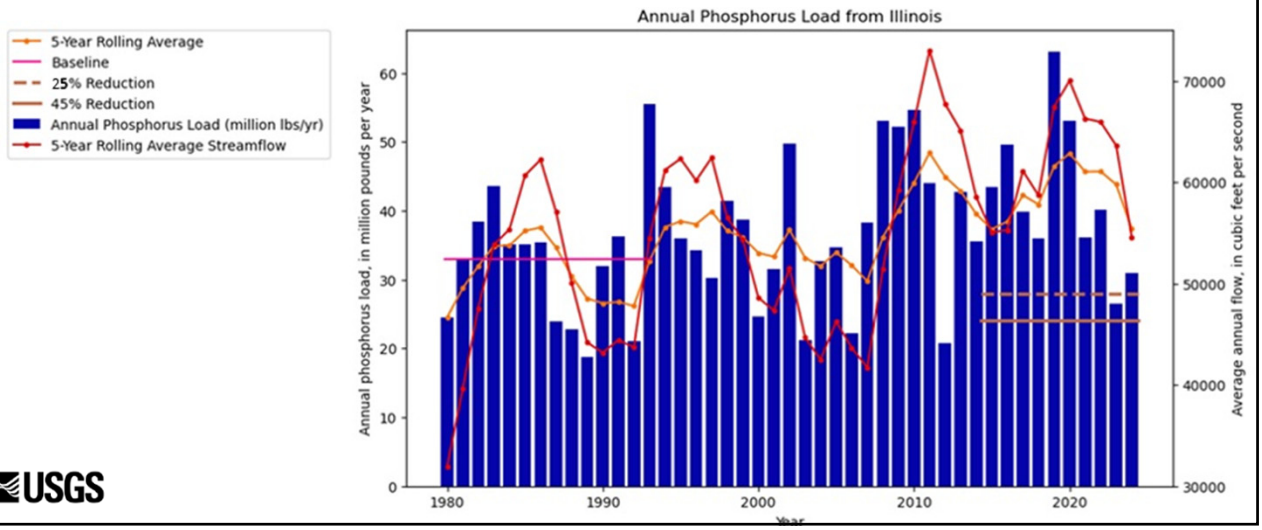
- 4-Year Average (2021-2024)
  - Total Phosphorus no change
  - Nitrate -30%
  - Streamflow -10%

Preliminary information-Subject to Revision. Not for Citation or Distribution.

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Statewide Water Quality
Total Phosphorus Loads
1980-2024

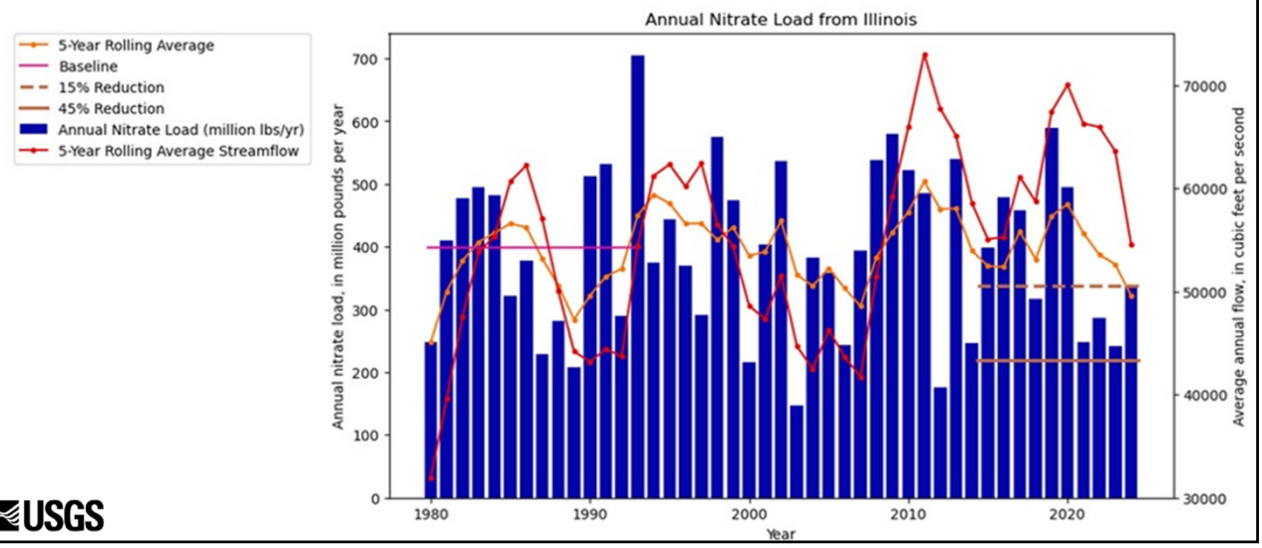
Preliminary information-Subject to Revision. Not for Citation or Distribution.



USGS

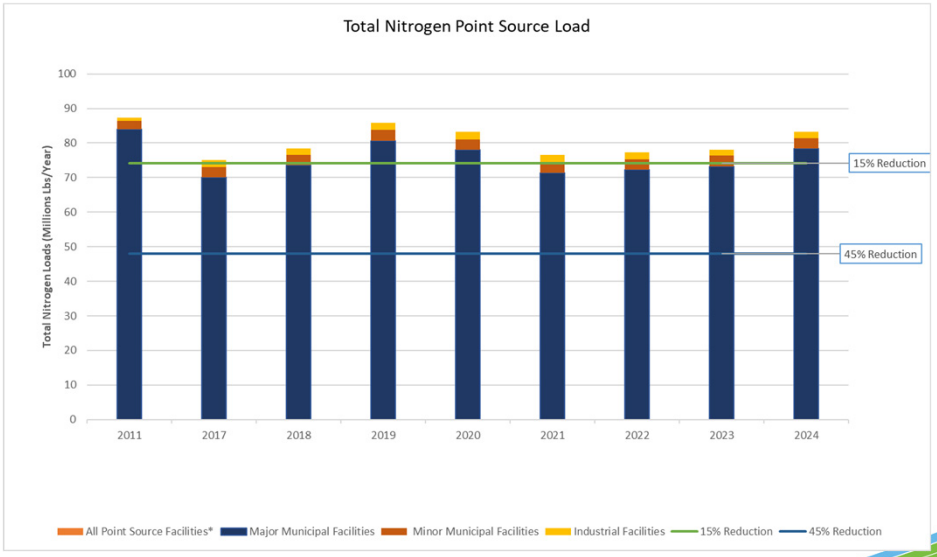
Statewide Water Quality
Nitrate Loads
1980-2024

Preliminary information-Subject to Revision. Not for Citation or Distribution.



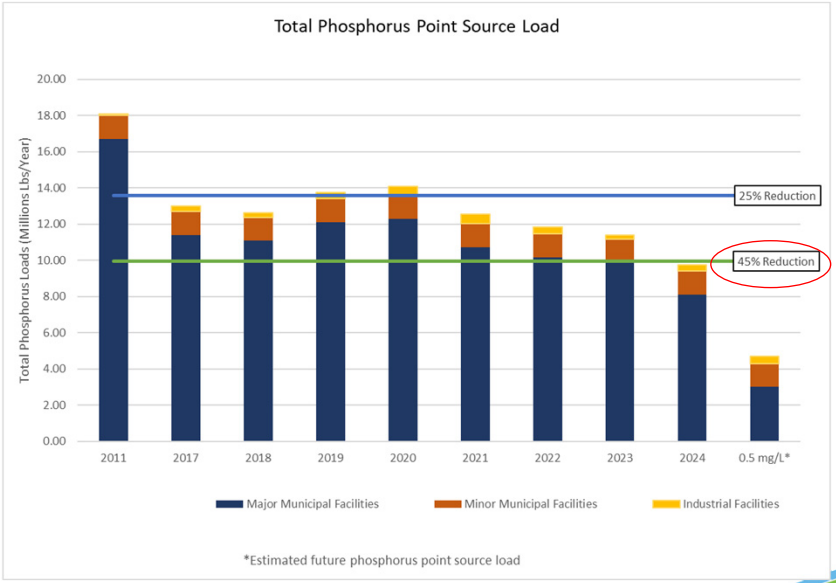
USGS

Illinois Point Source Nutrient Loads



ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois Point Source Nutrient Loads



2024 Total Phosphorus

8.3 million pound reduction (46%)

2023 Major Municipal Loads TP (million pounds/yr)

Arkansas 1.1
Kentucky 1.7
Missouri 5.5

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois Point Source Nutrient Loads
Total Phosphorus

- 211 Major Municipal Water Reclamation Facilities
  - 60 facilities have annual average 0.5-1.0 mg/L
  - 44 facilities have annual average below 0.5 mg/L
- 60 Nutrient Assessment Reduction Plans
  - Accounts for 152 facilities
- All have completed Optimization and Feasibility Studies

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

NLRS Science Team

- Nutrient contributions from Streambank Erosion
- Updating Agriculture Conservation Practice Performances
- HUC-12 Watershed Nutrient Inventory

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois Gulf Hypoxia Program

- Work Plan #1 - Completed
  - Priority Watershed Outreach and Planning
  - 2023 Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Biennial Report.
  - United States Geological Survey Continuous Nutrient Monitoring Network
    - 8 Super gages
  - Ag Retail Survey (Crop year 2023)
  - Illinois Department of Agriculture Cover Crop Insurance Premium Discount Program (80,000 additional acres over two years)
  - Illinois Department of Agriculture Groundwater Nitrate Analyzer

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois Gulf Hypoxia Program

- Work Plan #2
  - United States Geological Survey Continuous Nutrient Monitoring Network
  - Ag Retail Survey (Crop years 2024-2026)
  - Illinois Department of Agriculture Cover Crop Insurance Premium Discount Program (120,000 additional acres over three years)
  - Priority Watershed Implementation Cost-Share
    - Edge-of-Field practices (Woodchip Bioreactors, Saturated Buffers, Constructed Wetlands)
      - Two projects selected

ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

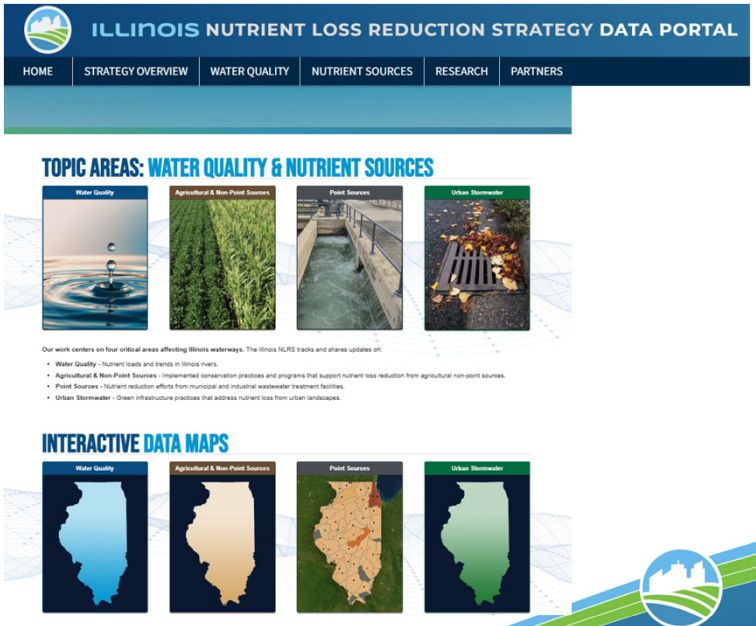
Illinois NLRS Data Portal

- Partnering with National Great Rivers Research and Education Center
  - Great Lakes to Gulf
- Hosted by the University of Illinois National Center for Supercomputing Applications

ILLINOIS
NUTRIENT LOSS
REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois NLRS Data Portal

- Data Portal will replace Biennial Reports
- Data currently through 2022
- 2023-2025 data will be uploaded this year
- Update annually
- Interactive maps to come
- All data downloadable



ILLINOIS
NUTRIENT LOSS
REDUCTION STRATEGY

Illinois NLRS Resources

- Illinois EPA NLRS website go.Illinois.edu/NLRS
- Illinois Extension NLRS website https://extension.illinois.edu/nlr
- NLRS Data Portal https://illinois-nlrs.ncsa.illinois.edu/
- NLRS Podcast https://extension.illinois.edu/podcasts/illinois-nutrient-loss-reduction-podcast
- NLRS Blog https://extension.illinois.edu/nlr/blog

- Contact: trevor.sample@illinois.gov

ILLINOIS
NUTRIENT LOSS
REDUCTION STRATEGY

Indiana Update on State Nutrient Reduction Strategy and Gulf Hypoxia Program

Hypoxia Task Force Meeting
Washington, D.C.
February 5th, 2026

Julie Harrold Program Manager, CREP and WQ Initiatives
Indiana State Department of Agriculture
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Indiana State Department of Agriculture
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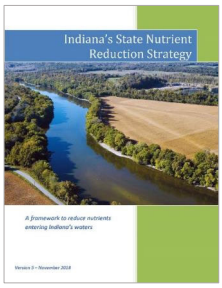
The State Nutrient Reduction Strategy

- Indiana's State Nutrient Reduction Strategy (SNRS) was developed to "capture statewide, present and future endeavors in Indiana which positively impact the State's waters as well as gauge the progress of conservation, water quality improvement and soil health practice adoption in Indiana".

- The Indiana SNRS represents the state's commitment to reduce nutrient runoff into Indiana's waters from **point** sources and **non-point** sources.



The State Nutrient Reduction Strategy

- Updated version includes:
  - Update on the progress that has been made in the MRB and in the state of Indiana in relation to water quality monitoring,
  - Re-assessment of HUC8 Priority watersheds – all 38 HUC8 watersheds in the state are being prioritized in a tiers,
  - Update on progress of our Indiana Science Assessment for:
    - Determining water quality trends
    - Determining effectiveness of conservation practices on improving water quality
  - Emphasize of the importance of a system of conservation practices since each practice treats nutrients differently, so therefore a system of conservation practices treats nutrient runoff more effectively.
  - Update to the multiple programs and initiatives available that support nutrient reduction.
  - Update on how we measure progress and share success stories.

Overview of GHP Dollars

Workplan

- The Indiana GHP workplans covers several focus areas:
  1) Expanding **staff capacity** and supporting staff.
  2) Development and expansion of a **soil sampling program** aimed at increasing 4R nutrient stewardship, nutrient use efficiency on Indiana farmland.
  3) Support for the **Indiana Nutrient Research and Education Program (INREP)** which continues and expands upon the work of the Indiana Science Assessment in quantifying nutrient reduction from conservation practices and determining conservation practice effectiveness toward improving water quality.
  4) Support of the Cover Crop Premium Discount Program.
  5) Support to USGS to continue water quality monitoring at important sampling locations in Indiana.

