

Since 2015, Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB®) has contributed to an impressive statewide effort called the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRs). Through leadership and participation from our farmer members across the state, IFB has been able to make meaningful contributions toward water quality improvements in Illinois. From 2016 to 2018, IFB has committed over \$500,000 of its own funding to build and maintain its sustainability programs.



The NLRs is a science-based framework for using research, technology and industry experience to assess and reduce nutrient loss to Illinois waters and to the Gulf of Mexico. The NLRs sets forth a plan to leverage existing programs to optimize nutrient loss reduction while promoting collaboration, research, and innovation among the private sector, academia, non-profits, wastewater treatment agencies, the agricultural sector, and state and local government. The primary goals include reducing nitrate-nitrogen losses by 15% and reducing total phosphorus losses by 25% by the year 2025 from established baseline conditions. The NLRs was released in July of 2015 after multiple years of stakeholder discussions in which IFB participated. In 2015, building off its existing water quality efforts, IFB created new programs to support farmer implementation of best management practices (BMPs) to help Illinois meet the goals of the NLRs.

For the past several years, IFB has made it an organizational priority to lead on environmental issues, most notably, the NLRs. Our NLRs efforts focus in four primary areas: 1) education and outreach; 2) supporting research initiatives; 3) supporting implementation efforts; and 4) demonstrating progress. The IFB Board of Directors committed significant financial resources and support from staff to accomplish some ambitious goals, allowing IFB to tackle environmental challenges head on. IFB will continue to prove that voluntary, incentive-based conservation, based on science, will move the needle on water quality improvements in our state. We are well on our way to meeting the 2025 NLRs goals.



## Sustainability Summary

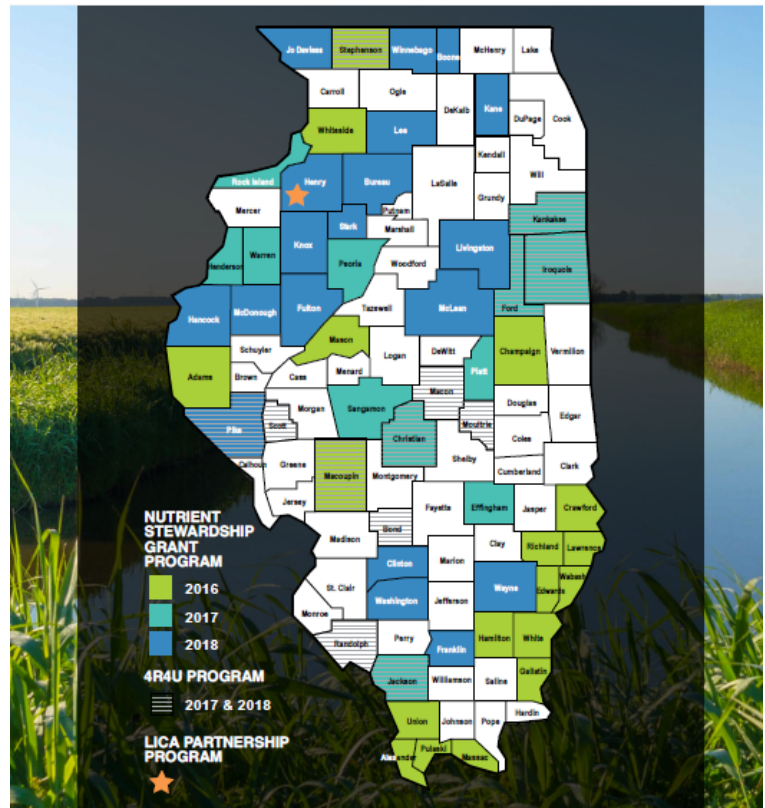
### From 2015 to present, what did we do?

IFB has been tackling the ambitious goal of improving water quality by implementing the NLRS. Excessive nutrient loads are a threat to water quality in Illinois and further downstream in the Gulf of Mexico. Illinois farmers understand the issue and made strides to reduce their own losses from agricultural land, along with urban and point source contributors. Through education and outreach, the creation and expansion of water quality programs, and the demonstration and installation of BMPs across the state, we have increased momentum and optimized nutrient loss reduction.

