In 2019 and 2020, the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) Board of Directors again set environmental action as an organizational priority, and they have followed through by committing significant resources to do the job. County Farm Bureaus (CFBs) have also stepped up in countless ways to develop ideas and support projects and programs. Even better, our individual farmer members across the state are taking action on their own terms and on their own land to improve soil health and water quality.

Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS): IFB has expanded on its work on the NLRS in four priority areas: 1) education and outreach to farmers, landowners and the general public; 2) supporting research of best management practices to reduce nutrient loss from agricultural fields; 3) supporting farmer implementation efforts across the state; and 4) demonstrating progress toward the long-term goals of the NLRS.

Livestock Environmental Performance: Over the past two years, IFB has continued to make environmental education to our livestock farmer members a priority. In addition to the development of swine, beef and dairy resource guides explaining the Illinois environmental rules, IFB also makes a special effort for small and medium-sized livestock operations so that they understand how the rules impact them through our new statewide program called Farm Gate.

Throughout 2019 and into 2020, we have spent our days working with farmers, federal and state regulators, scientific researchers, and a variety of other stakeholders. It is our hope that, with this report, we can showcase for you our 2019 accomplishments, and a forecast of where we are headed into 2020.
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2019 IFB NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY ACTIVITY SUMMARY

FINANCIALS

2015-2020
IFB COMMITTED OVER
$1,500,000

overall spent in:
• outreach and education
• supporting research
• supporting implementation
• documenting progress

FARMING FOR THE FUTURE: IFB’S MULTI-MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN

multi-media marketing campaign focused on Illinois farmers’ conservation efforts:

www.ilfarmersconserve.com

5,800,000 total social media impressions, with over 161,000 people clicking on links to learn more

50,150 website visits, with over 48,900 new visitors

760,000 impressions on Google Ads
SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2019

114 IFB social media posts regarding NLRS and environmental stewardship

32 Facebook posts with 115,472 people reached through the Illinois Farm Bureau page

82 tweets with 75,771 impressions generated @ILFarmBureau

PRINT MEDIA IN 2019

60 FarmWeek articles focusing on nutrient loss and conservation

74,000 farmers and their families read FarmWeek every week

RADIO/TV IN 2019

15 radio interviews RFD is the #1 Radio Network in Illinois for reaching farmers RFD reaches and audience of 29,000 people in 58 media markets

FIELD DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS

13 field days were held through the Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program across the state

975+ people attended our field days

1,700 were reached at other IFB events
The Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program is creating lasting impacts in nutrient stewardship at IFB. In 2019, IFB committed $100,000 to 30 CFBs and many local partners working together on 18 unique projects across the state. These projects showed active collaboration and action in all categories of the NLRS (education and outreach, research, implementation and documentation). Through this wide range of unique projects, farmers across Illinois demonstrated that they care about nutrient loss and management.

2019 County Farm Bureau Projects

**Bureau**
Bureau CFB farmers continued to promote the ‘4Rs’ of nutrient stewardship by practicing year-round weekly water sample tests, as well as hosting a summer field day to share their research and the grassroots impact of this project.

**Champaign**
Through a series of seminars and field days, Champaign CFB educated area landowners and farmers about many topics related to nutrient management, including conservation practices on working farms.

**Clinton**
Clinton CFB and their many partners, including Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC), expanded their work on comparing cropping systems. This project included planting cover crops, offering ongoing manure nutrient testing and a Nutrient Management Planning workshop, hosting two field days and numerous additional outreach efforts.

**Edwards, Crawford, Hamilton, Gallatin, Richland, Lawrence, Wabash, Wayne & White**
Through an active collaboration, these counties provided education on the NLRS, as well as shared information on precision agriculture and cover crops, including leading a discussion on farm profitability.

**Franklin**
Franklin CFB partnered with conservation agencies and the U of I Extension to perform soil testing, collecting field-level data and compare local common fertilizer practices with research-based application rates on farmers’ fields.

**Fulton**
Through a partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Fulton CFB hosted a field day to showcase research of various agricultural nutrient best management practices.

**Henry, Mercer, Rock Island**
Henry, Mercer, and Rock Island CFBs worked together to host a seminar, featuring speakers on cover crops, soil health and livestock management as topics. Additional topics included basic education on the Clean Water Act, conservation practices, and livestock nutrient management.

**Jo Daviess**
Jo Daviess CFB extended their work with soil testing and cover crops in order to determine nitrogen levels in the soil as well as impact of soil types, cover crops, and other factors on nitrogen utilization. The county also hosted two field days to educate local farmers and share results of ongoing research.