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

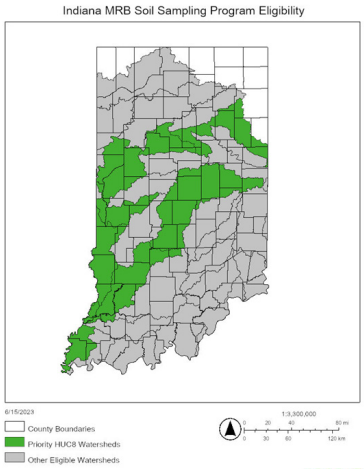
1) Strengthening Indiana's Nutrient Stewardship Through Staff Capacity

- In Fall 2023, grant funding supported the creation of a **Nutrient Stewardship Program Manager** position to strengthen program administration and coordination.
- This role expanded ISDA's capacity to manage BIL-GHP funds, administer the soil sampling program, and support statewide nutrient reduction and conservation efforts.
- Due to its value and impact, the position was absorbed as a permanent, full-time role within the Indiana State Department of Agriculture in Summer 2025, ensuring long-term program continuity well into the future.

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2) Soil Sampling Program

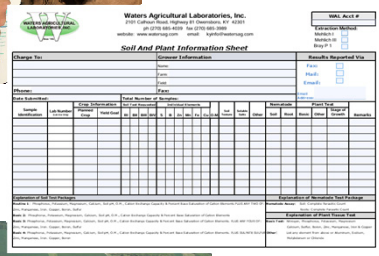
- Expand soil testing and soil sampling to guide nutrient management decisions, improve nutrient use efficiency and 4R stewardship, and support water quality, environmental, and climate benefits across Indiana farmland.
  - **Program Launch**: September 2023
  - **Partners**: Indiana Conservation Partnership members, Certified Crop Advisors (CCA), Ag Retailers, Indiana Agriculture Nutrient Alliance, Labs, and Landowners/Producers.
  - **Implementation**: ISDA Technical Staff & Private Sector; focus on smaller-scale growers who may not be sampling or not sampling regularly.
  - **Education**: Public meetings and workshops focused soil fertility, nutrient management, and importance of soil health/water quality for stakeholders, partners, and landowners/renters.

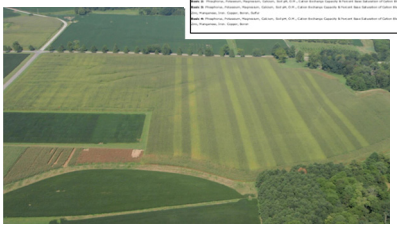


INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Soil Sampling Program Success

- **September 2023 (fall only) - April 2026**: spring and fall rounds of registration periods.
- Eligible if able to prioritize **100 acres** or less of production ag acreage within the MRB and 1) have never soil tested, OR 2)haven't soil tested within the last 3-4 years, OR 3) have recently acquire acreage.
- **Progress**: Nearly 83,500 production agriculture acres across 814 farms have been sampled by ISDA staff and partners to date.
  - Majority of participants have been indicating they have never soil tested.
  - ISDA has strong partnerships in place with Ag Retailers and Crop Advisors to assist with soil sampling and agronomic support – number above reflect these partnerships.





INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

3) Indiana Nutrient Research and Education Program (INREP)

Enhancing the scientific foundation for informing and improving nutrient stewardship in Indiana.

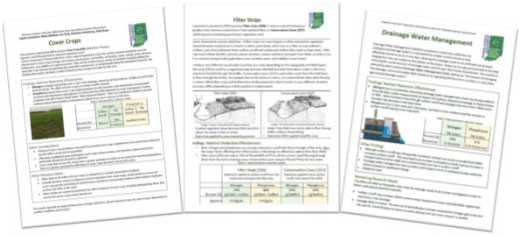
Purpose: to continue and expand the work of the Indiana Science Assessment

- INREP will be based at Purdue and include scientists and agencies from across Indiana.
- Goals are to:
  1. Sustain and strengthen the network of scientists and agencies collaborating to provide the scientific foundation for the Indiana SNRS and related conservation and education efforts.
  2. Lead a continual process of refining and improving the Science Assessment.
  3. Increase the availability of data from Indiana research on nutrient loss reduction.
  4. Synthesize and deliver the knowledge to conservation partners and the agricultural community.

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Products of the Science Assessment (Component 2)

1) Document of Practice Definitions;
2) A tool that will calculate practice effectiveness for new practices implemented in the state and improve the current method to calculate and track nutrient reduction;
3) A table that will report effectiveness of each practice;
4) Practice Fact Sheets for each practice



4 & 5) Support for CCPDP and to USGS

- Cover Crop Premium Discount Program
  - Funds support this program to target first time cover crop users in an effort to expand awareness and the adoption of cover crops as a management tool to improve farm resiliency.
  - Partner with The Nature Conservancy and the USDA Risk Management Agency.

- Support USGS Gages at 4 specific locations within the MRB system in Indiana to allow for continuation of monitoring for sediments and nutrients in order to keep long-term data collection going and support efforts of the Indiana Science Assessment.

INDIANA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

HTF – Iowa Updates

2026 Hypoxia Task Force Meeting

February 5, 2026

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE &
LAND STEWARDSHIP

Nutrient Reduction Strategy

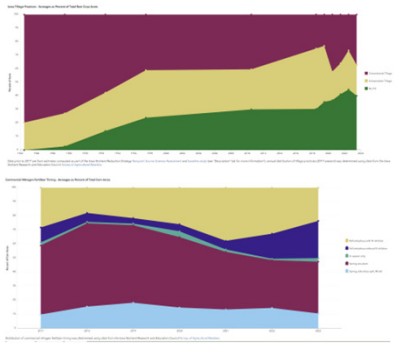
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & LAND STEWARDSHIP | DNR | IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

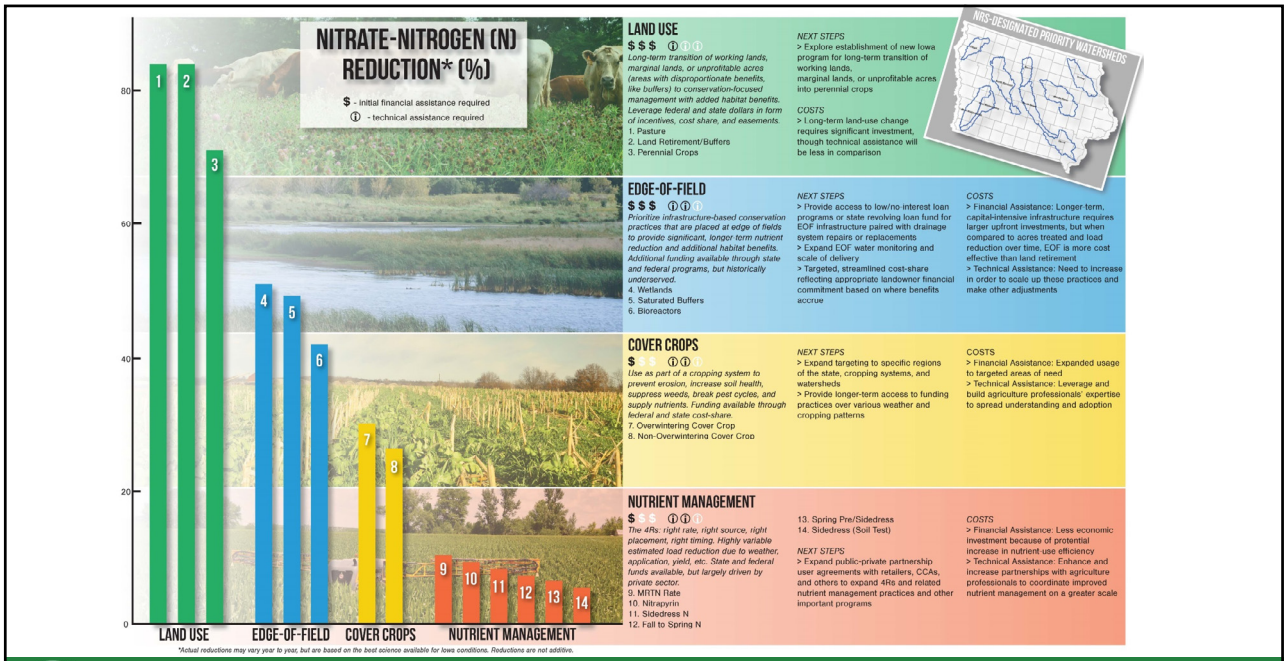
NPS - New and On-going Efforts

- Progress in advancing soil conservation and P reduction efforts
  - Historical effort to reduce soil loss (BMPs, reduced tillage, etc.) and improved P mgmt
  - Need to continue to maintain and grow these areas!
- Momentum on in-field practices, especially cover crops, due to alignment within multiple groups and efforts – AND less barriers to adoption than other practices (many of those have been worked through early on (RMA, seed availability, seeding dates/rates, etc.)
- More effort on N – recent, long-term investments are enabling scale-up of these key practices. Plenty of headwinds being and will be experienced
  - N Management - N Initiative https://www.agron.iastate.edu/portfolio/iowa-nitrogen-initiative/, 4Rs, etc.
  - EOF/Conservation Drainage Practices – Saturated Buffers, Bioreactors, Multi-purpose Oxbows, DWM, Water Quality Wetlands.
  - New/Emerging methods –DWR, Working Lands (rotations, perennials, etc.)

		1980-96 Baseline Load (tons)	2006-10 Benchmark Load (tons)	Change, 1980-96 to 2006-10		Major cause of change
Nitrogen	NPS	278,852*	293,395	5.2%	Increase	Land use change
	PS	13,170	14,054	6.7%	Increase	Flow increase
	Total	**292,022**	**307,449**	**5.3%**	**Increase**	
Phosphorus	NPS	21,436	16,800	21.6%	Decrease	Reduced tillage and soil test P
	PS	2,386	2,623	9.9%	Increase	Flow increase
	Total	**23,822**	**19,423**	**18.5%**	**Decrease**	

*The method used to derive the total nitrogen estimate of 292,022 tons indirectly reflected the point source contributions.





Nutrient Reduction Strategy
highlights

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & LAND STEWARDSHIP | DNR | IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

- Iowa communities beneft from Ag and Iowa Ag benefits from our communities – jobs, industry, food, fiber, fuel
- Enabling Conditions to support implementation efforts
    - Create opportunity for innovation and collaboration: Many partners want to engage and be a part of these efforts in their areas.
        - Don’t expect someone else to do it. Likewise ALLOW partners to help implement projects!
    - Need more people working on this and more reason to engage/benefit: Nutrient Reduction Exchange, Soil and Water Outcomes Fund, practices that achieve multiple benefits, interest in practices that benefit a critical watershed, location and/or landscape.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & LAND STEWARDSHIP

Launched in 2025

- ISU launched NFACT tool

https://n-fact.ag/start

- Streamside Buffer Initiative
- Updated NRS

https://www.nutrientstrategy.iastate.edu/documents

- Updated NRS Dashboard Reporting:

https://nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu/tracking-iowa-nutrient-reduction-strategy

NFACT
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

GHP Workplan 1– Conservation Agronomists

Leverage trusted advisors for conservation practice delivery

Credit Iowa Agriculture Water Alliance

Build network with individuals/organizations that farmers are familiar in working with and trust

Adapted from similar efforts and addressed challenges

Currently 16 CAs up from 8 in 2022. In part from GHP funding.

Key partners include: Agriculture's Clean Water Alliance, Heartland Cooperative, City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa Soybean Association, Landus, NEW Cooperative, AgState, Gold-Eagle Cooperative, NRCS, and many others!

To date, CAs through this project have directly been involved with 130k acres of cover crops, 98 EOF practices, 200k acres of improved nutrient mgmt., and 75k acres of reduced tillage

GHP Workplan 2– Priority & Emerging Practices

Address barriers to implementation and advance new/innovative practices

Figure 1. Wilkin CD-44, S. Br. Buffalo River

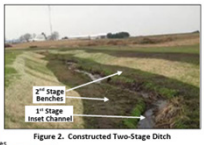


Figure 2. Constructed Two-Stage Ditch

Credit ISG

- **Started summer of 2025**
- **Dedicated funding to demonstrate new/emerging practices in Iowa**
- **Additional support to address barriers to implementation of priority practices**
- **Advance optimization efforts for reducing nutrient losses at point source facilities**

Kentucky Nutrient Strategy

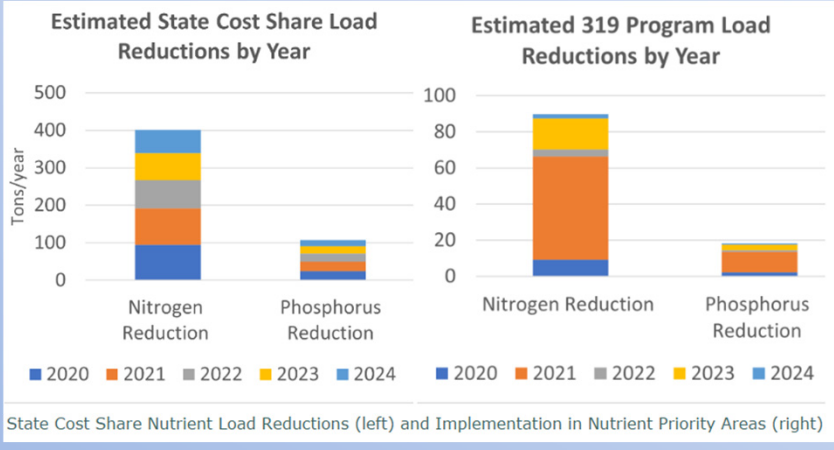
Hypoxia Task Force Update

Josiah Frey
Kentucky Division of Water

TEAM KENTUCKY
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

Kentucky's Biennial Report

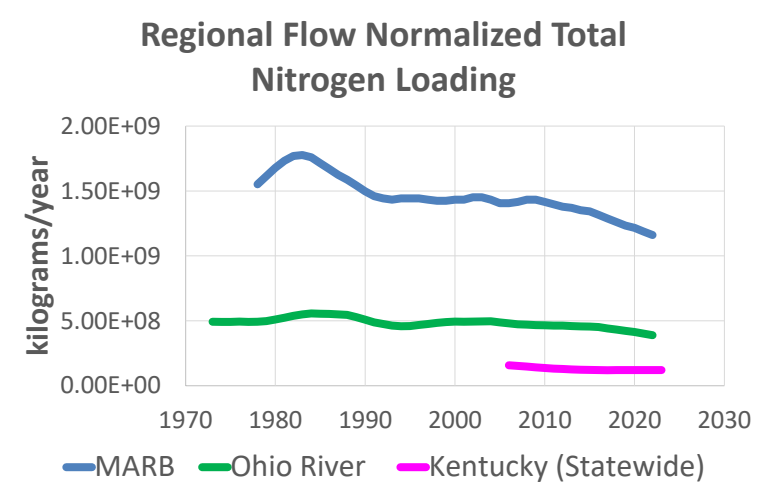
- Reporting on progress since 2022 Nutrient Reduction Strategy release



