

Executive Summary



The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (Illinois NLRS or the strategy) is a framework for using science, technology, and industry experience to assess and reduce nutrient loss to Illinois waters and the Gulf of Mexico. The strategy will direct efforts to reduce nutrients from point and non-point sources in a coordinated, primarily voluntary, and cost-effective manner.

Nutrient loss and runoff is a major threat to water quality in Illinois. State and local efforts over the decades to control nutrients have yielded positive results, but new and expanded strategies are needed to secure the future health of our water throughout Illinois and the Mississippi River Basin.

The Illinois NLRS builds upon existing programs to optimize nutrient loss reduction while promoting increased collaboration, research, and innovation among the private sector, academia, non-profits, wastewater agencies, and state and local government. It does not call for new regulations for either point or non-point sources.

The plan will be introduced and implemented throughout the state with leadership from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, the Illinois NLRS Policy Working Group, and newly formed committees. Emerging science, new technology, and practical experience will continue to identify the financial benefits and costs of the strategy's recommendations and inform future policy. Success will require that stakeholders closely collaborate and acknowledge their evolving and increasing mutual dependency.

Development of the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy

The strategy was developed in response to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) 2008 Gulf Hypoxia Action Plan, which calls for each of the 12 states in the Mississippi River Basin to produce a plan to reduce the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen carried in rivers throughout the states and to the Gulf of Mexico. In 2011, U.S. EPA provided a recommended framework for state plans. Illinois' strategy follows this framework.



The Illinois NLRS was developed by a Policy Working Group that includes representatives from local, state, and federal agencies, the agricultural industry, and non-profit organizations as well as scientists, academics, and wastewater treatment professionals.

Key Strategy Components

- ◆ Extends ongoing regulatory and voluntary efforts. The strategy describes a comprehensive suite of best management practices for reducing loads from wastewater treatment plants and urban and agriculture runoff. These practices will help the state reduce its phosphorus load by 25 percent and its nitrate-nitrogen load by 15 percent by 2025. The eventual target is a 45 percent reduction in the loss of these nutrients to the Mississippi River. These actions will also assist in addressing water quality problems in Illinois rivers, lakes, and streams for the benefit of Illinois citizens.
- ◆ Identifies priority watersheds for nutrient loss reduction efforts. Recommended practices target the state's most critical watersheds and are based on the latest science and best-available technology.
- ◆ Establishes the Nutrient Monitoring Council to coordinate water quality monitoring efforts by government agencies, universities, non-profits, and industry.
- ◆ Creates the Nutrient Science Advisory Committee to develop numeric nutrient criteria for Illinois waters. This committee will evaluate all available research, data, and methodologies and recommend a credible approach.
- ◆ Identifies strategies for improving collaboration among government, non-profits, and industry. This includes formation of an Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum to steer outreach and education efforts to help farmers address nutrient loss and an Urban Stormwater Working Group to coordinate and improve stormwater programs and education.
- ◆ Defines a process for regular review and revision by the Policy Working Group, as well as for measuring progress and reporting to the public.

The Illinois NLRS outlines strategies that meet community and industry needs while reducing the negative impacts of nutrient loss on the environment, industry, and public health. Although many are cost-effective, some, particularly those related to point source reductions, will require significant investment.