

Performance Benchmark Committee Meeting

April 2nd, 2019 1:30 – 3:00pm

Mississippi Conference Room, Illinois EPA
1021 North Grand Avenue East, Springfield

In attendance: Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA; Brian Rennecker, Illinois Dept. of Agriculture; Kris Reynolds, American Farmland Trust; Emily Bruner, American Farmland Trust; Steve Stierwalt, Association of Illinois SWCDs; Alec Davis, Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group; Kelly Thompson, Illinois Environmental Regulatory Group; Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension; Kate Gardiner, Illinois Extension; Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau; Albert Cox, MWRD; Caroline Wade, The Nature Conservancy; Catie Gregg, Prairie Rivers Network; and Cindy Skrukrud, Sierra Club

Discussion on the Biennial Report Adaptive Management Chapter

The committee discussed what the Adaptive Management chapter of the Biennial Report should look like. The committee revisited the meaning of adaptive management and how it relates to implementing Illinois' NLRs goals. They discussed the updated Science Assessment and how progress would be illustrated. The group agreed that to maximize data visualization, the report should use graphs that show the data clearly in chronological order. There was discussion of adopting a specific year to meet the state's reduction goals – several potential years were brought up as options with the discussion ending on mirroring the goal of the Hypoxia Task Force. The committee agreed to revisit the topic at the next Policy Working Group meeting.

Dr. Greg McIsaac is currently finishing up the updated Science Assessment. With regards to how often the Science Assessment needs to be updated, it's useful to wait until there is another 5-6 years of data, so that HUC 8 loads can be recalculated and priority watersheds reestablished. Two maps were shown of the original science assessment's priority watersheds and the new priority watersheds based on new data. Some of the priority watersheds changed over time and the committee concluded that no watersheds would be taken off "priority" status, but watersheds could be added as needed. Committee members expressed desire to be able to capture what practices are being used in these watersheds and how that affects nutrient loads.

Committee members discussed the value of the scenarios in the original Science Assessment in showing the scale of implementation, particularly scenarios 2 and 3, which set out to achieve the state's nutrient reduction loss goals. The committee thought it useful for these scenarios to be updated in conjunction with the science and to explore scenarios for reaching interim goals.

The government shutdown delayed the NASS Survey release, which means the results won't be available in time for the Policy Working Group meeting in May. When given the option of seeing a draft Biennial Report earlier without the NASS results or waiting until the NASS results are ready to be included in the report, the committee members agreed to wait for a draft that included the NASS results. The committee members also agreed that it would be best to prioritize a quality report rather than getting it out in time for the Farm Progress Show. The Biennial Report will be completed and published in time for the NLRs Conference in December. The group will reconvene at the Policy Working Group meeting on May 22nd.