State Cost Share Nutrient Load Reductions (left) and Implementation in Nutrient Priority Areas (right)

TEAM KENTUCKY
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

2024 Nutrient Loading Study



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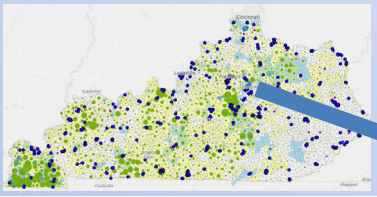
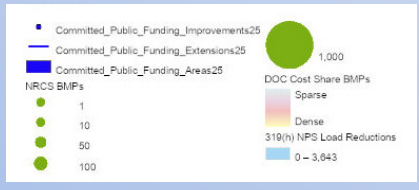
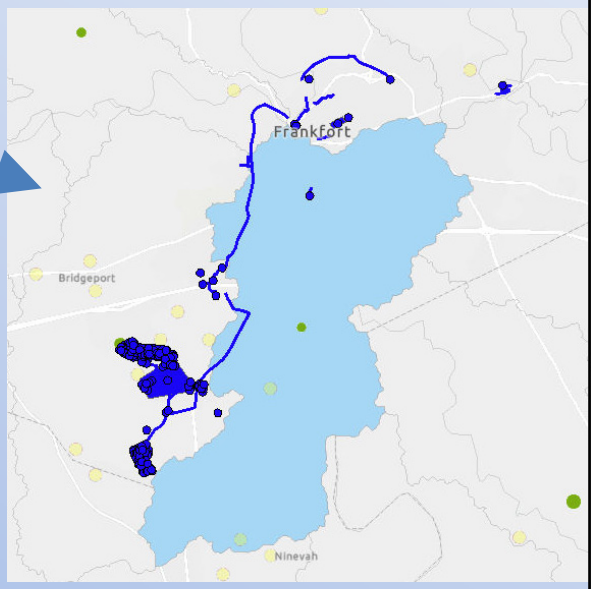
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

Tracking Kentucky Investments







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ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

Optimization Progress

- About 100 major facilities
- Over 28 permits issued with optimization requirements
  - >15 audits completed or scheduled
  - 13 declined or deferred
- 9 facilities requested voluntary audits

~24% facilities participating in the first year!

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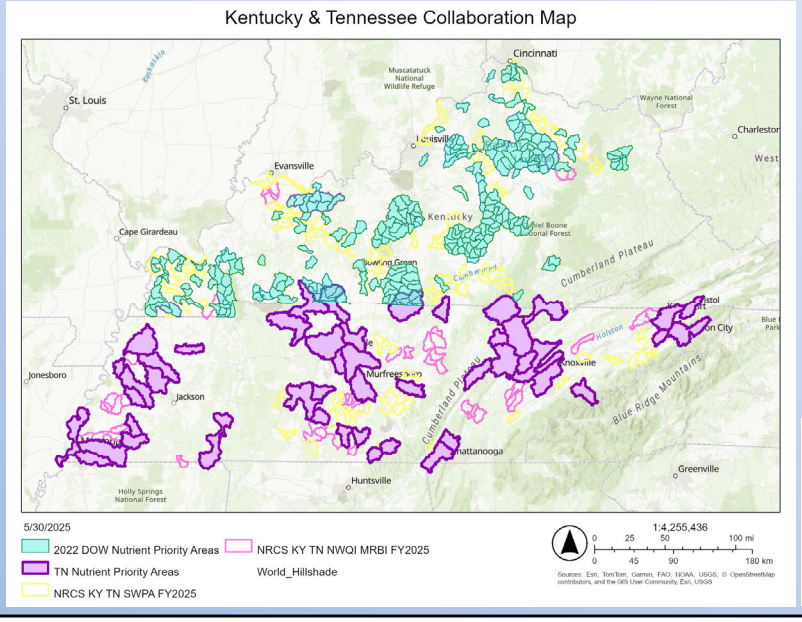
Collaboration Tools



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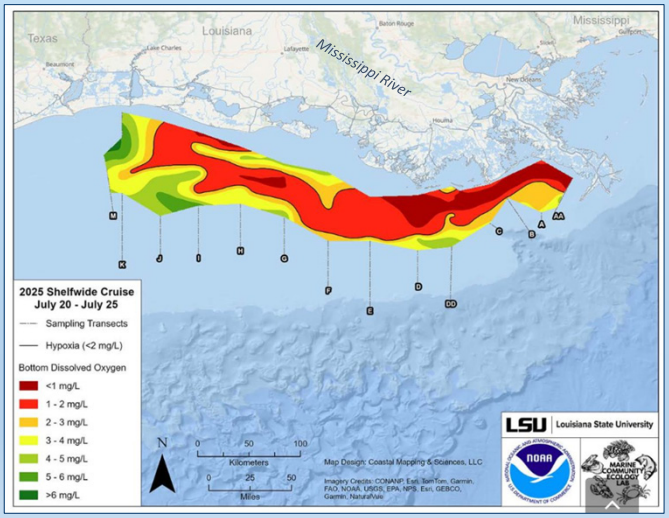
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

Louisiana: Collaborating to Address Nutrients

Mississippi River / Gulf of America Hypoxia Task Force

February 5, 2026

Louisiana's Nutrient Reduction and Management Strategy



- Although Louisiana contributes only a small portion of nutrients entering the Gulf, it is the **terminus of upstream impacts** from the Mississippi-Atchafalaya River Basin (MARB)
- Louisiana remains committed to **protecting inland and coastal water quality** and **collaborating with upstream states** to reduce nutrient loads
- Louisiana addresses nutrients through **local efforts** involving **nonpoint and point sources**, as well as river reconnection
- **Multiple agencies and partners** work collaboratively to implement strategies

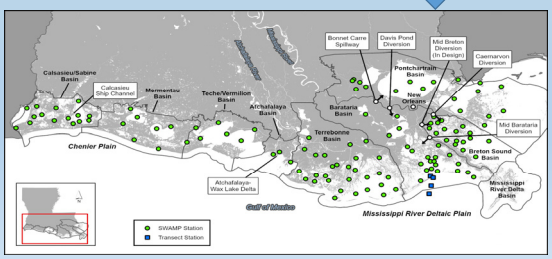
Monitoring Sites

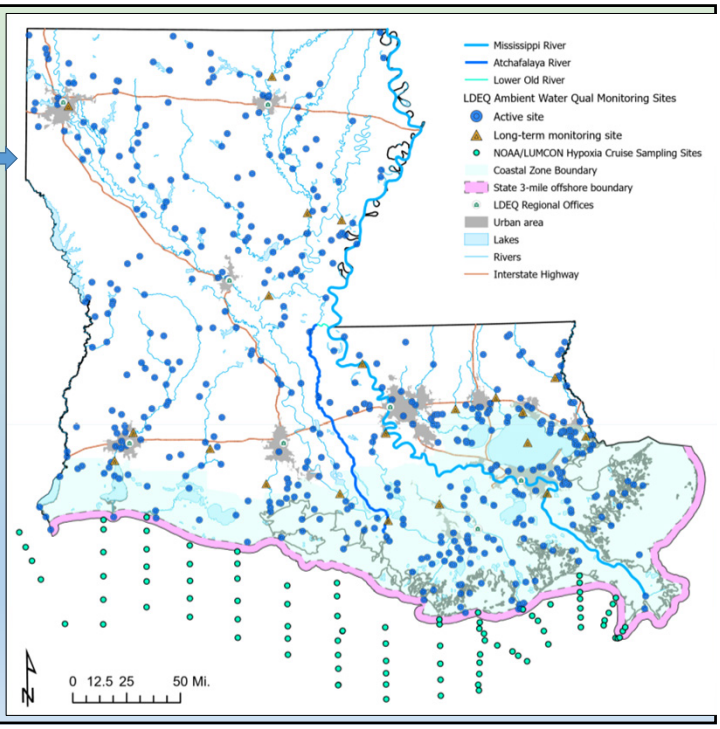
Ambient Water Quality Monitoring Network

- 21 long-term sites monitored monthly since 1978
  - TKN, NO3NO2, & TP

System Wide Assessment and Monitoring Program

- 120 discrete monthly water quality stations, starting in Barataria Basin in 2015





Fulfillment

Louisiana's primary focus is on *Agricultural Conservation Measures*

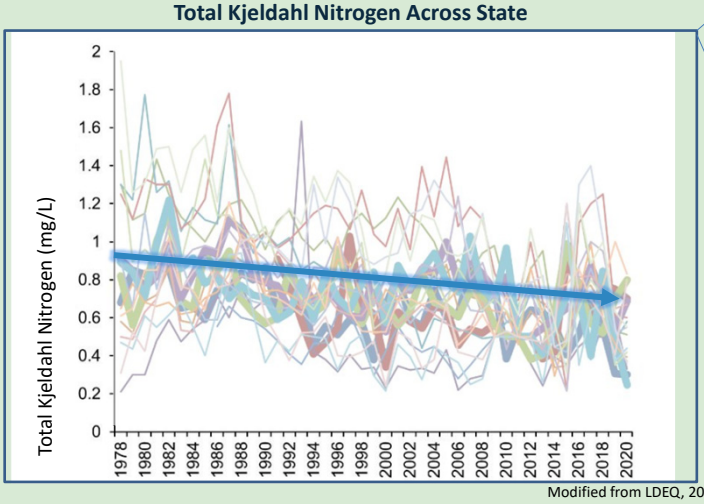
- **LDEQ Nonpoint Source Pollution Program** develops priority watersheds with LDAF and partners
  - Currently **43 target areas**; activities planned in 15+ watersheds through 2027
    - Other focal points: on-site wastewater treatment and EPA Vision activities
  - Additional USDA NRCS locations

- **LDEQ Water Division Efforts**
  - Nutrient-specific projects
    - Inland Rivers & Streams and Inland Lakes (ongoing)
    - **Nitrogen and phosphorus trends** every 5 years (due 2026)
    - Water Quality Trading (active)
  - Turbidity
    - Undergoing draft criteria refinement; in review & draft rule development
  - Regulations
    - Ammonia fresh water (FW) criteria promulgated; completed 2024
      - For protection of FW mussels where present (default)

*Details on LDEQ ongoing projects provided in Integrated Reporting

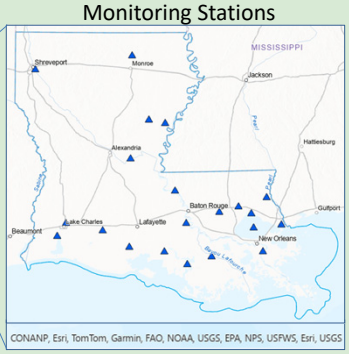
Nutrient Trends in Louisiana

Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen Across State



Modified from LDEQ, 2021

Monitoring Stations



Conservation practices (2019-2023) decreased loads:

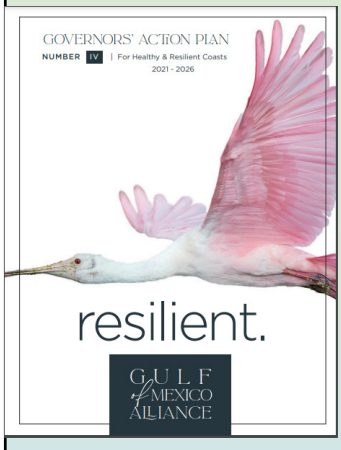
- **Nitrogen** by **~87,000 pounds**
- **Phosphorus** by **~19,224 pounds**
- Sediment by 3,012 tons

- Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen levels **decreasing** across state (LDEQ, 2021)
- Nitrate-Nitrite and Total Phosphorus show **decreasing** or **no trend** for **90%** of *long-term* locations

Water Quality Trading (WQT) Program

- LDEQ developed regulations for WQT in 2019 (LAC 33:IX.Ch. 26), supported by state legislation and consistent with the Clean Water Act, to facilitate trading among watershed stakeholders interested and eligible in participating in trading opportunities.
  - Regulations amended in 2021 to allow eligibility of projects funded with public conservation funds unless otherwise prohibited by the project terms and conditions.
  - Main objective:
    - Achieve equal or greater reduction of pollution and improvement of water quality at lower costs,
    - Reduce cumulative pollutant loading,
    - And prevent future environmental degradation.
  - WQT, particularly between point and nonpoint sources, does include inherent uncertainties around market supply and demand, as well as the challenge of quantifying nonpoint source pollutant reductions.
- Nutrients (TN, TP) are appropriate pollutants for trading, and LDEQ received and approved the first pollutant reduction credits in 2024.
- Details are available at: https://www.deq.louisiana.gov/page/water-quality-trading

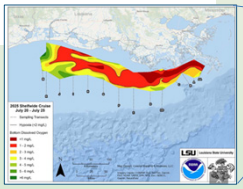
Gulf of America Alliance (GOAA)

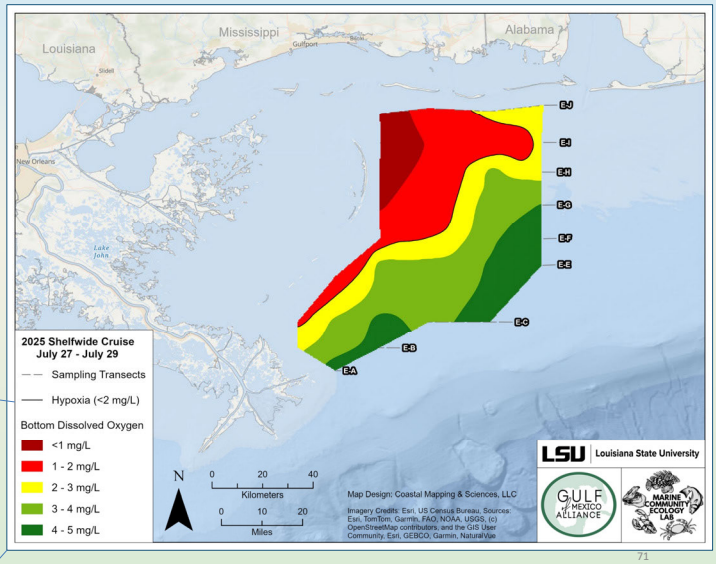


- The Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts
  - Action Plan I formed in 2006
  - Currently acting under **Action Plan IV**, 2021-2026
  - The Governor of Louisiana is one of five state governors pledging state support and implementation of the Action Plan.
- '**Impacts to Water Quality**' is one Focus Area of the Plan, action items include:
  - **Partner** to collect data and establish or expand pollutant reduction practices in agricultural watersheds
  - **Collaborate** with business and industry to demonstrate the economic value of water resource conservation
- GOAA supports projects that accomplish actions identified in the Plan through Gulf Star (a public-private partnership) and HTF BIL funding across the five Gulf states.