**Knox**
Knox CFB continued to work with one farmer per township to plant 20 acres of cover crops, as well as conduct soil samples throughout the season to learn how cover crops impacted soil properties.
LaSalle
Through work with several collaborators, LaSalle CFB held a field day to expose local elected officials to the NLRS and farming practices that mitigate agricultural runoff as well as the impacts of flooding, including sharing results of U of I on-farm struvite research.

Mason, Cass-Morgan, Tazewell
These counties kicked off a large-scale, multi-year study to characterize fate and transport of nutrients, as well as investigate management solutions on irrigated land.

McLean
McLean CFB hosted a field day which focused on increasing awareness of the NLRS, in addition to sharing science-based information on nutrient loss reduction and resources for farmers to implement conservation practices on their farms.

Menard
Through a field day, Menard CFB educated community and legislative attendees on practices that could control soil erosion as well as monitor nutrient loss at an SIUC on-farm research site. Special conversations included the secondary benefits of WASCOBs, including soil quality, nutrient runoff, and crop yields.

Winnebago-Boone
Winnebago-Boone CFB co-hosted two soil health seminars, one on soil compaction and one on cover crops.

Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program 2016-2020
With the first year of work being completed in 2016, our work in 2020 will mark the fifth program year with over $550,000 in total being committed to local nutrient stewardship, soil health, water quality, and other county projects.
2020 County Farm Bureau Projects

Bureau
Bureau CFB is continuing to collect water samples and several additional points of data in order to begin analyzing results and developing a model based on the three years of data.

Clinton
Clinton CFB is again offering manure nutrient testing as well as manure management outreach opportunities. Through an active collaboration with several partners, they will also be holding a field day to share preliminary results of ongoing cover crop and manure research being conducted by SIUC at a local on-farm research site.

Crawford, Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Jasper, Lawrence, Richland
Through a large-scale collaboration, these counties hosted a series of nine planning meetings throughout the Embarras River Watershed (ERW) in January 2020, as a step towards updating the ERW Plan.

Fulton
Fulton CFB and MWRD are planning to invite farmers to the Fulton County site in order to host a farmer focus group and to provide farmers an opportunity to share meaningful feedback on continued research at the site.

Hancock, Warren-Henderson, Mercer, Henry, Knox
These counties are hosting a series of five watershed planning meetings to educate farmers on the NLRS and the importance of having a watershed plan in place, as well as gathering feedback for a Mississippi North Central (Flint/Henderson) Watershed Plan.

Jo Daviess
Jo Daviess CFB will be continuing to conduct soil tests at a cover crop test site, specifically measuring surface water run-off and testing for nitrates, phosphorus, and ammonia. In addition, the county will be hosting a field day to share results of ongoing nutrient research.

Knox
Knox CFB is working to expand their cover crop program with the hope of adding more farmer participants and acres of cover crops, in addition to conducting ongoing soil sampling throughout the county.

LaSalle
LaSalle CFB will once again host a field day geared towards local elected officials in the county. In 2020, local farmers will share their experiences with reducing nutrient loss through a variety of conservation practices.

For 2020, IFB committed over $150,000 with over $88,000 in-kind matches to the Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program. 28 counties will be working together on 14 projects throughout the state, in order to help “move the needle” on NLRS implementation.

In 2020, projects included planting test plots of cover crops, water testing, watershed planning, and hosting education and outreach activities. Farmers across Illinois have once again showed that they actively care about conservation of both land and water.
Mason, Case-Morgan, Tazewell
This iteration of this collaboration will include continuing to install equipment, conducting discrete sampling and monitoring, as well as completing ongoing data management and reporting.

McHenry
McHenry CFB, with the County Conservation District, is planning to install a woodchip bioreactor and providing education and outreach opportunities, including a field day, for farmers and community members to learn more about this conservation practice.

Shelby
Shelby CFB will be hosting a field day to educate farmers of ongoing U of I on-farm research on drainage water management (DWM), including topics such as monitoring watershed-scale effects of DWM on nutrient reduction and estimating long-term environmental and agricultural benefits of DWM.

St. Clair
St. Clair CFB is planning to host a field day for farmers and local community and legislative members, in order to share SIUC on-farm research including topics related to synthetic gypsum and its potential effects on phosphorus loss.

Warren-Henderson
Warren-Henderson CFB will be continuing to evaluate nitrogen management practices, including trials with various inhibitors at a local field site. At a field day, the CFB and its partners are also planning to share results of ongoing research, including which methods produced the highest yields.

Wayne
Wayne CFB is continuing to conduct field trials to demonstrate fertilizer efficiency and the economic advantages over traditional fertilizer applications, in addition to sharing preliminary results of research at a field day.
The NLRS is a framework for using science, technology, and industry experience to assess and reduce nutrient loss in Illinois waters, as well as the Gulf of Mexico. The NLRS calls for collaboration between many groups of stakeholders to see progress on the scale of the NLRS goals. As such, IFB has made it a priority to build relationships and cooperative efforts with our state’s drinking water suppliers and wastewater treatment plants.

