

Progress in 2004 and 2005 with the Nutrient Management Farmer Training Program

Using Market Principles to Reduce Nitrogen Losses in the Mississippi River Basin” is a joint program between UW-Discovery Farms and the Sand County Foundation.

The focuses of the Sand County Foundation are to address localized environmental problems as well as problems such as hypoxia that manifest themselves in locations that are far removed from the lands where nutrient management practices are implemented. Sand County Foundation hopes to start to address these problems through the use of a market based incentive. Discovery Farms will serve as the lead agricultural expert through the plan to advise Sand County Foundation on design and implementation of farmer outreach programs, specific nitrogen and nutrient conservation practices, and communication about the initiative in the farm community.

One key piece of the partnership is the Nutrient Management Farmer Training program. The farmer training program utilizes dealers to recruit farmers to come to the workshops. Nancy Drummy has been appointed to coordinate this program.

After the workshops, farmers and dealers can sit down together to work on their own nutrient management plan. This team effort approach allows dealers to get more acres included into Nutrient Management Plans. It also enables the farmer to be actively involved in his/her Nutrient Management Plan.

Through the market incentive program, the dealer receives \$6 per acre to write Nutrient Management Plans and process the subsequent soil samples. The farmer receives \$300 for attending the workshop, and all of their soil samples are processed free of charge to them. The project expands the baseline by following the farmers for two years after they have completed the nutrient management training. After two years, the farmers retake a survey they took at the beginning of the workshop. This survey is used to see what progress has been made in nutrient management. The results from the survey will show what has been accomplished through the voluntary incentive program.

In 2004, twenty seven farmers went through the Nutrient Management Farmer Training program. With the help of their fertilizer dealers, these farmers went on to prepare nutrient management plans for their operations, which totaled over 12,000 acres.

Another facet of the partnership with Sand County Foundation includes research at Koepke Farms, Inc. Currently we have two tile monitoring sites collecting data at the Koepke Farm.