New Partnership, Expanded Gulf Hypoxia Monitoring

- Area **east of Mississippi River** is added to larger shelfwide hypoxia monitoring area
- **Nutrient data** collection
- Grantee: Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
- Funding Source: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (NOAA), through the Gulf of America Alliance





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Additional Ag Conservation Measures

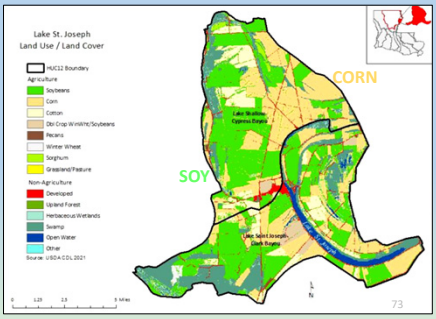
New Partnership for Nutrient Control, Morehouse Parish

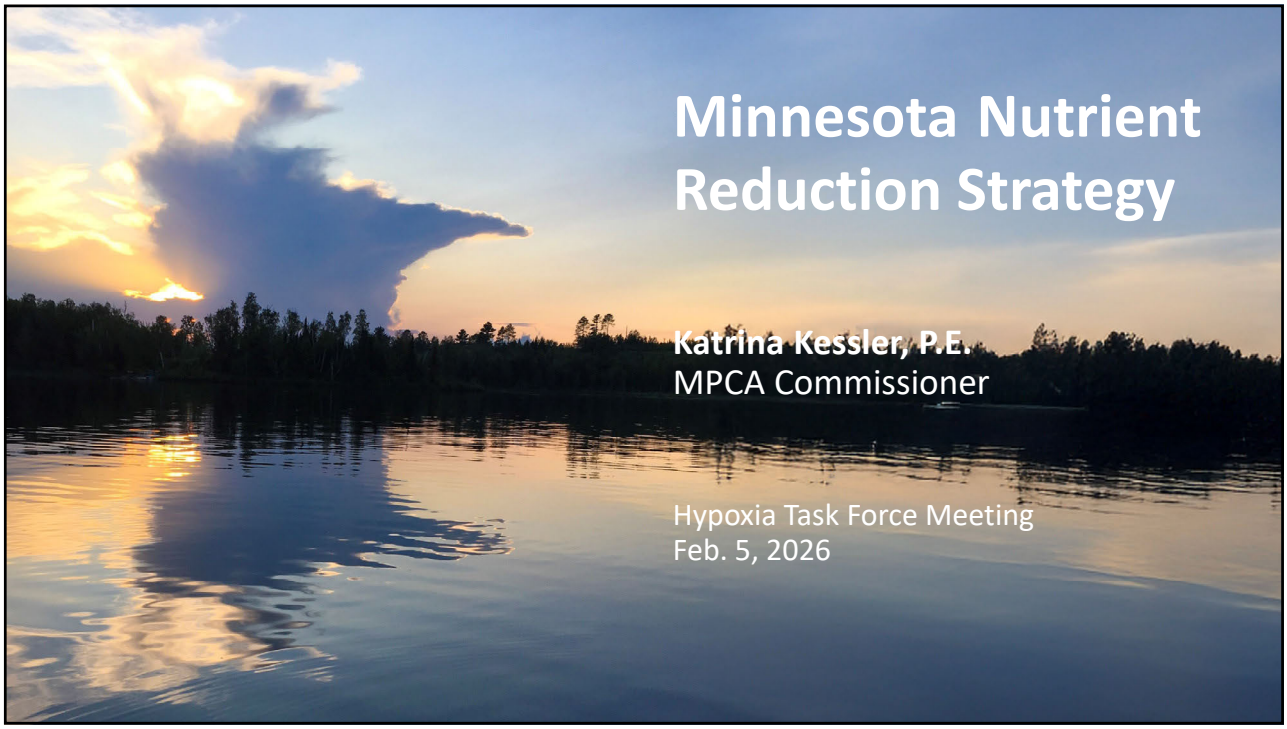
Collaborators: Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry/Office of Soil and Water Conservation, Morehouse Soil and Water Conservation District, and University of Louisiana, Monroe, Gulf of America Alliance (Project Manager). Environmental Protection Agency Gulf of America Division (Funder).

Additional Ag Conservation Measures-GHP

Lake St. Joseph, Louisiana, Nutrient Loading Reduction (Gulf Hypoxia Program)

- Targeted **Best Management Practices** (BMP) program implementation in the Lake St. Joseph-to reduce nitrogen and phosphorous edge of field runoff & provide other water quality improvements.
- Monitor implementation through collection of **edge of field runoff** for differences in water quality and clarity compared to control site.
- 6 area producers qualified and were enrolled in the BMP implementation program.
- **Fall cover crops** planted late 2023, delayed by severe drought.
- Edge of field **monitoring** 2024-2025.





Minnesota Nutrient Reduction Strategy

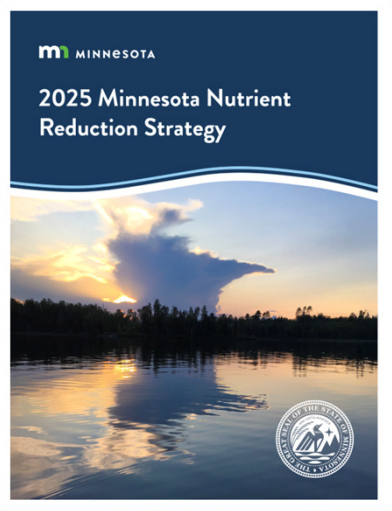
Katrina Kessler, P.E.
MPCA Commissioner

Hypoxia Task Force Meeting
Feb. 5, 2026

Agenda

- **Overview 2025 Minnesota NRS 2025**
- **10 years of progress 2014-2024**
- **Future directions**
- **Gulf Hypoxia Program state work plan phase 1 & 2**

2025 Minnesota NRS released



2025 Minnesota NRS contributors

MINNESOTA

POLLUTION CONTROL AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
BOARD OF WATER AND SOIL RESOURCES
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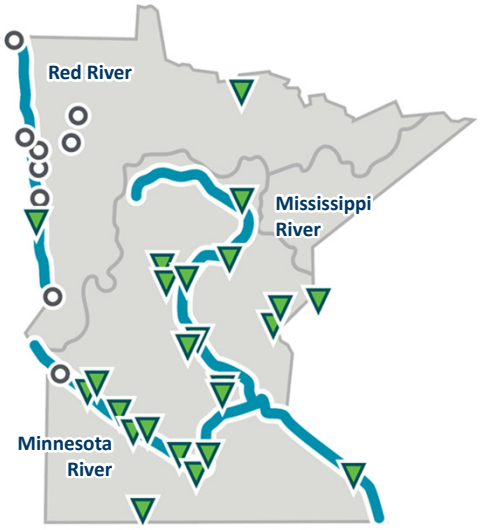
METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

USGS
science for a changing world

Statewide – Phosphorus reduced in Minnesota

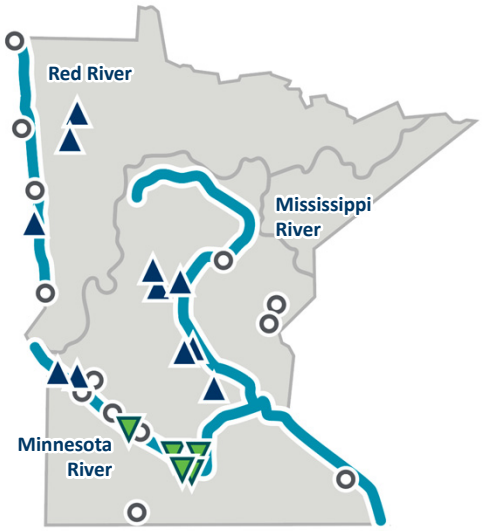


Phosphorus concentration
Streams and rivers
Flow corrected trends, 2003-2022

▼ Decreasing = 24

○ No trend detected = 12

Statewide mixed results – Nitrogen in Minnesota



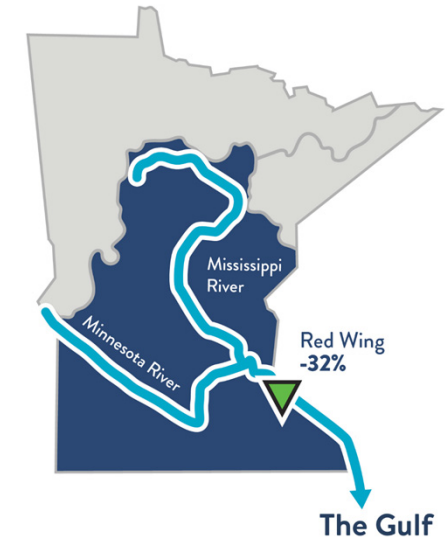
Nitrate concentration
Streams and rivers
Flow corrected trends, 2003-2022

▲ Increasing = 11

▼ Decreasing = 5

○ No trend detected = 15

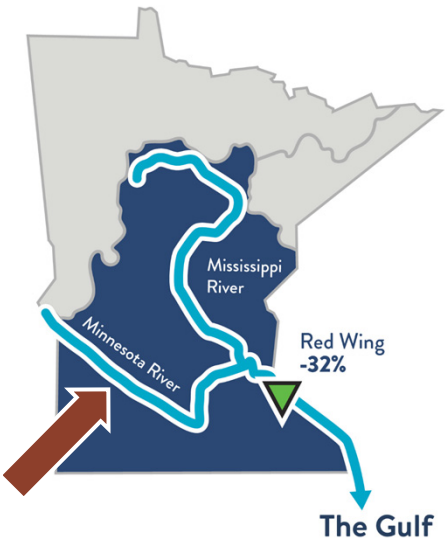
Success – Less phosphorus going to the Gulf



Phosphorus load decrease

-32% Red Wing monitoring station

Success – Signs of less nitrogen going to Gulf



First indication of nitrogen load decrease

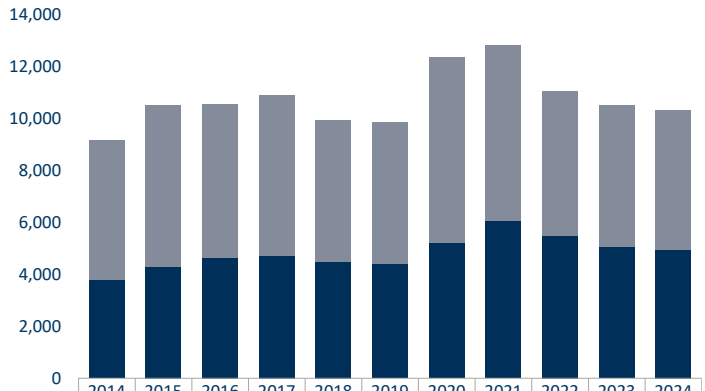
-6% Red Wing monitoring station

Success – Phosphorus reduced in wastewater

Urban wastewater phosphorus reduced 76% since 2008

Success – Working septic systems

New and replacement systems 2014-2024

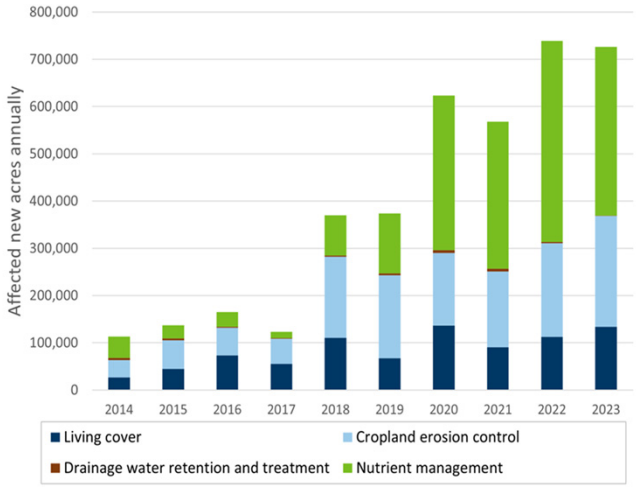


	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Replacement	5,393	6,205	5,917	6,197	5,436	5,492	7,183	6,786	5,568	5,488	5,375
New	3,767	4,288	4,639	4,709	4,483	4,377	5,185	6,026	5,483	5,029	4,942

- **2014 Minnesota NRS** called for reduction of failing septic systems to less than 5% all systems
- **Goal met by 2020, maintained into 2025**

Success – Agricultural land practices

Government-funded acres of BMPs 2014-2023



Chapter 5 2025 Minnesota NRS

Future - Vastly increase continuous living cover

Chapters 5 and 8 – 2025 Minnesota NRS

Future - Centralized dashboard to track progress

- Developed BMP Effects Estimator Tools (2025)
- Updating existing applications (now)
- Future work
  - Centralized tracking progress website (soon)
  - Single source of trackers
  - Story maps
  - Video content
- Dashboard development time-line 2026-2028

How you can stay involved

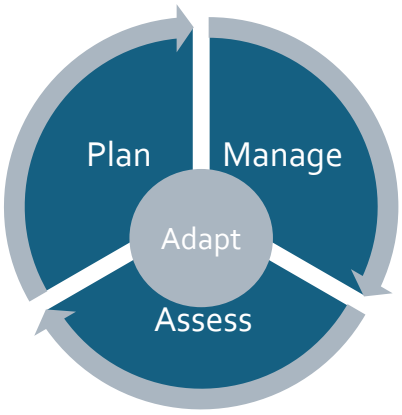
- Sign up for email list
  mnpca.info/4bKzmDP

- Check our web pages
  mnpca.info/nutrient-reduction

- Email: info.PCA@state.mn.us

- Follow on social media


THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA
Thank you
• Katrina Kessler, MPCA Commissioner
MINNESOTA



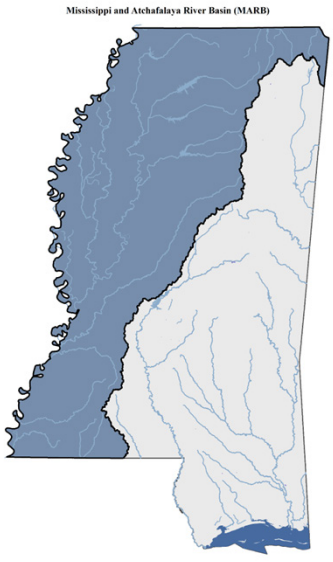
OUTCOME FOCUSED NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Natalie Segrest