**How did we do it?** Thanks to the leadership of Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), organizations like IFB have been given the opportunity to invest in the creation of purposeful programs and initiatives that lead to meaningful solutions. Progress was achieved through numerous partnerships that leveraged resources and retargeted efforts toward nutrient loss reduction goals. In addition, IFB has made "leading on environmental issues" an organizational priority for the past several years. Facing a lack of state resources, the IFB Board of Directors committed significant funding (over \$500,000 between 2016-2018) and support from staff. IFB staff used internal and external communications platforms to educate and empower members about nutrient loss reduction. County-level projects and demonstrations, in addition to statewide partnership programs, had measurable benefits, in addition to the millions of people reached through print media, social media, radio, television, and in-person education.

**Who was involved?** Since 2015, IFB and County Farm Bureau (CFB) leaders have shared the NLRS message with approximately 39,000 farmers, landowners, educators, and agricultural partners via in-person education and dialogue at 237 events. IFB has invested over \$500,000 in local nutrient stewardship, soil health and water quality projects in 54 counties through its various programs, with many counties continuing their initiatives for multiple years, with approximately 100 local partners.

## Making NUTRIENT STEWARDSHIP a Priority in Illinois



**What were the benefits?** Improved water quality today, and for generations to come. Through action, advocacy, communication and assistance, IFB has made a positive impact on water quality, and will continue to build upon that momentum.



### Economic

- Since 2015, IFB has committed over \$500,000 to improve water quality in Illinois, including:
  - **\$300,000** in IFB's Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program to CFBs
  - **\$100,000** in 4R4U Nutrient Stewardship Partnerships with GROWMARK, FS Member Companies and CFBs
  - **\$100,000** in Edge-of-Field Partnership w/ the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors of America (Illinois LICA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and University of Illinois College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES).
- In 2017 alone, our Illinois Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) program invested **\$20,000** in NLRS education. AITC helps students appreciate and recognize the many ways that farmers provide food, fuel, clothing, and shelter



### Social

Highlights of IFB's social impacts since 2015:

- Approximately **39,000** farmers, landowners, educators, and agricultural partners educated about the NLRS through in-person learning at **237** events (field days, workshops, webinars, conferences, and presentations.)
- Approximately **360** *FarmWeek* articles related to NLRS, reaching **74,000** weekly subscribers
- Approximately **24** RFD Radio interviews about the NLRS, in **80** rural media markets across Illinois
- Approximately **19,400,000** people reached with **117** external media sources and stories about our programs and the NLRS
- Approximately **200,000** people reached with our social media posts and a tele-town hall
- **54** CFBs implementing NLRS projects at the county level
- Approximately **100** local partners involved in county-level projects



### Environmental

- According to the 2016 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Survey referenced in the August 2017 Illinois NLRS Biennial Report:
  - **More than 70%** of farmers are familiar with the NLRS
  - The number of acres where at least half of the nitrogen was applied in the spring (pre-plant and side-dress) **increased by 28%** between 2011 and 2015
  - Cover crop acreage **increased by 123%** on tilled ground and **66%** on non-tilled ground between 2011 and 2015
  - Compared to baseline 1980-1996 load data, nitrate-nitrogen loads during the time period of 2011-2015 have **decreased by 10%**
  - In 2016 alone, Illinois agriculture invested nearly **\$55 million** in NLRS research, outreach, implementation, and monitoring. That figure does not include the additional significant private financial investments of farmers statewide, outside of state and federal cost-share programs.

## **Description of Activities**

### **IFB's NLRS Priorities:**

- 1) Education & Outreach**
- 2) Supporting Research Initiatives**
- 3) Supporting Implementation Efforts**
- 4) Demonstrating Progress**



- 1) Education & Outreach**—IFB continues to meet with farmer members at local CFB meetings, as well as use internal and external communication platforms, to deliver educational messages about the NLRS that impact our farmer members.

- NLRS presentations and webinars
- Sessions at IFB's Governmental Affairs Leadership Conference, Commodities Conference and Annual Meeting
- *FarmWeek* articles, and external print and online media coverage
- AITC education about environmental issues, including soil, water, and conservation
- Ads in farmer publications, digital platforms
- Social medias campaigns
- RFD Radio interviews

- 2) Supporting Research Initiatives**— Through partnerships with scientific researchers across Illinois, IFB is educating farmers about ongoing scientific research, as well as conclusions made and “lessons learned”, regarding various BMPs to assist in reducing nutrient loss. IFB is also connecting researchers with farmers for purposes of conducting on-farm research and sharing farmers’ practical experience with various BMPs.

