

Multi-Benefit Conservation Practices Significantly Improve Water Quality in the Upper Mississippi River Basin



Accelerating multi-benefit conservation on farmland in the Upper Mississippi River Basin is important for crop production, clean water, ecosystem health, flood attenuation, and drought resilience.

UMRBA convened leaders in nutrient reduction policy, program management, and implementation, who together, believe these small changes in administration, financial, and technical support can result in big improvements.

- **Peer-to-peer learning** networks
- **Administrative and technical support** of projects
- **Financial resources** that are more accessible to communities and farmers
- **Partnership and collaborations** among farming, conservation, water quality, and other interests

The power of peer-to-peer communication, education, and leadership reinforces the insight that **messages and messengers geared to specific and different audiences are keys to unlocking and leveraging change.**



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Multi-benefit conservation practices are a single conservation practice that provides more than one beneficial outcome.

The outcomes may be any combination of agronomic, ecological, social, and financial factors.

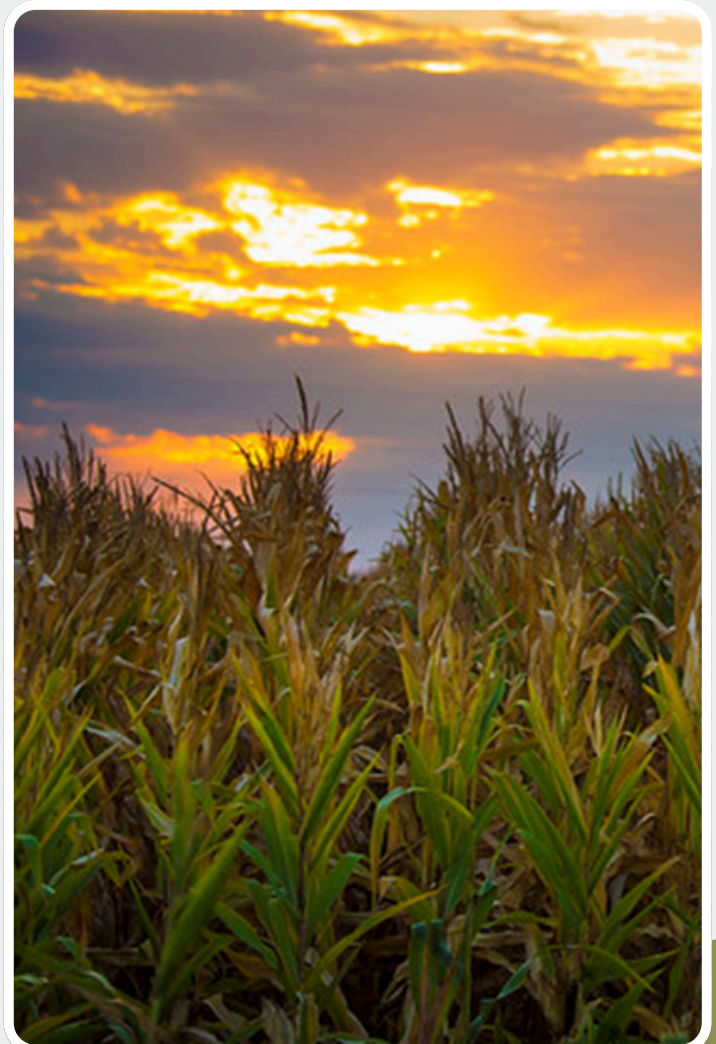
For example, wetlands provide habitat, improve water quality, reduce nutrient loss, improve soil health, and attenuate flooding while ensuring farmland is healthy and resilient.

Systems Thinking Using Logic Model

Systems mapping visually depicts forces that trigger actions within a bounded process.

UMRBA facilitated a two-part workshop series, bringing together leaders in nutrient reduction policy, program management, and implementation. Together, participants illuminated how systems thinking might create alignment and energy towards the most impactful and feasible investments of time and financial resources.

Systems mapping illustrates how certain levers (information, leadership, support) can influence the speed, efficiency, or effectiveness of the individual action steps, moving from the conception of an idea through project implementation, evaluation, and maintenance.



UMRBA's Multi-Benefit
Conservation Practice
Workshop Series Materials



UMRBA's Commitment

UMRBA is the Governor-established forum for interstate water resource planning and management on the Upper Mississippi River, jointly shared and directed by **Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin.**

UMRBA will continue to foster **interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration, communication, and coordination** in the states' individual and collective efforts to accelerate nutrient reduction measures.

UMRBA will use systems thinking to identify leverage points of change, focusing interstate collaboration on the places where small changes in administration, financial, and technical support result in big improvements to the adoption of multi-benefit conservation practices.



"I learned a lot from the presentations and discussion; I'm **coming away with ideas** and plans for my daily work, longer term projects, and continuing education needs."

"[The] systems lens can help focus collaborative work by clearly identifying opportunities for how such shared efforts can make positive impacts."

"There is a lot of alignment in how people are thinking about these [nutrient] issues. There is a lot of **opportunity for more collaboration within and between states."**



A Special Thank You



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Brian Stenquist of Meeting Challenges for process design and facilitation.

The workshop presenters for insightful discussions of policy, finance, technical information, leadership, and partnership.



Workshop Participants

State and Federal Agencies

Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality
Missouri Department of Agriculture
Missouri Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Minnesota Department of Health
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Non-Governmental/Private

Agricultural Drainage Management Coalition
America's Watershed Initiative
American Farmland Trust
Centra Sota Cooperative
Clean Wisconsin
Ducks Unlimited
Field to Market
Heartlands Co-Op
Illinois Farm Bureau
Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council
Iowa Farm Bureau
Iowa Nutrient Research and Education Council
Iowa Soybean Association
Latino Economic Development Center
Midwest Row Crop Collaborative
Mississippi River Network
Missouri Corn Growers Association
National Wildlife Federation
Practical Farmers of Iowa
Renewing the Countryside
Sand County Foundation

Non-Governmental/Private

Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources
The Land Institute
The Nature Conservancy
Trout Unlimited
Wisconsin Land and Water
Heartland Co-op

Local Units of Government

Polk County, Iowa

Universities

Iowa State University
Texas A&M University
University of Illinois
University of Minnesota
University of Wisconsin Washington University in St. Louis