Chief, Basin Management and NPS Branch; MDEQ

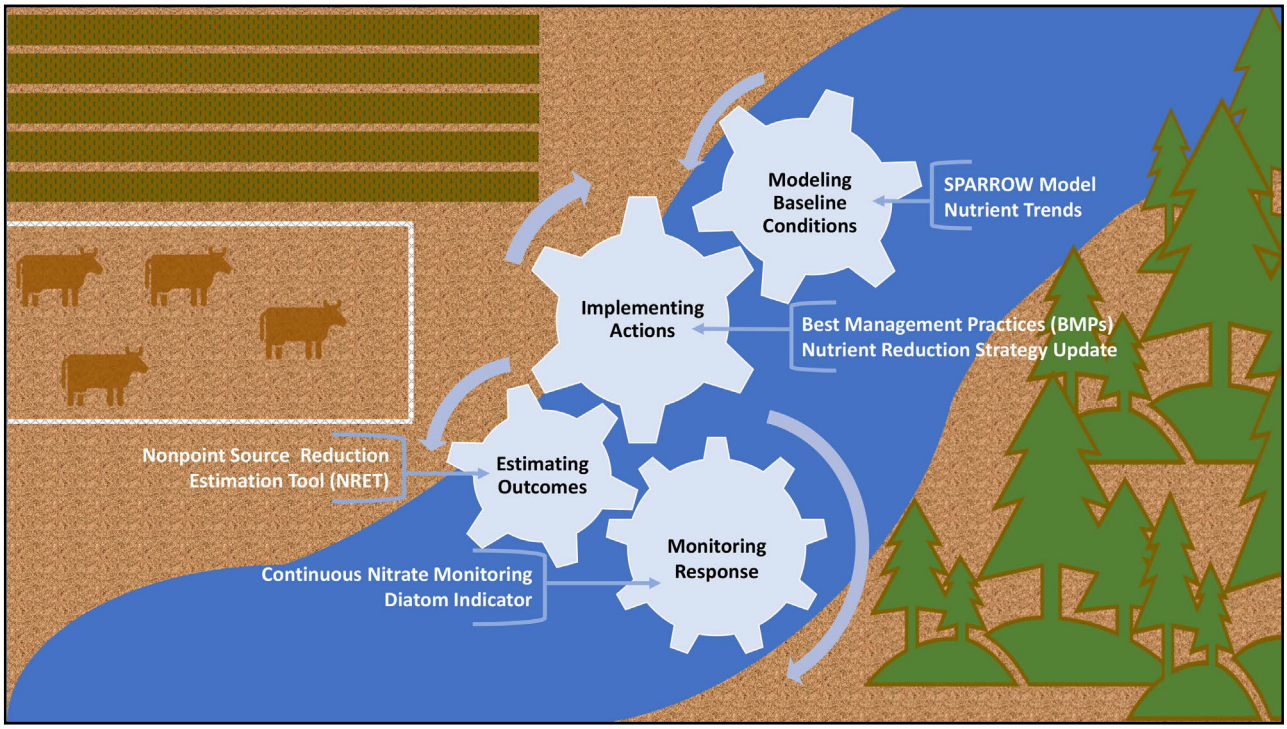
Hypoxia Task Force Public Meeting

February 5, 2026



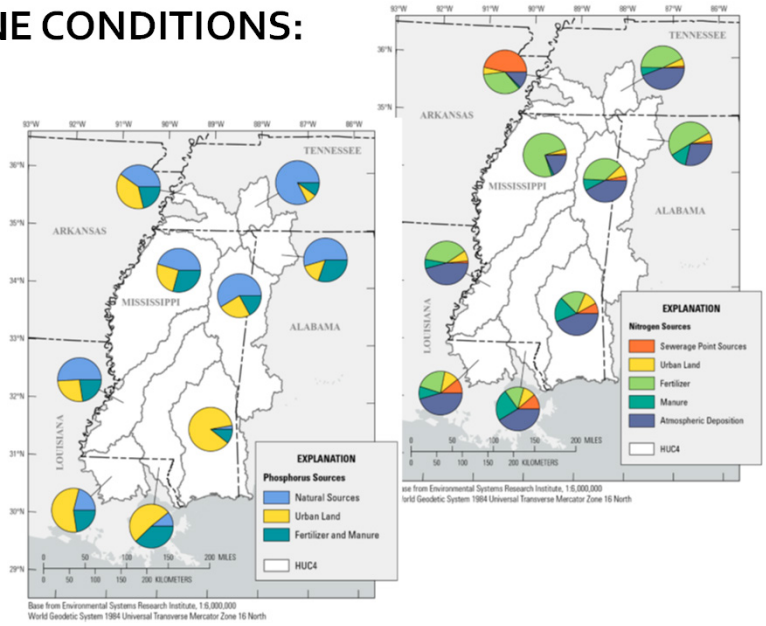
MISSISSIPPI'S GULF HYPOXIA PROGRAM

- **Support State Nutrient Reduction Strategies**
- **Provide Measurable Outcomes**
- **Leverage Long-Standing Partnerships, Funding, and Monitoring Approaches to Expand Project Impacts**
  - Expanded monitoring – Continuous Nitrate
  - Better estimates of background loads – MS SPARROW
  - Identify load reductions – NRET Tool
  - Measure nutrient response – Diatoms (near-term indicator of success)
  - Statewide Nutrient Trends (long-term indicator of success)
- **Re-Engage Stakeholders Through Adaptive Management to Share Progress, Confirm Priorities, and Amplify Success**



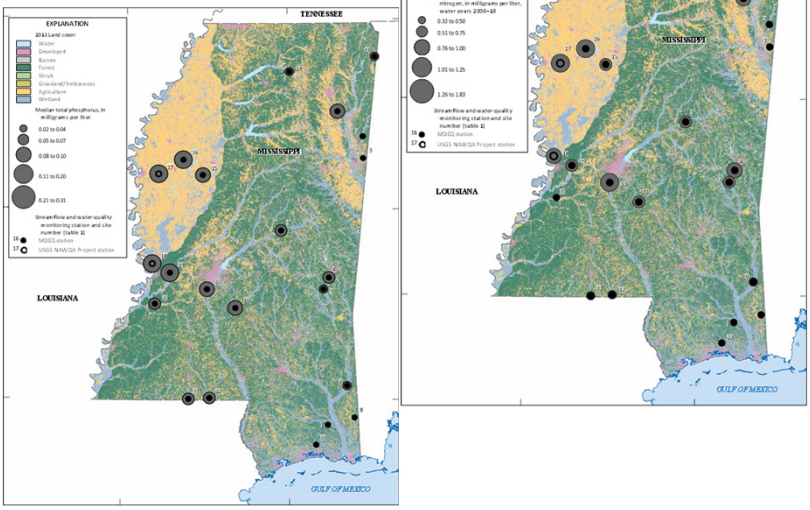
MODELING BASELINE CONDITIONS: MS SPARROW

- **Update Mississippi's SPAtially-Referenced Regression on Watershed Attributes (SPARROW) Model**
  - More sites = better model calibration
  - MS specific data
  - Identify nutrient sources
  - Estimates at scale
  - Improve targeting



STATEWIDE NUTRIENT STATUS AND TRENDS:

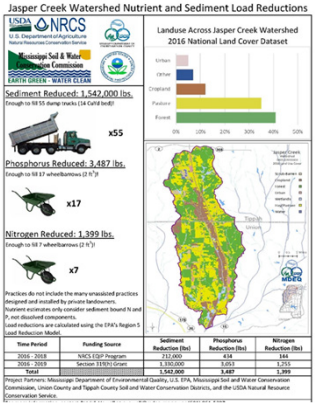
- **Flow Normalized Nutrient Concentrations, Yields, and Loads**
  - 2008-2018
  - Concentrations influenced by landuse
  - TN Max Range 1.26-1.83 mg/L
  - TP Max Range 0.21-0.31 mg/L
  - Agricultural land is highest
  - Forest is lowest
- **GHP Funds to Expand Analysis**
  - More sites included in the analysis
  - Longer period of record (2008-2025)



ESTIMATING LOAD REDUCTIONS - NRET

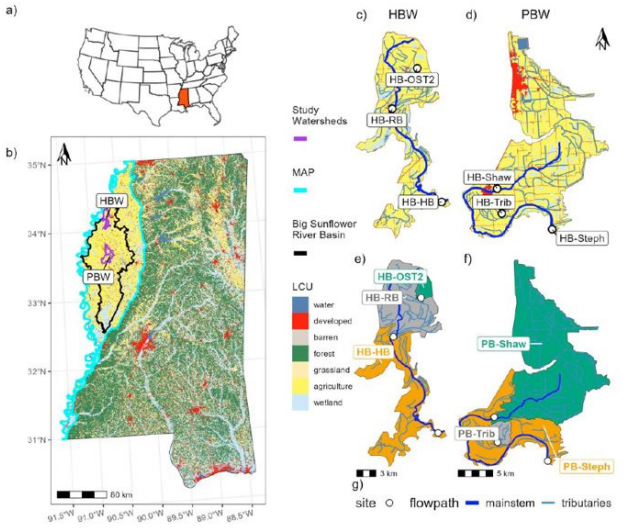
BMP Data → Nutrient Sources, Nutrient Management Actions, BMPs → Nutrient Reduction Estimation Tool

- **Nutrient and Sediment Load Reductions**
  - Incorporates data from multiple sources
  - Utilizes state and/or regional efficiency data
  - Outputs across scales: spatial, temporal, and by BMP type
- **Reviewed existing literature and models for existing functionality**
- **Compiled historic 319 BMP data, SPARROW model outputs, NRCS Practice information**
- **Report Environmental Outcomes**



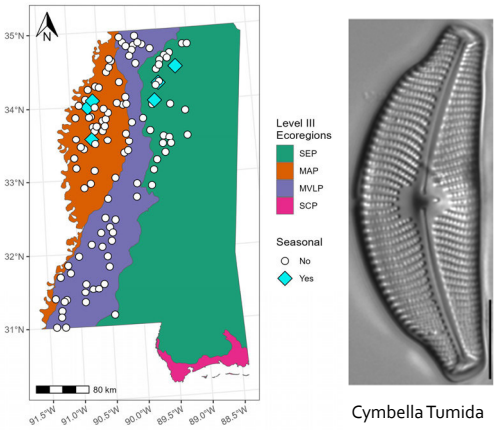
LESSONS LEARNED FROM WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION

- **Long Term study of HUC 10 Watersheds:**
  - Harris Bayou
  - Porter Bayou Watersheds
- **Data and Model outputs show success**
  - 37.7 – 56.9% TN reduction
- **BUT…. Required 10+ yrs of Data – VERY EXPENSIVE**
- **BMPs at End of Life**



MONITORING RESPONSE: DIATOM INDICATOR

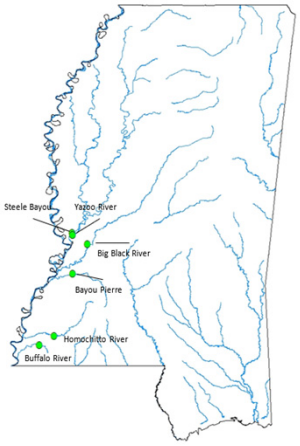
- Measure Response to Nutrient Reduction Actions
- Data Collected at 116 Sites
- Coupled with Habitat and Water Quality Data
- **Leveraged Efforts:**
  - DNA analysis for diatoms and sediment bacteria (USGS and USDA ARS NSL)
  - Sampling in Coastal MS – Deepwater Horizon Funding
  - State NPS Funding to fill gaps for statewide dataset



Cymbella Tumida

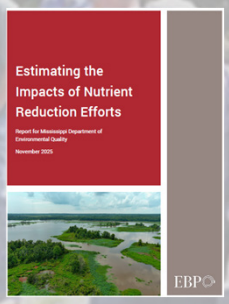
REAL TIME DATA COLLECTION: CONTINUOUS NITRATE MONITORING

- **Continuous Nitrate Data at 6 Major Tributaries to the MS River:**
  - Steele Bayou, Yazoo River, Big Black River, Homochitto River, and Buffalo River
- **Sensors Co-located at USGS Gauges**
  - Better understanding of the connection between flow and nutrient dynamics
- **Leveraged as Part of USGS Larger Continuous Nitrate Monitoring Network**
- **Provide Better Understanding of Nutrient Dynamics in Lower MS River**



NUTRIENT REDUCTION STRATEGIES UPDATE

- **MS's Nutrient Reduction Strategies Guide Actions to Address Nutrients Flowing Into State Waters and Downstream to the Gulf**
- **Answer the Core Questions Identified by Stakeholders Using Updated Tools and Analyses**
  - **New resources to enhance outreach and public understanding of nutrient management**
- **Evaluate Progress Over Time in Reducing Nutrient Loads Through Science and Technical Updates**
  - **Identify new or novel approaches to assessing change over time**
- **Better Tools for Prioritization and Targeting of Nutrient Management Investments**
- **Adaptively Manage Based on Challenges, Successes, and Lessons Learned**

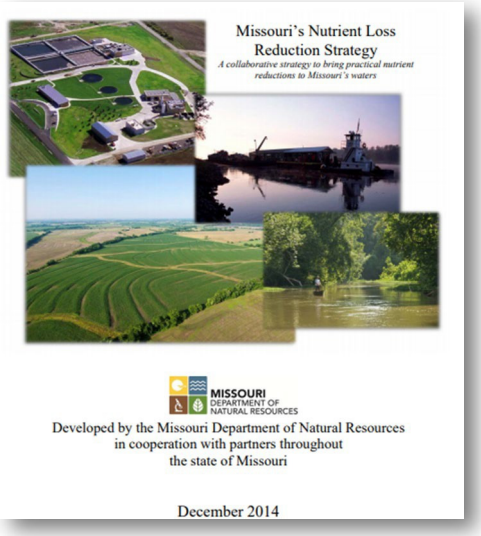


MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2026 Missouri Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Update

Chris Wieberg, Deputy Director Missouri Geological Survey

The Missouri Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) is a collection of adaptive approaches to reduce nutrient pollution from point and non-point sources. The overarching goal of the NLRS is to improve local water quality and reduce statewide nutrient pollution that ends up in the Mississippi River and Gulf of America.



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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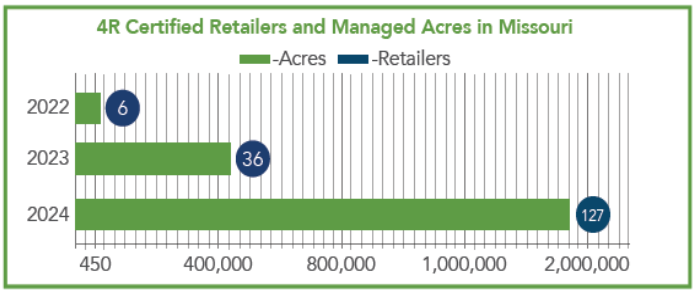
MO NLRS Objective Progress

2022-2025

Implement the 4R Nutrient Stewardship: Missouri Fertilizer Control Board (MoFCB) assisted with the creation and implementation of the 4R Nutrient Management pilot cost-share program in partnership with Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Districts Commission.
To date the MoDNR's Soil and Water Conservation Program (SWCP) has 50 4R contracts active or have been paid covering 4,356 acres.