**Drinking Water Suppliers**

Throughout 2019 and into 2020, IFB has worked with the following drinking water suppliers:

- **Springfield City Water, Light & Power** to develop and support grant proposals to Illinois EPA and USDA-NRCS. Sangamon CFB has also been a longtime supporter of the work in the Lake Springfield watershed.

- **AQUA Illinois in Danville** to develop and support grant proposals to Illinois EPA. Vermilion CFB has also been a longtime supporter of the work in the Lake Vermilion watershed.

- **City of Bloomington** to develop and support grant proposals to Illinois EPA. McLean CFB has also been a longtime supporter of the work in the Lake Bloomington and Lake Evergreen watersheds.
Wastewater Treatment Plants

IFB has continued to build and strengthen relationships with wastewater treatment plants across our state as we aim to build a bridge between the point sources and nonpoint sources in addressing the issue of nutrient loss reduction. Our energy has recently been focused on continued collaborations with the MWRD. MWRD is a special-purpose district responsible for treating wastewater and providing stormwater management for the residents and businesses in its Chicagoland area. The service area of MWRD encompasses 882.1 square miles, and MWRD serves approximately 10.35 million people each day.

MWRD has graciously hosted IFB farmer leadership on several occasions for tours and discussions of their operations in the Chicagoland area. In addition, MWRD’s Fulton County property has served as a location to facilitate that collaboration with MWRD’s commitment to supporting Illinois agriculture and research of nutrient best management practices. We thank the farmers and staff of Fulton CFB for their support along the way.
Through a partnership with the Illinois Beef Association, the Illinois Milk Producers’ Association and the Illinois Pork Producers Association, IFB extended its livestock education campaign through 2019 and into 2020. This work includes clarifying and simplifying rules and regulations for concentrated animal feeding operations.

To provide our members with their “first step” in understanding if and how environmental rules and regulations impact their operations, we continued to share our resource guides for swine, beef, and dairy operations. These resource guides have been distributed widely in order to help our members ensure compliance and increase their confidence in operating according to best practices.
Farm Gate

To specifically focus on small and medium-sized livestock operations across the state, IFB created Farm Gate, a free and confidential environmental education program for livestock farms.

Our regional partners – four CFBs with heavy livestock populations – assist us in delivering Farm Gate resources to livestock farmers across the state. Through the program, livestock producers can have access to our resource guides and an opportunity to schedule an on-site visit with an IFB-sponsored expert to receive site-specific advice for meeting industry regulations.
Now more than ever, IFB is playing an active role in supporting researchers across the state. To date, we have utilized several methods to develop and maintain our relationships with researchers across the state. These methods include:

- Connecting farmer members with researchers to develop on-farm research trials
- Offering farmer focus groups for researchers
- Offering researchers the opportunity to present their work and findings to our farmer members
- Facilitating communications support
- Assisting in the coordination and promotion of field days and events featuring researchers
- Participating in continued networking with numerous organizations
- Providing financial gifts when appropriate

IFB has worked with over 20 individuals with a wide range of research specialties. Our partnerships have resulted in several research projects across the state, including various nutrient best management practices.
Woodchip Bioreactor and Saturated Buffer Partnerships

To demonstrate our commitment to working with university researchers in Illinois, IFB is involved with two edge-of-field practice partnerships. These partnerships are examples of some of the relationships we have developed with universities in order to meet the priority of IFB to support research initiatives, as outlined in the NLRS.

The Woodchip Bioreactor Partnership is a five-year collaboration between IFB, the Illinois Chapter of the Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA), University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES), and Illinois NRCS. The purpose of this partnership is to install one woodchip bioreactor every year for five years and to support water quality research of the practice at each site for a number of years. IFB looks forward to installing the third of five woodchip bioreactors in the summer of 2020 in McDonough county. To date, the partnership has installed woodchip bioreactors in Henry and Bureau counties.

In 2019, IFB added a Saturated Buffer Partnership to its body of work. The Saturated Buffer Partnership is a five-year collaboration between IFB, LICA, SIUC, and Illinois NRCS. The purpose of this partnership is to install one saturated buffer each year for five years and to support water quality research of the practice at each site for a number of years. The first saturated buffer was installed in the spring of 2019 in Moultrie county.

Why This Work Matters

The NLRS is a “living document,” meaning it was designed to respond to updated science about conservation practices in Illinois. By playing an active role in partnering with university researchers, we continue to position IFB and its members as leaders on state level and federal level environmental issues. Supporting scientific research not only provides our members with additional research findings and resources, it also helps us inform policy decisions and better advocate for farmers.