- Relationships have been strengthened between Illinois farmers and researchers at the University of Illinois, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Illinois State University, Prairie Research Institute, and United States Geological Survey.
- Illinois farmers invest \$0.75/ton of fertilizer sold in the state into the Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council (NREC) to support critical nutrient research. Since its establishment in 2012, NREC has been managed by a council led by a farmer leader from within IFB. The remaining representatives on the council include other farmer organizations, commercial fertilizer, specialty fertilizer, and IDOA. Members of environmental organizations also provide input to NREC.
- Since 2012, Illinois NREC has invested over \$12 million into nutrient research efforts across the state. Without this funding, Illinois agriculture would be without critical research into maximizing the efficiency of agricultural nutrients while minimizing any possible negative impacts to the environment.



**3) Supporting Implementation Efforts**—IFB lead by example by focusing on on-farm implementation of the NLRs. In addition to what occurs on our farmer members' own farm fields, IFB created county-level and statewide partnerships to build upon that momentum, including:

- Meaningful county level nutrient loss reduction projects in **49 counties** via the IFB Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program, pulling together local partners, additional matching funds, and building momentum at the local level to implement farmer-driven ideas.

Those projects have included the following:

- Seminars for female landowners in Bureau and Sangamon Counties
- Seminars and round tables for farmers interested in cover crops in Massac, Union, Pulaski, Alexander, Rock Island, Henry and Mercer counties
- Cover crop, tillage and nitrogen utilization demonstration plots and field days in Effingham, Jo Daviess, Livingston, Macoupin and Wayne Counties
- Saturated buffer installation and field demonstrations in Knox County
- Research and demonstration regarding the influence of manure management and cover crops on reducing nutrient losses in Clinton County
- "Early Adopters" video series created by Rock Island, Mercer, Henry and Whiteside counties
- "First Steps" video series created by Champaign County
- Evaluation of nitrate losses through the Sny Island Levee and Drainage District in Pike County
- Tile drain monitoring in the Wabash River Valley, central and western Illinois
- Installation of two streambank stabilization projects in Piatt county
- Support of the locally-led Nutrient Stewardship of Northern Illinois effort focused on a nitrate monitoring program and education events for farmers and retailers
- Enhancement of nutrient research at the University of Illinois Dudley-Smith Research Farm and the Monmouth Research Farm
- Free, confidential soil and water testing for nitrate levels
- Construction of a dry dam to prevent nutrient & sediment loss into Kinkaid Lake
- Installation of a woodchip bioreactor in Peoria county

Projects planned for 2018 include:

- Partnering with county conservation agencies and University of Illinois Extension to compare local common fertilizer practices to research-based application rates on farmers' fields in Franklin County
- Demonstrating recycling of drainage water to improve usage efficiency of water and nutrients in Fulton County, and demonstrating the same via field days
- Working with local farmer experts in Hancock County to host four round table, small group discussions on experiences on several conservation topics
- A field day featuring cover crops and the installation of a woodchip bioreactor in Henry, Mercer and Rock Island Counties
- Installation and demonstration of woodchip bioreactors in Kane County and Stark County
- Continued discussion, monitoring, and research from the year-old saturated buffer in Knox County (*Projects continued on the following page...*)

- Utilization of mobile soil testing laboratories at Sauk Valley Community College's new agricultural research field and local farmers' fields
  - On-farm demonstration plot of cover crops preceding soybeans in Livingston County
  - Testing of soil and water samples for nutrients in Washington County
  - Studying on-farm nitrogen movement in Winnebago and Boone Counties
- Farmer and agricultural retailer-lead demonstration plots, field days and social media coverage showcasing fertilizer BMPs in **12 locations** across the state as part of the 4R4U Nutrient Stewardship Partnership.