MISSOURI CRCL PROJECT



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

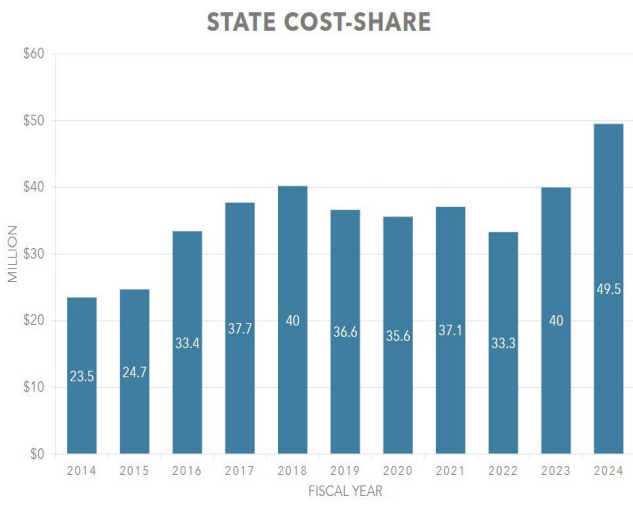
MO NLRS Objective Progress

2022-2025

Administers the Parks, Soil and Water Sales tax: Soil and Water Program funding $168.4 million in cost-share practices on the ground in fiscal years 2022-2025.

Sediment and Nutrient Runoff Prevention: Through the work of the State's 114 Soil and Water Conservation Districts an estimated 5,246,769 tons of soil was prevented from entering Missouri's waterways, along with the associated nutrients and pesticides.

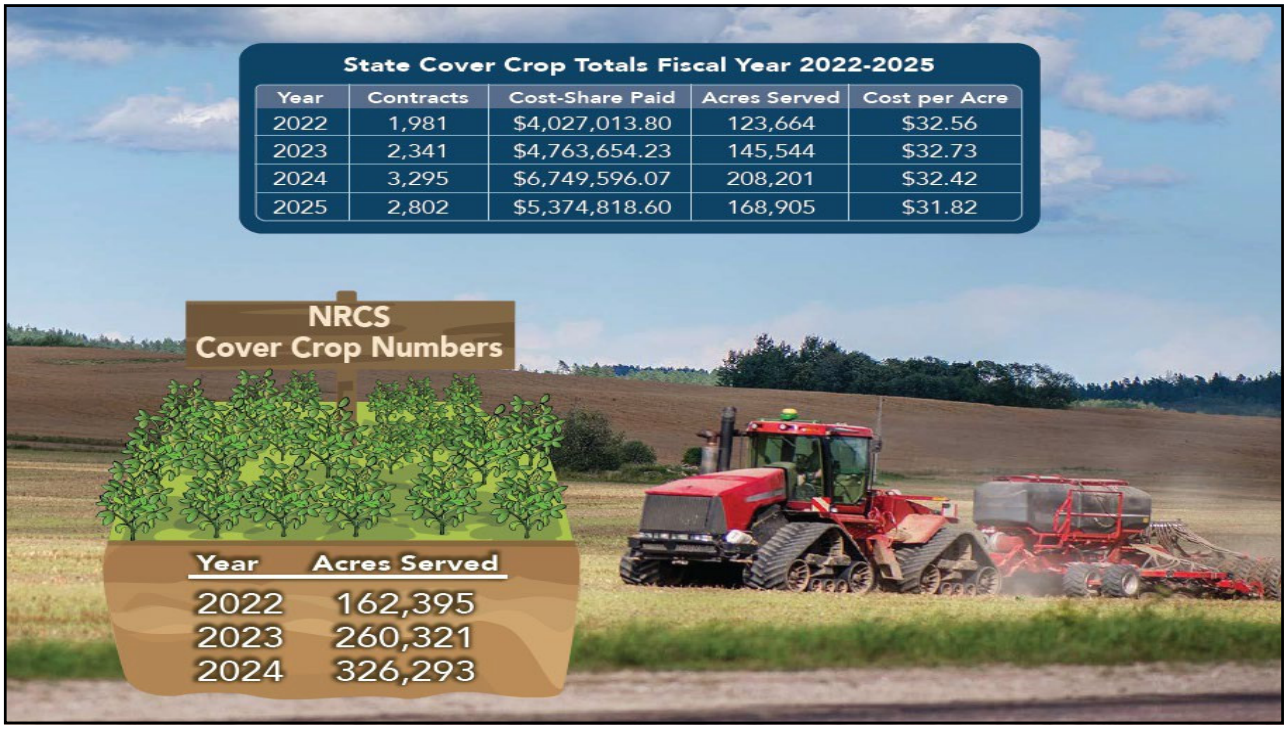
Received GHP Grant to evaluate new nutrient reduction BMPs



Nutrient Reduction Estimates from State Soil and Water Conservation

Type of practice	N Reduction (lbs/year) AVERAGE PER ACRE	P Reduction (lbs/year) AVERAGE PER ACRE	Sediment Reduction (tons/year) AVERAGE PER ACRE	2014-2024 C-S # Contracts	2014-2024 Acres served	N Reduction (lbs/year) STATEWIDE (based on per acre FY2014-2024)	P Reduction (lbs/year) STATEWIDE (based on per acre FY2014-2024)	Sediment Reduction (tons/year) STATEWIDE (based on per acre FY2014-2024)
Cover Crop Total	5.22	1.38	0.50	21,922	1,400,040	7,310,620.8	1,928,393.3	693,393.1
DSL-01 Total	1.06	0.07	0.00	4,379	113,851	120,226.8	7,481.6	-
DSL-11 Total	1.93	0.33	0.11	296	550	1,060.6	180.7	62.8
DSP-02/DSL-02 Total	1.43	0.09	0.00	1,757	49,610	71,168.2	4,420.4	-
Fld Border Total	6.10	1.35	0.47	160	6,872	41,922.3	9,272.1	3,257.3
N410 Total	3.08	0.73	0.24	4,057	223,067	687,788.4	163,244.1	54,414.7
N472 Total	8.01	1.47	0.53	2,324	62,917	504,210.8	92,408.8	33,564.9
Pond Total	3.62	0.57	0.21	2,784	53,084	192,243.3	30,123.2	11,251.0
Terrace Total	3.50	1.04	0.39	9,760	166,111	580,559.1	172,313.4	64,585.7
WASCoB Total	6.20	0.94	0.30	2,878	33,922	210,217.1	31,814.2	10,030.8
Waterway Total	2.98	0.87	0.32	3,635	120,322	358,419.8	104,338.9	38,471.5
WQ10 (Use Excl + Stream Protect) Total	5.85	0.69	0.30	964	8,135	47,577.3	5,600.0	2,408.2
Grand Total	**234.08**	**61.76**	**0.47**	**54,916**	**2,238,481**	**10,126,014.4**	**2,549,590.8**	**911,440.1**

Stewardship • Integrity • Collaboration • Respect • Innovation



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MO NLRS Objective Progress

2022-2025

Changes to Land Application Rules:

- Passage of H.B. 2134 in 2024, initiated rule changes to No-Discharge Operations and Land Application Requirements regarding the land application of wastewater and wastewater treatment residuals.
- To implement rule, MoDNR developed the Missouri Industrial Nutrient Management Technical Standard for Industrial Wastewater and Wastewater Treatment Residuals. This standard is now required as part of a permit to conduct this land application.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MO NLRS Objective Progress

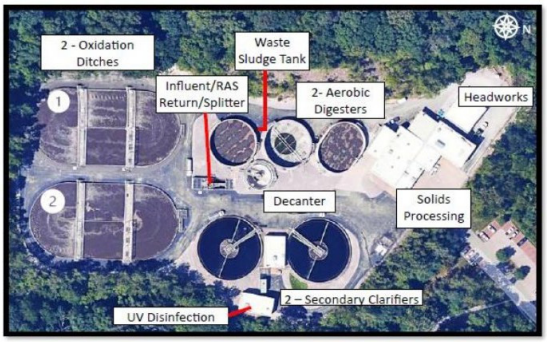
2022-2025

Nutrient optimization project conducted: MoDNR's conducted a nutrient optimization project for 8 wastewater treatment facilities with design flows between the range of 1 million gallons per day to 15 million gallons per day.

We worked to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels from their discharge using existing equipment.

Project highlighted possibilities for wastewater treatment facilities to affordable reduce nutrient discharges without the need for plant upgrades.

- Oxidation ditch (7.0 MGD)



	TN (mg/L)	TP (mg/L)	TN (lbs)	TP (lbs)	
Before	23.76	3.92	921	151	
After	9.17	1.91	344	74	
			576		77 lbs/d removed
			105		14 tons/yr removed

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MO NLRS Priorities 26-27

- DNR Water Protection Program will finalize supporting nutrient accounting worksheet and nutrient credit usage plan documents in preparation for point source nutrient trading implementation in Missouri State Operating Permits.
- Establish a Non-point Source Trading Program through DNR's Water Protection Program
- Soil and Water Conservation Program will continue working with NRCS and other partners to implement conservation practices in Missouri.
- The Soil and Water Conservation Program (SWCP) plans to model watersheds for nitrogen, phosphorus, BOD and sediment with an emphasis on the Lower-Missouri Moreau. This is an additional way to show the benefit and return on investment by Missouri's taxpayers through the implementation of the state cost-share program's available practices.
- Soil and Water Program will continue the targeted watershed approach with state-cost share in the Lower Grand. This will include approaching the commission with options to allocate additional funding to this watershed to encourage the use of underutilized and grouped practices with a 90% cost share rate to address sedimentation, water quality and nutrient loss.
- Use the EPA Hypoxia Grant to study the effectiveness of innovative practices

Ohio's Gulf Hypoxia State Update

Department of Agriculture

Environmental Protection Agency

Gulf Hypoxia Workplan 1 Tasks

- Update Ohio's Nutrient Reduction Strategy (ONRS)
- Build Ohio EPA and ODA staff capacity to support for HTF Goals
- Support development of HUC12 Nonpoint Source Implementation Strategies (NPS-IS)
- Support a program that reduces nutrients from Household Sewage Treatment Systems (HSTS)
- Measure the effectiveness of new innovative practices
- Support nutrient load monitoring at key pour points in the Ohio River Basin

Building Staff Capacity

Environmental Protection Agency

Ohio EPA now maintains a full-time Environmental Specialist focused on nutrient reduction in the ORB

Department of Agriculture

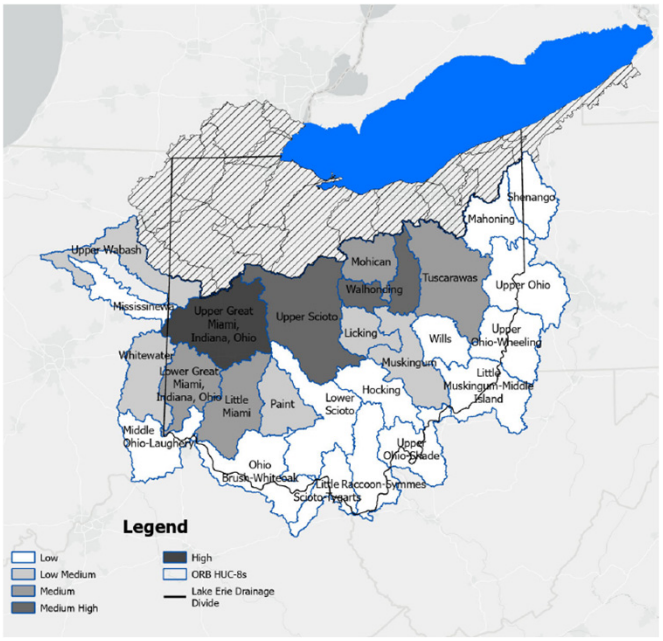
Ohio Department of Agriculture maintains two full-time positions supporting nutrient reduction in the ORB:

- A Conservation Engineer who provides engineering assistance
- A Nutrient Management Specialist who provides training and support to local personnel

Revise ONRS

Why did we need to update?

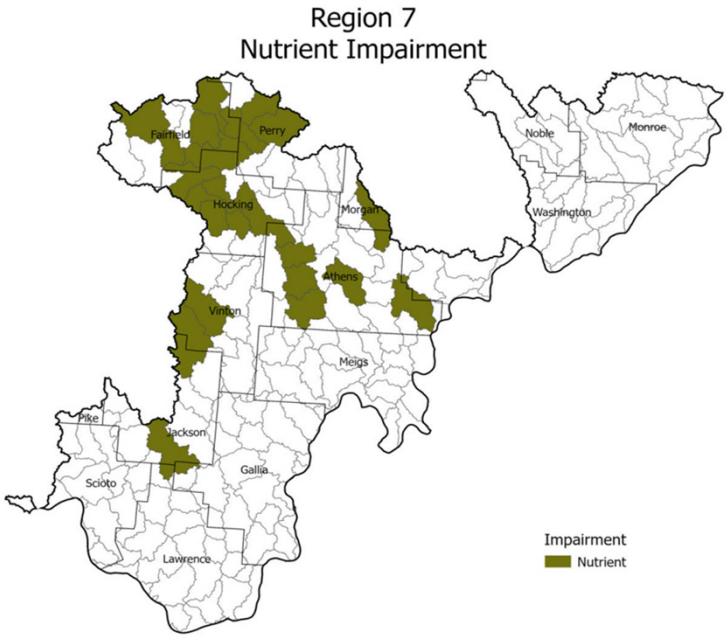
- New guidance
- New baseline data
- Updated priority watersheds
- Changes in WQ since 2013
- Address areas to improve
- Align objectives with changes since 2013



Revise ONRS

What will change?

- Development of baseline data for Ohio River Basin
- Map of impairments broken dow by region
- Each strategy update based on comments received during public roundtable meetings



Revise ONRS

Updated Strategies

1. Agricultural Nutrients
2. Enhanced Nutrient Sinks
3. Developed Areas Nutrient Reduction
4. Point Source Nutrient Reduction
5. Decentralized Wastewater Management Reduction
6. Distribution of Resources
7. Outreach and Communication
8. Evaluation and Adaptive Management

Illustration Credit: Brooke Ripley, MSES '26 Ohio University.

