

Report on Manitowoc Educational Seminar Series

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An educational seminar series, introducing preliminary Discovery Farms data collected in Northeastern Wisconsin, was presented in Manitowoc County in July and August, 2005. The five-part series entitled, "Protecting the Lake Michigan Shoreline by Understanding Agriculture's Impact on Water Quality" was presented to the citizens of Manitowoc County with many elected officials, agricultural producers, and environmental group members in attendance.

The intent of the educational series was not only to present newly gathered data, but to provide the attendees with the background knowledge of non-point source pollution, the Discovery Farms Program, and local geographic conditions relating to the research. This background information was presented to attendees to help them better understand some of the basic principles before research findings were presented and implications were discussed.

The following is a listing of the topics for each of the five sessions:

Session 1 - What types of farming systems exist in Northeast Wisconsin?

Session 2 - Understanding agricultural non-point pollution.

Session 3 - Discovery Farms: goals and operation.

Session 4 - How is the water quality data collected (on-farm)?

Session 5 - What are we learning from the data in Northeastern Wisconsin?

Results from an evaluation taken at the final session were very positive as to the effectiveness and reception of the educational series. One hundred percent of respondents answered to having a better understanding of: the challenges associated with tile lines as they relate to the Lake Michigan watershed; the goals of the Manitowoc County Discovery Farms Project; how on-farm water samples are collected and analyzed for the Discovery Farms Project; and the mission and role of the U.S. Geologic Survey in relation to the Discovery Farms Project. The majority of respondents also reported gaining an increased knowledge of: different types of farming systems; the physical and geographic properties that impact ground and surface water; the challenges associated with surface runoff including snowmelt; the

state and local agricultural regulations that farmers must follow; and the major non-point source pollutants in Northeast Wisconsin including sediment, nitrogen, and phosphorous.

This pilot educational series will be improved upon and modified to be presented in other areas of Wisconsin as additional Discovery Farms data is collected and becomes available. The seminar series was sponsored by Manitowoc County UW-Extension, U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Manitowoc County Government, and UW-Discovery Farms.

For talks presented at the educational training, visit <http://www.discoveryfarms.org/new/manitowoctraining.htm>