

Bringing Agriculture and Municipalities Together

ANDREW MCELWAIN

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST



Evolution of Water Policy

“Our rivers and streams may not be fishable and swimmable but at least they are no longer flammable”

-former EPA Administrator William K. Reilly



Things have improved

“Be home by five and STAY AWAY FROM THE RIVER,” – former Pittsburgh Mayor Tom Murphy on growing up on the South Side.



Pittsburgh then and now



But there are Still Problems



Non-Point Source (a.k.a. nutrient runoff)

Toxic algae blooms come from many sources:

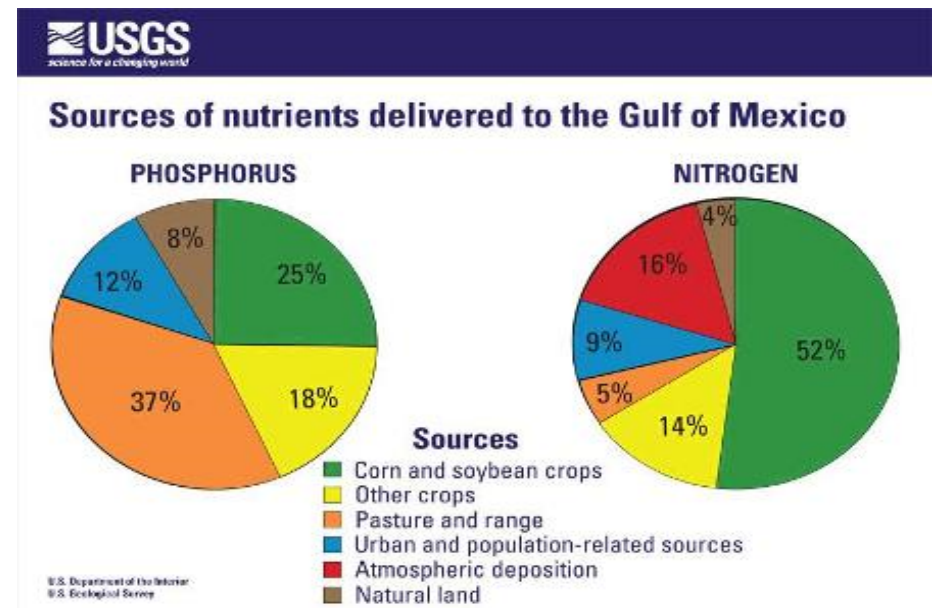
- Sewage overflow
- Failing septic
- Agricultural run off
- Urban storm water run off



Agricultural Nutrient Pollution

Agriculture is a major source of nutrient pollution in the Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay, and other estuarine systems.

How can agriculture move from a problem to a solution?



Water Quality Trading: 15 Years On

Since the late '90s water quality trading has been attempted around USA. EPA & USDA finalized guidance a decade ago. Has never been updated.



Nutrient Reduction at Lower Cost

Water Quality Trading: 15 Years On

- - In 2009 there were 57 water quality trading programs between point and non point source
- - Today there are over 100. Mixed bag
- - Numerous problems: verification, trading ratios, liability, measurement, citizen suit and right-to-know provisions, states with zero-discharge standards (PA, WA)
- - Many programs are overcoming these barriers, but many are stalled.