Other Updates

- Completed eight new NPS-IS throughout the Ohio River Basin
- Completed an HSTS project that assessed alternative pathways for treating septage

- Initiated monitoring of new cascading waterway with funding continuing through 2027
- Collected 2 additional years of data on the Hocking, East Fork Little Miami, and Little Miami rivers

Thank You

Department of Agriculture

Environmental Protection Agency

Nutrient Reduction Strategy Implementation in Tennessee

Hypoxia Task Force Meeting

Sam Marshall, Administrator – Land and Water Stewardship Section | February 5, 2026

Tennessee Nutrient Reduction Efforts

- Nutrient reduction efforts in Tennessee is a joint effort between the Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the Department of Agriculture (TDA).
  - TDEC:
    - TMDLs, NPDES permits, water quality monitoring, etc.
    - Focus on point sources of pollution
  - TDA:
    - Focus on nonpoint sources of pollution
      - 319 nonpoint source grant program
      - Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF)
    - Plays a role in CAFO permitting
- In 2019, TDA and TDEC jointly convened the Tennessee Nutrient Reduction Task Force

TDEC Activity and Accomplishments

- Since 2019, 21 wastewater treatment facilities have gone through the Tennessee Nutrient Plant Optimization Program (TNPOP).
- In 2025, 5 facilities going through the program achieved the following:
  - Prevented 1,000,000 lbs/yr of nitrogen, and 40,000 lbs/yr of phosphorus being discharged into Tennessee streams
  - Reduced annual wastewater treatment costs by over $500,000 on average
  - Across the board, reduced average annual energy use by 5,500 MWh

TN Department of Agriculture

TDEC Activity and Accomplishments

- Bottomline…more is better
  - More watershed plans
  - More stream gauges
  - More data from municipal wastewater treatment plants
  - More firsts:
    - TN is the first state in the US to develop a centralized geodatabase that compiles SCM data reported by MS4s
    - TN hosted the first ever Tennessee Nutrient Summit in November 2025
      - 97 participants from a wide variety of organizations
      - Progress to date, current successes, future challenges and opportunities

TN Department of Agriculture

TDA Activities and Accomplishments

- Long-term, ongoing cost-share programs:
  - Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF)
  - 319 Nonpoint Source Program
- Special, limited-time cost-share programs
  - Gulf Hypoxia Cover Crop Program
  - Tennessee Riparian Incentives Program (TRIP)

TN Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund

- ARCF collections were slightly up in FY 2025 ($11.7 million) compared to FY 2024 ($11.4 million).
  - In FFY 2025, ARCF spent $7,026,526 for 2,131 BMPs
  - These BMPs impacted 76,684 acres
  - Estimated pollutant load reductions achieved:
    - 338,064 lbs N
    - 118,165 lbs P
    - 55,501 tons sediment

Streambank Stabilization and Exclusion Fencing (Before, 2017)
Bradley County

Streambank Stabilization and Exclusion Fencing (After, 2023)
Bradley County

TN Department of Agriculture

319 Nonpoint Source Grant Program

- Tennessee receives approximately $2.6 million in 319 grant dollars per year
- In FFY 2025, TN paid $540,929 for 104 BMPs
  - These BMPs impacted 2,240 acres
  - Estimated pollutant load reductions:
    - 5,164 lbs N
    - 1,229 lbs P
    - 561 tons sediment

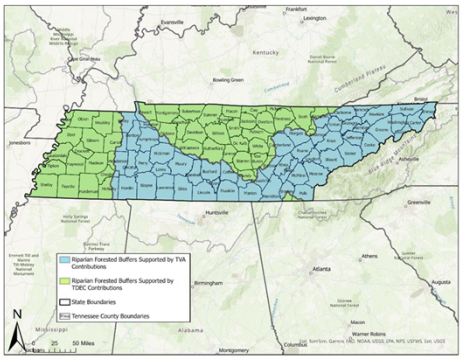
TN Department of Agriculture

Gulf Hypoxia Cover Crop Project (GHP)

- From 2023-2025, $687,148 in incentives have been paid to 153 landowners.
- To date, approximately 18,200 acres have been planted.
- GHP has resulted in the following estimated load reductions:
  - 69,544 lbs of nitrogen
  - 31,585 lbs of phosphorus
  - 15,779 tons of sediment
- TDA will be receiving an additional $943,000 over the next three years for additional cover crop practices.

TN Department of Agriculture

Tennessee Riparian Incentives Program (TRIP)



- Unique partnership between Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), USDA, TDEC, and TDA
  - TVA and TDEC provide $$$
  - USDA provides existing incentives
  - TDA provides conduit for cost-share
- The program pays a one-time $3,000/acre incentive payment to the landowner with a 5-acre cap per participant.

TN Department of Agriculture

TDA Activities and Accomplishments

- Long-term, ongoing cost-share programs:
  - Agricultural Resources Conservation Fund (ARCF)
  - 319 Nonpoint Source Program
- Special, limited-time cost-share programs
  - Gulf Hypoxia Cover Crop Program
  - Tennessee Riparian Incentives Program (TRIP)
- **Success turns up where funding is provided and partners are willing to work**
  - **2 Success Stores published this year by USEPA**
  - **We are committed to writing 4 Success Stories per year**

TN Department of Agriculture

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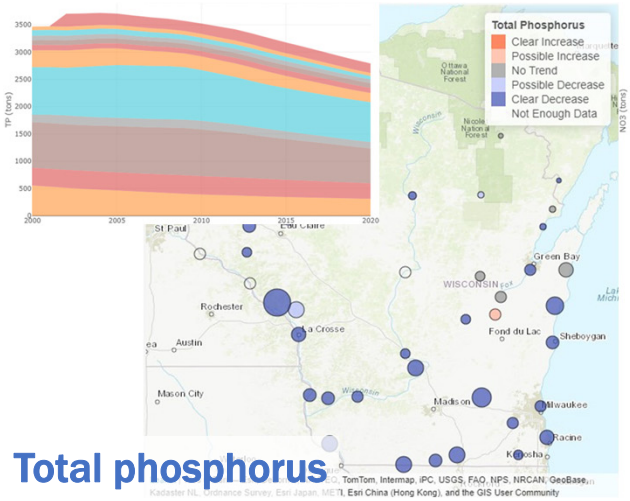
TN Department of Agriculture

Advancing Wisconsin's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

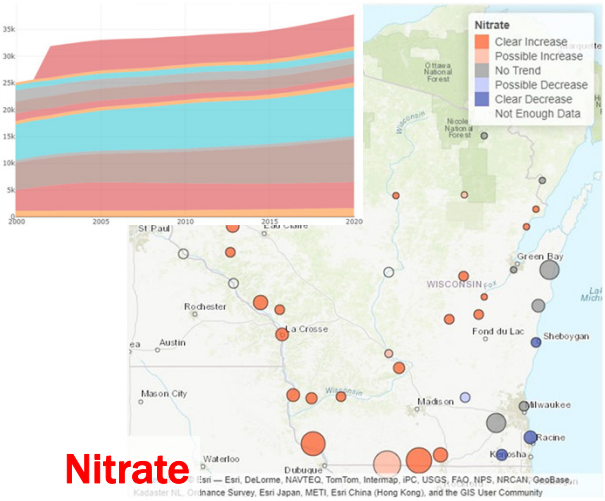
Brian Weigel, PhD | Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Hypoxia Task Force Public Meeting | February 5, 2026

Wisconsin is making progress on reducing nutrient losses, but we have more work to do.



Total phosphorus



Nitrate

Wisconsin's new Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS) emphasizes:

Partners	Stakeholders	Science
• Improved partner coordination and shared goals	• Stakeholder participation to inform the strategy	• Effectiveness of practices to reduce nutrient loss

Extension UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON · WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES · LAND + WATER · USDA · USGS science for a changing world

We are prioritizing stakeholder input to the new strategy by seeking feedback and ideas from farmers, their advisors, and agriculture organizations.

- **Peer networks & local leadership**
- **Trust & communication**
- **Funding & economic opportunities**
- **Technology & research**
- **Consistency & accountability**

Science assessments are increasing stakeholders' knowledge of practices, adoption, and impacts.

- Agricultural conservation practices nutrient loss reduction effectiveness
- Social science on adoption and behavior change
- Mass balance assessment of phosphorus and nitrogen

Working better together is Wisconsin's way forward to continue advancing progress.

- Continue partner engagement and communication for NLRS as a unified framework for clean water, resilient agriculture, and public health.
- Align research, funding, and support for short-term actions and long-term priorities.

January 27, 2026

Mississippi River and Gulf Hypoxia Task Force
Jessica Kramer (Task Force Co-Chair), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Naig (Task Force Co-Chair), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Submitted via email to Katie Flahive at Flahive.Katie@epa.gov

Subject: One Mississippi Comments for the 39th Public Meeting of the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force on February 5

Dear Gulf Hypoxia Task Force Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comments ahead of the 39th Gulf Hypoxia Task Force meeting, which will be held both in person and virtually. One Mississippi will attend the meeting virtually, and, as appropriate, we are willing and able to respond to those day-of presentations if called upon.

The Gulf Hypoxia Task Force (GHTF) is a high priority for One Mississippi's mission and work:

One Mississippi is a growing movement of over 20,000 people and over 75 organizations committed to protecting the future of the Mississippi River. We seek to influence not only policies that affect the River, but also people's perceptions of and connections to the River. A significant part of that work includes advocating, educating, and working to reduce the impacts of agricultural and urban runoff and support sustainable agriculture for better water quality.

We have encouraged our supporters, the River Citizens, and member organizations to share their visions for a healthy Mississippi River. We've engaged both grassroots and grasstops networks to promote public comments at your meetings and advocacy actions directed to GHTF members. We know of over a dozen member organizations, both national and from mainstem states, that plan to attend this meeting. The Hypoxia Task Force is the only federal-state initiative focused on reducing nutrient pollution in the Mississippi River basin. We view the Task Force's successes as our own and its failures as opportunities to collaborate more effectively on these critical issues. Collectively, our network of organizations represents millions of Americans, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide input.

We urge more robust public engagement, especially from organizations working in the 12 mainstem states and directly working with frontline communities.

In 2022, we asked the Task Force to meet in the Mississippi River basin, and we were appreciative that in 2023, this meeting took place in Fayetteville, AR. We were disappointed that no meeting was held in 2024 and that this meeting, although the virtual component is appreciated, is again based in DC. One Mississippi is eager and willing to help inform places and partners that could help inform decision-making around locations. The Task Force's public outreach and engagement efforts will be more accessible and impactful if co-located in areas with higher numbers of individuals interested in Mississippi River policy and organizations active in this space.

In 2022, we heard that state agencies pursue public engagement and stakeholder outreach at the local and state levels for specific projects and campaigns throughout the year, outside the GHTF meeting. **Please report on these activities over the past two years and share why those state NGOs and other stakeholders are not actively engaged in or presenting at these annual Hypoxia Task Force public meetings.**

Results– while trends are averaging down, we still have significant work to do to meet goals.

In 2025, the Dead Zone measured 4,402 square miles—nearly the size of Connecticut. While this is smaller than last year, it is still more than double the long-standing goal of reducing the Dead Zone to fewer than 1,900 square miles, as set by the GHTF. As you know, scientists and state leaders back that goal, and it was initially meant to be achieved in 2015. A decade later, we're still falling short. "The five-year average size of the dead zone is now 4,755 square miles, more than two times larger than the 2035 target."[1] We must fundamentally change how we address the pollution that drives the dead zone to meet this goal. We are concerned about staffing, funding, and resourcing cuts to programs and scientists that are desperately needed to scale up, not down, efforts. Unfortunately, instead of increasing investments to address the problem, the federal government is regularly considering cuts to the very agencies and programs responsible for monitoring and reducing this pollution. We are aware and concerned because not only is the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) crucial to the goals of the GHTF, but also the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) are essential to tracking water quality and supporting conservation efforts collectively as well. **Please provide a status report on how these changes are impacting the GHTF work.**

There is a significant need for a cross-agency, cross-state, community, and whole river approach.

The state nutrient reduction strategies are designed to improve the health, function, and resilience of the Mississippi River basin, and efforts to reduce them have had some success. However, much more

[1] https://www.epa.gov/ms-htf/hypoxia-task-force-action-plans

is needed to scale. **A holistic river approach, with additional work among state governments, tribal governments, agricultural, municipal, conservation, and community stakeholders, needs to be ramped up and prioritized.**

One Mississippi continues to advocate for this approach, including the required funding through the appropriations process. We look forward to hearing more and request updates on this approach:

- **How much FY27 appropriations might be needed to fund dedicated staff in each state who are solely focused on Mississippi River issues and the Hypoxia Task Force goals?**
- **How are funds/resources being directed towards communities that need them the most?**

One Mississippi, active in 10 mainstem states, cannot easily track each state's nutrient-loss-reduction plans at a whole-river scale due to GHTF reporting. This lack of standardization prevents meaningful comparison. We continue to urge the Task Force: adopt a coordinated, basin-wide approach, not just state plans.

We appreciate state agencies' on-the-ground engagement, but urge the Task Force to lead whole-river conversations, not just state-by-state updates. **Please prioritize:**

- **Facilitating whole river discussions before and during public meetings**
- **Creating more and regular opportunities for states to share lessons and models basin-wide**
- **Standardize nutrient loss reporting across all states**
- **Provide clear, comparable progress data**

We strongly encourage the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force to explore strategies to incorporate "continuous living cover" agricultural systems into its work.

Continuous living cover (CLC) refers to the presence of living plants aboveground and/or living roots in the soil year-round; CLC can be achieved with perennial species or rotations of summer and winter annual species. CLC farming fundamentally improves the environmental outcomes of agricultural systems: it retains nutrients and soil on the landscape, promotes soil health, can increase soil carbon stocks, and fosters biological diversity. A 2023 analysis found that, under a moderate adoption scenario, CLC systems could reduce nitrogen loss in Minnesota by 23% and reduce soil erosion by 35%, making CLC by far the most impactful strategy for mitigating agricultural pollutants. (For more, see https://fmr.org/clc-report) Market-oriented CLC systems can increase farmer profits, create new opportunities for supply chain businesses, and provide valuable new food ingredients and industrial feedstocks.

A useful precedent for such a pivot is to be seen in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) in-process update to the state's Nutrient Reduction Strategy (MN NRS), a comprehensive action planning tool that guides state agencies and public/private partnerships toward the most effective methods to reduce nutrient loading to the Mississippi River and its watershed. We anticipate that MPCA will release the revised MN NRS early in 2026. In the initial drafts released for public review and comment, MPCA included a major new pillar of work centered on CLC agricultural practices. Recognizing the limitations of a traditional cost-share "best management practices" approach, the MPCA has proposed establishing a CLC Task Force to create a statewide strategy to ramp up adoption

of CLC, encompassing advanced agricultural research, commercial development, and farmer adoption. This strategy will build on the work of the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative and its partners in industry and the NGO sector, which have been developing scalable CLC systems targeted for the Upper Midwest. However, there are viable pathways for expanding CLC farming across the rest of the Mississippi River watershed, including winter-hardy oilseeds, perennial rice and other grains, and an array of other regionally appropriate crops and systems, positioning CLC agriculture as a core opportunity for the GHTF writ large.

