

Tainter Lake Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Project

Semi-Annual Report

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Pilot Project Implementation - Phase 2

In 2010, the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Coordination Team implemented the second phase of the pilot project that uses different components of Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM). The second phase not only brings together community and conservation oriented objectives, but also strives to lower nutrient loading and sedimentation in the Red Cedar River Watershed.

The Coordination Team continued to work with landowners and farmers in Grant Township in Dunn County, WI. The costs of renting a no-till drill, no-till corn planter, and analyzing soil samples were covered by a grant received from the Department of Natural Resources. Forty five landowners, representing 2,732 cropland acres, participated in the 2010 pilot project. Nine producers planted no-till corn on 183 acres, two producers used the no-till drill to plant soybeans, oats, and alfalfa on 279 acres, and 34 landowners soil tested 2,270 acres.



Figure 1: A Grant Township landowner uses the no-till drill to plant soybeans

Once again, farmers interested in soil sampling were provided field maps, soil bags, a soil probe, soil bag labels, and complete instructions on how to appropriately soil sample their farm. Shipping and lab analysis costs were covered using grant funds. Once soil test results were received from the lab, Lance Klessig or Melanie Baumgart met with landowners to review the soil test reports. Typically, farmers adjusted their fertilizer and lime applications after reviewing the reports. The rental costs for the no-till corn planter and no-till drill were covered for interested farmers. A private contractor was used to plant the no-till corn acres. Farmers using the no-till drill to plant soybeans, oats, or alfalfa, worked with a local cooperative that provided the drill.

Project Outreach and Education

The Second Annual No-till Field Day was held on July 16,th 2010, at a farm in Grant Township. The host farmer recently switched to using no-till planting techniques because of his successful experience with the pilot project. In 2009, he used the no-till drill to plant 90 acres of soybeans. He

recorded a 40 bushel/acre yield while increasing his profitability. Earlier this spring, he converted his existing corn planter to no-till planter by adding residue whippers and fluted coulters.



Figure 2: The second stop on the no-till field day tour. No-till beans planted in 30" rows are shown here

The objective of the Field Day was to have this producer share his experiences using no-till and provide an avenue for producers to ask questions about using no-till on their own farms. The field day was attended by 42 people. Attendees included landowners from within and outside of the Township, representatives from the Steering Committee, and interested citizens. After lunch and a brief meeting, the group toured a no-till corn field and no-till soybean field.

The event was also attended by a writer for the local newspaper, the Colfax Messenger, who developed a story for the July 28,th 2010, edition. Additionally, the Tainter Lake Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Project was featured in the Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine in an article titled, "Less P is Key".

Partnerships

The Tainter Lake Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Project's success lies in the pooling of expertise from a variety of partners. These partners include local farmers and landowners as well as representatives from the Dunn County Land Conservation Division, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin Extension, the Tainter/Menominee Lake Association, Western Wisconsin Energy, Xcel Energy, Crossroads Ag., and River Country Resource Conservation & Development Council.

Conclusions

Throughout this summer and fall, landowners can continue soil sampling. Certified yield checks will occur as crops are harvested in the fall. In the winter, profitability analysis' will be generated with cooperating producers. The facilitators of the project anticipate working with Grant Township residents and landowners within five miles of Grant Township. They hope to expand this project by meeting with town board members from the surrounding area and by forming relationships with surrounding agriculture oriented landowners and farmers.