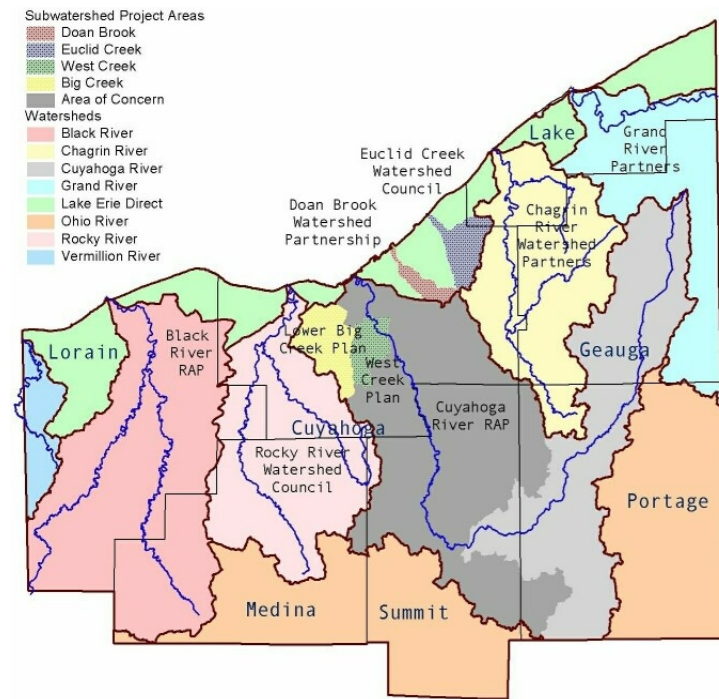
Water Quality Trading: Ohio River



Trading is an Important Tool: More is Needed

Trading is a means to an end: helping to achieve water quality goals at least cost and greater efficiency.

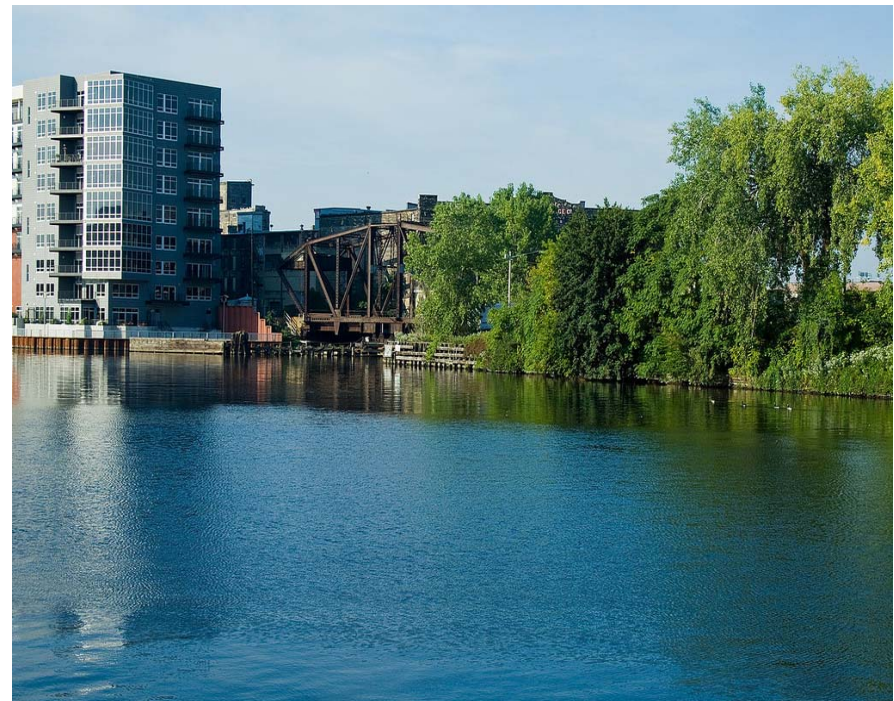
But it is not by itself a full solution to water quality problems, nor is it intended to be.



Adaptive Management: A Partnership Between Municipalities and Agriculture

Wisconsin Adaptive Management: Meet water quality standards for P via collaborative partnership

Point and non-point sources generate a joint plan with shared funding to reduce loadings of P at least cost



Adaptive Management: Ag as a Solution

Utah adaptive management program:
state targets support for watershed
management partnerships between
agriculture and municipalities.

State funds used to implement BMPs to
meet water quality standards, reducing
capital costs to municipalities.



Water Quality Trading & Adaptive Management are not Mutually Exclusive


- For larger watersheds adaptive management can include water quality trading components.
- Or it can use less formal tools in which a pool of funds are reserved for new and upgraded treatment, constructed and non-constructed urban BMPs, and agricultural non-point source BMPs.
- The collaborative planning process can result in allocation of limited funds from multiple sources to implement nutrient control and management programs and policies.

Barriers to Success

- Fractured local government
- Uncooperative bureaucracy
- Lack of certainty for point sources
- Fear of regulation by producers
- Lack of citizen/NGO input



Overcoming Barriers

- Consistent policies at the state and local level
 - Clearly defined benefits for agricultural producers
 - Clearly defined benefits for POTWs and industrial point sources
 - Certainty for both point and non-point
 - Robust stakeholder process
 - Extensive public partnership
 - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- 

QUESTIONS?



American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US