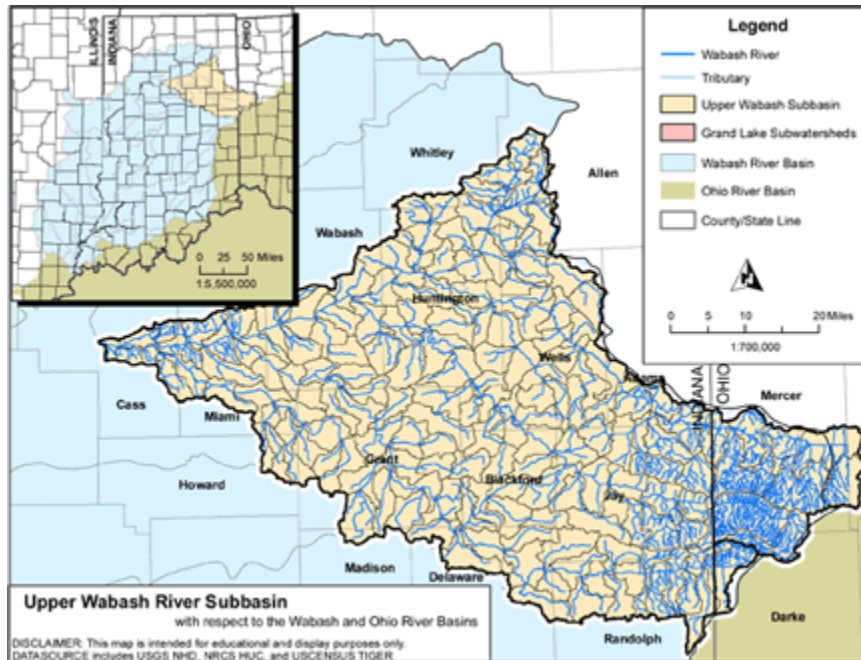


Upper Wabash River Nutrient Management Coalition

DRAFT Action Plan



Vision statement: We envision an interstate partnership that forms a unified voice for promoting nutrient management in the Upper Wabash River watershed.

Mission statement: Draw on our diversity and focus to attract funding and undertake short and long-term actions for continual benefit to the watershed.

Key Result Areas:

1. An increase in resources for needed actions.
2. An increase in the adoption of nutrient management practices.
3. A decrease in nutrient levels in streams and river of the watershed.
4. An increase in awareness of hypoxic areas.

Key Result Area #1: An increase in resources for needed actions.

Goal 1A: Increase number of personnel available to provide nutrient management technical assistance to agricultural producers. (To include certified crop consultants and other technical service providers. Consider performance-based incentives.) **Note from 3-31-09 Conference Call: secure federal dollars for district-employed personnel.**

Goal 1B: Increase amount of financial assistance available to agricultural producers for nutrient management.

Consider additional goals (from SWCD feedback):

Goal 1C: Analyze what financial resources are already available in the watershed and whether or not they are being utilized; if resources are not being used, to find out why.

~~Goal 1D: Develop a proposal to leverage EQIP funds through the Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) for specific geographic regions for specific resource objectives. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ccpi/index.html> (6-8-09)~~ The RFP was opened and has closed for Ohio CCPI projects. Recipients will be announced soon, following signing of contracts.

Goal 1D. Consider Conservation Innovation Grants. Applications for FY 2009 were due to the NRCS National Headquarters March 2, 2009.

~~Goal 1E: Encourage participation in the Floodplain Easement Program.~~ The Floodplain Easement Program was to be a one time opportunity. Tentative approval letters will be sent out this week (6-8-09). After that time a formal announcement will be made.

Key Result Area #2: An increase in the adoption of nutrient management practices.

Goal 2A: ~~Develop cover crop campaign to include outreach, technical assistance, and financial assistance.~~

~~Consider~~ ~~Replace~~ replacing Goal 2A with: Develop a campaign to include a package of conservation practices, rather than cover crops alone, to include outreach, technical assistance, and financial assistance. For example, cover crops, conservation tillage and tile drainage control structures can go hand-in-hand, and lead to long term benefits to both soil and water quality. Additionally, the entire suite of conservation buffers (including filter areas, wetlands, riparian forest buffer, and upland vegetated barriers) that are specifically designed to address specific locations (e.g. areas of concentrated field runoff) that are most prone to nutrient or sediment losses, can and should go beyond the widely promoted and installed 30 foot wide filter strips along ditches, creeks or streams.

Goal 2B: Develop a pilot/demonstration on a sub-watershed scale. (Primarily supported by private industry; focused on N and P stabilizer; marketing and education via web site.)

