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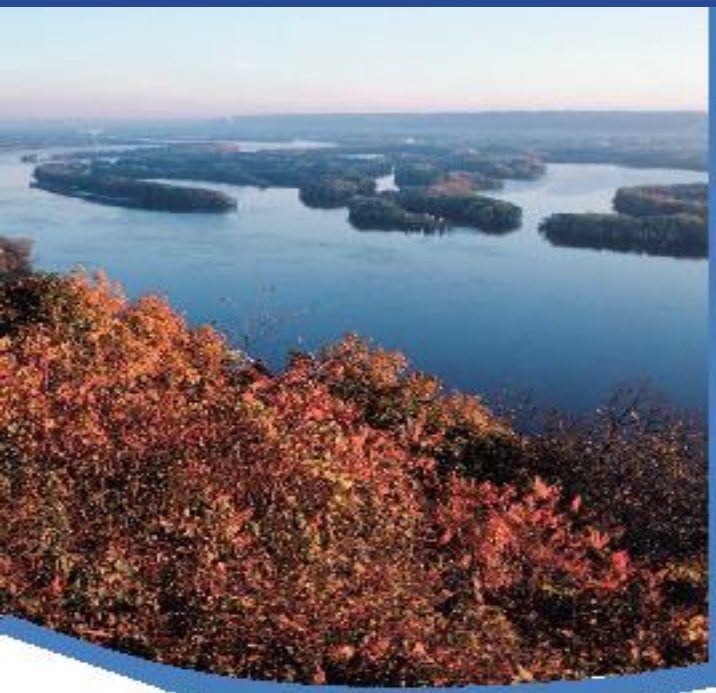

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Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative

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Helping People Help the Land

NRCS Landscape Initiatives

- Dedicated funding to accelerate conservation
- Science-based
- Partnership driven & build on locally-led efforts
- Identified environmental outcomes

Upper Mississippi Basin CEAP

- Voluntary, incentive-based conservation works.
- Nutrient management is the greatest need.
- Comprehensive conservation planning is essential.
- Targeting can greatly enhance program efficacy.
    - 3X reduction in phosphorus
    - 4X reduction in nitrogen
    - 5X reduction in sediment

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Mississippi River Basin Healthy Watersheds Initiative (MRBI)

- 13 States
- 43 Focus Areas
- $80 M annual funding
  - CCPI
  - WREP
  - CIG

MRBI Overview

Improve the health of watersheds within the Mississippi River Basin

- Avoid, control and trap nutrient runoff
- Restore/enhance wildlife habitat
- Maintain agricultural productivity

Selecting MRBI Focus Areas

Fall 2009

- State Technical Committees
- 8-digit HUCs
- Utilized a consistent watershed evaluation:
  - Information from CEAP and SPARROW
  - State-level nutrient reduction strategies and priorities
  - State-level water quality data
  - Available monitoring and modeling of nitrogen and phosphorus management data

MRBI Conservation Practices

- **Core Practices Examples**
  - Nutrient Management
  - Residue & Tillage Management
  - Drainage Water Management
  - Prescribed Grazing

- **Supporting Practice Examples**:
  - Waste Storage Facilities
  - Conservation Cover
  - Sediment Basin

Quantifying Outcomes

- Monitoring and Evaluation
  - Three-tiered monitoring and evaluation
    - Edge-of-Field
    - In-stream
    - At the 12-digit HUC level
  - Edge-of-Field Monitoring (799)

MRBI *Next Steps*

- NRCS will bring greater focus, resources, and consistency of effort across States, and especially in the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB)
- Proposed actions include:
  - enhanced partnering with States and other stakeholders
  - Integration and targeting of resources

MRBI *Next Steps*

- **Greater Consistency** across states with ranking/funding pools, ranking criteria, payment schedules and conservation practice specifications
- **New Focus Areas** were added to expand the competitive pool and offer more opportunities for those interested in drainage water management and enhanced nutrient management.
- **Remove Focus Areas** that have shown little or no activity to pursue MRBI projects.

MRBI *Next Steps*

- **Drainage Water Management (DWM):** NRCS has committed resources to establish a DWM Team and a draft action plan to foster greater adoption of DWM.
- **Nutrient Management:** Pursue institutionalization of adaptive nutrient management into MRBI EQIP to achieve enhanced nutrient management results.
- **Strategic Watershed Action Teams (SWATs):** Establish SWATs through partner agreements with technical expertise in nutrient management and drainage water management.

MRBI *Next Steps*

- **Technical Assistance:** Identify opportunities to provide funding for technical experts (e.g., nutrient management, drainage water management, cover crops) to provide direct assistance to producers and monitoring partners to follow-up after project implementation and assess project success.
- **Coordinate Grant Activities:** Pursue harmony between MRBI Conservation Innovation Grants, EPA grants, and Federal grants related to MRBI objectives to ensure synergy of purpose, priorities, timing, selection, implementation, and follow-through.

MRBI *Next Steps*

- **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
  - Seek options for the NRCS monitoring and evaluation practice for simpler, practical edge-of-field techniques that assist producers' adaptive nutrient management.
  - NRCS is also working with EPA, USGS, USACE, and the local monitoring partners on a strategy to compile consistent data that can be used to express outputs towards nutrient reductions within select MRBI small watersheds.
- **Outcomes:** Establish clear, achievable, and measurable performance expectations and environmental outcome measures for MRBI.

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Questions?

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