At a time when funding for farmland conservation and pollution mitigation programs is at an ebb, and when the farm economy itself faces a generational crisis, it is vital that our institutions seriously explore alternative pathways such as market-based continuous living cover. **We, along with our partners at the Forever Green Initiative, would greatly appreciate the opportunity to present on this topic at a future GHTF meeting.**

Climate change must remain a priority for modeling and planning.

We applaud the GHTF efforts to apply a model to climate change scenarios through 2050-2100 and to understand better how climate change affects the dead zone. We would like an update on the Implementation of CGEM and the HyCOM multimedia framework (air, watershed, hydrodynamic, and water quality models). From Climate Central, "*Harmful algal blooms (HABs) involving blue-green algae in freshwater are increasing in frequency and severity across the globe. Warming, heavy rainfall, and nutrient pollution are driving factors behind HABs—and climate change is amplifying the risks*."[2]

Over the years, we have learned from our supporters that many experience the adverse effects of fertilizer and runoff pollution, particularly through harmful algal blooms and beach closures in their states each summer. The issue of harmful algal blooms (HABs) underscores the significance of our work in public health and recreation. **What additional roles will the Task Force play in predicting and modeling the impacts of climate change on the Mississippi River system?**

Despite this year's slightly smaller Dead Zone, we're still nowhere near where we need to be.

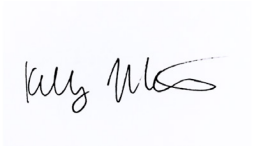
Meanwhile, new threats are emerging. As noted by our partners in Louisiana and Texas, proposed fertilizer plants producing so-called "blue" ammonia—a nitrogen-based fertilizer created using natural gas—are being framed as sustainable. In reality, these projects risk adding even more nitrogen pollution to the River system and pushing us further from our goals. We ask that the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force do everything in their power to address the drivers and impacts of hypoxia, build capacity, convene, and push for further reductions in nutrient pollution.

We are grateful and willing to be thought partners alongside you. On behalf of One Mississippi and our Mississippi River Network members, thank you once more for the opportunity to provide written comments on the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force.

[2] https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/harmful-algal-blooms

We respectfully submit these comments before the meeting agenda is shared and hope they can help inform the meeting agenda and future work. We appreciate your time and consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



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Executive Director

One Mississippi

Marie Risalvato

Policy Manager

One Mississippi

Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group
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Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

January 29, 2026

Ms. Katie Flahive
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
c/o Gulf of America Hypoxia Task Force

Dear Ms. Flahive,

I am submitting the following comments for the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force Meeting scheduled for February 5, 2026 on behalf of the Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group. The Group is a public forum focused on promoting and supporting the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan in Louisiana and upstream. We have met every month since 2003, and remain the only open and consistent public outreach effort on the Gulf Hypoxia issue in Louisiana.

The Gulf Hypoxia Task Force and the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan have brought together 12 States along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, federal partner agencies, Land Grant Universities, and stakeholders for over 25 years in a cooperative effort focused on voluntary, cost-effective activities, programs, and projects.

The current version of the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan (2015) includes two main components:

Achieving an Interim Target 20% reduction in loading of Nitrogen and Phosphorus from the Mississippi-Atchafalaya River Basin by the year 2025; and

Attaining the Coastal Goal of an average annual size (aerial extent) of the Gulf Hypoxic Zone of 5000 square kilometers/1950 square miles (on a five-year basis) by the year 2035.

We are currently in the window in which actions and activities must be taken to reach the 2035 goal. The February 2026 meeting of the Gulf Hypoxia Task Force (HTF) is therefore an especially important one, as the first public meeting of the HTF in over a year, and the first HTF meeting of the current administration.

In our meetings and discussions, a consistent priority has been expressed: the need to provide adequate resources for reaching the Action Plan's 2035 Goal. This includes key areas in need of continued and increased funding:

1) On the state level, the Gulf Hypoxia Program developed by EPA to utilize funds allocated in the 2022 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) needs continued, and if possible, increased funding. The initial amount of funding from the BIL ($60 million divided between the 12 States, along with Tribes and Sub-basin Committees over 5 years)

was modest but critically important – and represents the first direct funding from Congress to the HTF States in the entire life of the Action Plan. Therefore, increasing its funding should be a baseline priority.

2) On the basin level, the Conservation Programs and Landscape Initiatives in the U.S. Farm Bill have provided the primary tools for activities in the agricultural sector that can help achieve the nutrient reduction levels necessary to attain the Action Plan's goals. The next Farm Bill is overdue, and should be seen by the HTF as a priority vehicle for its engagement, with adequate conservation funding directed to this and other national goals.

   There are a number of other federal programs that fund watershed and wetland conservation, protection, and restoration that also play a critical part in helping to implement the Action Plan, such as the National Wildlife Refuge System along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and their tributaries, and the Upper and Lower Mississippi River Restoration Programs, among others.

3) The annual Gulf Hypoxia Mapping Cruise conducted by Louisiana State University and the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium continues to provide the data that serves as the key metric for measuring attainment of the 2035 Goal, as well as the general trend of hypoxia in the Northern Gulf, and has delivered this long-term benefit for an extremely modest amount of funds. Its continuing funding through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) at adequate levels should be understood as a key priority by the HTF.

4) Finally, the Action Plan itself has never been fully funded, and its inclusion as part of the President's Budget would help rectify that situation, in addition to helping to ensure that the Action Plan's goals are reached following a multi-decade process of collaboration and engagement by the agencies and states involved. A number of stakeholder groups in the basin have been promoting this idea in outreach to the administration, and deserve the HTF's support.

We welcome the opportunity to submit these comments and will continue to work in support of the Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan in Louisiana and upstream.

Sincerely,

Doug Daigle
Coordinator
Louisiana Hypoxia Working Group
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February 5, 2026

Mississippi River and Gulf Hypoxia Task Force
Jessica Kramer (Task Force Co-Chair), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Mike Naig (Task Force Co-Chair), Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Submitted via email to Katie Flahive at Flahive.Katie@epa.gov

RE: Comments to the Hypoxia Task Force, February 5, 2026 public meeting

Dear Mississippi River and Gulf Hypoxia Task Force,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Healthy Gulf has been tracking and participating in the Hypoxia Task Force since its inception in 1997. While we are glad that each state has committed to shared activities, such as the development of Nutrient Reduction Strategies, we continue to be frustrated with the lack of progress in reducing nitrogen and phosphorus pollution. To this end we offer the following comments.

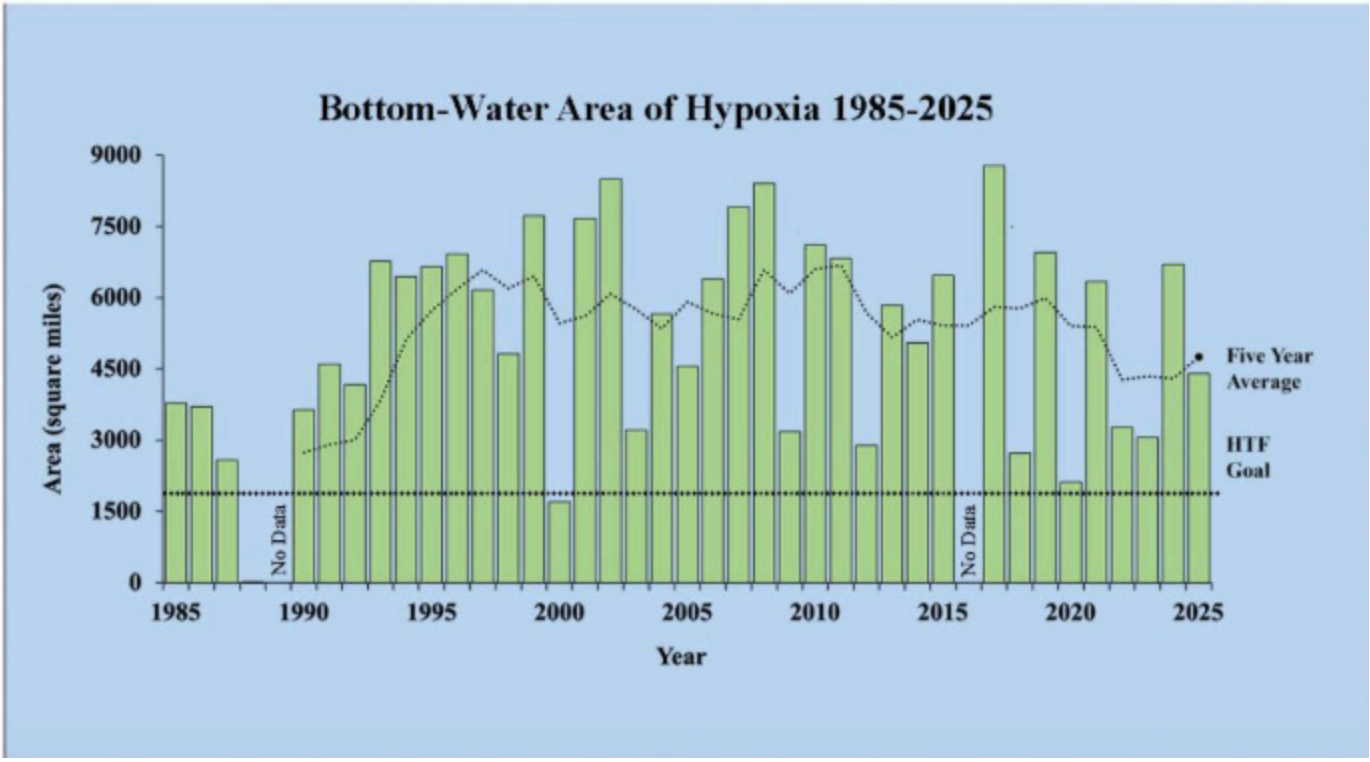
What will happen if we don't reach the 2035 goal?

The Hypoxia Task Forces' goal is to reduce the average size of the Gulf Dead Zone to 1,900 square miles by 2035. This goal was originally to be met by 2015. After not getting even close, the goal was extended by 20 years. It would take $2.7B annually to meet the Task Force goal, if we strategically targeted conservation practices.[1] We need to understand that unless we fundamentally change how we address this pollution, from farming practices to federal and state policies, it is unlikely we will reach this 2035 goal. If we don't reach this goal, our fisherfolk, coastal communities, and Gulf ecosystems will continue to suffer.

With this in mind we request answers to the following:

1. *If the Task Force continues to operate in the same manner it has in the past decades, what is the likelihood that the 2035 goal will be met?*
2. *With the goal less than a decade from now, what will the Task Force do if the goals are not met?*

[1] Rabotyagov SS, Campbell TD, White M, Arnold JG, Atwood J, Norfleet ML, Kling CL, Gassman PW, Valcu A, Richardson J, Turner RE, Rabalais NN. Cost-effective targeting of conservation investments to reduce the northern Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. 2014 Dec 30;111(52):18530-5. doi: 10.1073/pnas.1405837111. Epub 2014 Dec 15. PMID: 25512489; PMCID: PMC4284528. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25512489/



Long-term measured size of the hypoxic zone (green bars) measured during the ship surveys since 1985, including the target goal established by the Mississippi River/Gulf of America Hypoxia Task Force and the 5-year average measured size (black dashed lines). (Credit: NOAA/LUMCON/LSU)

The Task Force should assess proposed fertilizer facilities in the Gulf South, and the impacts to nutrient pollution.

There has been an increase in proposed new fertilizer plants in Louisiana and Texas, touted as “blue” ammonia, which uses methane gas to create nitrogen-based fertilizers. It is worrisome that while the Hypoxia Task Force is attempting to reduce fertilizer pollution runoff, petrochemical companies are doubling-down on fertilizer production, which impacts local communities, as well as water quality throughout the Mississippi River Basin.

Due to this expansion, we request the Task Force do the following:

1. *Encourage states to not only monitor nutrients, but require water quality based permit limits for facilities, especially new facilities, that discharge nutrients, such as sewage treatment plants and industrial facilities, like ammonia and phosphate manufacturers.*
2. *Track fertilizer applications throughout the basin, tracking trends to assess if increased fertilizer production results in increased application.*

The Task Force should issue regular letters of support, as well as funding, to support the annual Gulf hypoxia monitoring program

Every year, it is uncertain whether the annual Hypoxia monitoring cruise will happen. This is funded by NOAA, and other groups, such as the Gulf of America Alliance. If we do not continue this long term monitoring, it will be impossible to measure progress against the stated goal of the Action Plan. While unmanned vehicles might be able to augment these monitoring cruises, they cannot replace them. Additionally, it is vital that not only dissolved oxygen is monitored during this cruise, but also the drivers of the Dead Zone, including nutrients and algae (e.g. chlorophyll a).

We request that the Task Force actively support long-term monitoring of the Gulf Dead Zone. Additionally, the Task Force (or its members that can) should issue letters of support for continued annual monitoring cruises.

The Task Force should encourage all state and federal farm payment policies to have a basic standard of care.

The damage from nonpoint pollution is felt both locally and downstream from the source, such as in the Gulf of Mexico's Dead Zone, an area the size of Massachusetts that is basically devoid of life. To protect water quality, states must design effective controls for the pollution that flows from farms within their borders. Likewise, it makes sense that if a farm is collecting funds from a federal program, some basic standards of care should be required.

The Task Force is uniquely situated to encourage state and federal agencies and programs to require basic standards of care on agricultural land. These basic standards of care should include 1) vegetative buffer requirements, 2) land application setbacks, 3) winter manure application restrictions, 4) livestock exclusion requirements and 5) fall fertilizer restrictions.[2]

We request the Task Force to assess state and federal programs and laws to see how basic standards of care are implemented in participating states. Further, the Task Force should produce recommended policies that could implement these common-sense land conservation practices.

Oral public comments should be accepted virtually at Task Force meetings.

According to the agenda for the Task Force meeting on February 5, 2026, there was a public comment period at 4:30.[3] However when that time came, attendees online were not permitted to submit oral comments. While a mechanism was provided to provide written comments, oral comments are an important part of the process.

We request that virtual attendees are allowed an opportunity to offer oral comments, in addition to written comments, at subsequent public Task Force meetings.

[2] Environmental Law and Policy Center. Cultivating Clean Water: State-Based Regulation of Agricultural Runoff Pollution, 2010. https://www.iaenvironment.org/webres/File/News%20%26%20Resources/Publications/Cultivating_Clean_Water_Report.pdf
[3] https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2026-01/htf-2026-39th-public-meeting_508.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and participate in the Hypoxia Task Force meeting. I would be happy to follow up on any of these issues. I can be contacted at matt@healthygulf.org.

Sincerely,

Matt Rota
Senior Policy Director
Healthy Gulf