Goal 2C: Develop a watershed map showing producer participation in selected conservation programs.

Goal 2D: Develop an equipment trade-in program to help producers acquire nutrient management equipment.

Consider additional goals:

Goal 2E: Look to successes regarding the adoption of particular conservation practices (no-till, two-stage ditches, **filter strips, waterways, controlled drainage, cover crops, etc.**). Define how that success came about and apply those lessons to plan implementation, **education, and outreach.**

Goal 2F: Explore the opportunity of methane digesters (work with Limberlost Watershed group).

Goal 2G: Support Electric Power Research Institute's effort to develop a nutrient trading system for the Ohio River watershed and CTIC's project to conduct a market feasibility assessment for water quality credit trading in the Wabash River basin.

Goal 2H: Encourage additional practices:

- 1) Installation of Riparian Buffers (e.g., filter areas, filter strips, forested riparian buffer and other conservation buffers);
- 2) Encourage and establish conservation tillage (e.g., no-till, contour);
- 3) Fence livestock from waterways and install watering systems;
- 4) Educate and assist with proper septic system citing and maintenance; and
- 5) Address crop fertilizer efficiency.
- 6) Increase water holding capacity by restoring, enhancing, and creating wetlands or shallow water ponds.

Potential strategy: Pattern a program after Adams County SWCD that sponsored a program in which they promoted strip till by awarding the ag dealers \$200 for each producers to convert to strip till. Sold the practice to 14 different producers and dealer helped them to learn to run the equipment. Will repeat this financial incentive to dealer program this fall.

Goal 2I: Coordinate with County Surveyors on 2 Stage Ditch installations. EQIP program could be utilized by the landowners, County Surveyors could supplement their maintenance fund for additional funding support, and minimal dollars would have to be found to implement each 2 Stage Ditch. This would be a way that counties could leverage their dollars in habitual problem areas that they may be directing a great deal of financial resources to, resulting in frequent clean outs of drainage ditches in their area. 2 Stage Ditches are a great piece to the puzzle that begins to get to the desired or acceptable nutrients levels in our freshwater systems. They

provide some additional functions - increased bank stability (reduce bank slumping), and increased water holding capacity.

Goal 2J: Encourage participation in the BMP Challenge. The BMP Challenge is an organization that promotes Conservation Tillage and Nutrient Management on agriculture lands. They provide the risk assurance to growers for their comparison trials whether it is nutrient or tillage based. Both components of their program that are offered would be a great fit into the process being considered with no more investment needed than possibly providing a consultant to those growers and promoting the program to area growers, working with them through signup. This would be a component to addressing the application rates and especially timing of those nutrients.

Goal 2K: Promote a specifically targeted CREP type of program. Large enrollments in that program of filter strips may not lead to the end result in nutrient reductions that would be desirable, but coupled with additional strategies it is definitely a component to the desired outcome. Floodplain protection and wetland restoration may be more beneficial at filtering and assimilating nutrients.

Key Result Area #3: A decrease in nutrient levels in streams and river of the watershed.

Goal 3A: Develop a viable method to measure and track nutrient levels.

Key Result Area #4: An increase in awareness of hypoxic levels.

Goal 4A: Develop and deliver a consistent message. (Consider funding sources: Clean Water Indiana, Section 319 funds, and industry; include SWCDs, Extension, Lake Associations in message development; include elementary schools, TV, radio, materials, and billboards in delivery.)

From 3-31-09 notes: Goal 4B: Educate the right people (people with the most impact) on nutrient management.

Parallel Actions (not in particular order):

1. Develop top 3 goals with input from SWCD boards (complete)
2. Form producer group to get involved and help drive this effort
3. Consider whether this is an agriculture (row crop and livestock/poultry) centered effort or if it should be broadened to include the non-ag stakeholders
4. Involve retailers
5. Involve local/regional/national ag industry
6. Involve county government
7. Involve researchers with data/information about Wabash River

8. Develop nutrient management strategy for Upper Wabash River watershed?
 - a. Developed by ag
 - b. Involve non-Ag?
9. Determine organization structure and local leader(s) for stakeholder group. Consider a local chair person or co-chairs, perhaps one from IN and one from OH to carry forward
10. Initiate communication with SWCDs in the basin to address feelings that the goals of this project may become duplicative, superseding not only the local work that's occurring, but also competing for available social, technical, and financial resources.
- ~~11.~~ Initiate further collaboration between the Grand Lake Wabash Watershed Association and the Upper Wabash River Basin Commission.