The local partnerships include the following:

- Gold Star FS, Inc. and Mercer CFB
  - M&M Service Company and Macoupin CFB
  - Prairieland FS, Inc., Scott CFB and Pike CFB
  - Heritage FS, Inc., Kankakee CFB and Ford-Iroquois FB
  - Evergreen FS, Inc. and Macon CFB
  - Stephenson Service Company and Stephenson CFB
  - Southern FS, Inc. and Jackson CFB
  - Gateway FS, Inc. and Randolph CFB
  - Christian County Farmers Supply Co. and Christian CFB
  - South Central FS, Inc., Moultrie CFB and Bond CFB
  - Piatt County Service Company and Piatt CFB
- Installation and research of woodchip bioreactors in the Edge-of-Field Partnership. This partnership includes IFB, Illinois LICA, NRCS and ACES.
- 2017 was the first year of this partnership, and the partners installed a woodchip bioreactor in Henry County. Dr. Laura Christianson of ACES will study the woodchip bioreactor over a number of years to determine its effectiveness.
  - Through the program, the partners have committed to installing at least one woodchip bioreactor each year for four additional years and continuing the study of those sites through university research.
  - Efforts are currently underway for finalizing our 2018 site.



**4) Demonstrating Progress**—IFB has been committed to demonstrating the progress of our organization and our farmer members in implementing the NLRS across the state. IFB has produced several progress reports that have been submitted to IDOA and IEPA, and we have shared our farmer members' collective story with a wide variety of stakeholders since 2015. IFB also invested in the USDA NASS Survey referenced in the 2017 NLRS Biennial Report to provide a statistically-valid measurement to track agricultural BMP adoption and farmer attitude over an extended period of time. The USDA NASS Survey will continue to be funded every two years into the future.

## **Relevance to Others**

IFB is an organization comprised of approximately 74,000 individual farmer members, all of which join through their CFB. Through all of our implementation efforts, we have watched our individual farmer leaders from across the state take on the challenge to continuously improve upon their environmental performance on their own farm fields and in their community. We are witnessing that leadership from within our organization translate into similar farmer-led efforts in different parts of the state. We are seeing that leadership from within our organization translate into additional local partners and trial of new approaches and partnerships that have never been attempted before in Illinois. We are experiencing that leadership from within our organization impact other segments of society, including wastewater treatment facilities, urban stormwater professionals, and environmental non-governmental organizations, as they react positively to what they see farmers across the state doing to improve water quality. IFB looks forward to continuing to seek out new and proactive approaches focused on innovation and leadership to improve water quality.

## **Progress/Future**

In 2018, IFB is continuing to build and strengthen its NLRs efforts. Above all, IFB is committed to helping our farmer members meet the 2025 goals set forth in the NLRs. Specifically, we are committed to our four NLRs priorities including: 1) education and outreach; 2) supporting research initiatives; 3) supporting implementation efforts; and 4) demonstrating progress.



## Please note:

Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) is a unique entity in that its sustainability efforts, while impressive, are measured in a manner unlike that of other facilities' projects. IFB voluntarily presents its NLRS activity to IDOA and IEPA in the format requested by the agencies. It is in that format that the metrics for this application are also presented.

Instead of the Excel chart encouraged for this application, please find:

- A **Summary** of IFB Accomplishments since 2015  
(on the following page)
- **Metrics Tables** reflecting details of IFB's accomplishments from 2015, 2016 and 2017  
(found in the "Documentation" section of this application)
- Link to IFB's 2017 **Water Quality Report**:  
<http://www.ilfb.org/resources/illinois-farmers%E2%80%99-conservation-efforts.aspx>
- Please also see **IEPA's NLRS webpage** for additional information:  
<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/water-quality/watershed-management/excess-nutrients/nutrient-loss-reduction-strategy/index>





## Summary of IFB Accomplishments since 2015:

Summary of IFB Accomplishments	2015	2016	2017	2018	Totals
<b>Financials Committed</b> (Grants Given/Resources Invested)	N/A	\$100,000	\$220,000	\$200,000 (Committed)	<b>\$520,000</b>
<b>Outreach/In-Person Learning</b> (field days, workshops, webinars, conferences, & presentations)	4,295 people/ 38 events	4,713 people/ 81 events	29,835 people/ 118 events	(Ongoing)	<b>38,843 people reached/ 237 events</b>
<b>Communication</b>					
<i>FarmWeek</i> articles	74 articles	127 articles	161 articles	(Ongoing)	<b>362 articles, reaching 74,000 weekly subscribers</b>
RFD radio	7 interviews	6 interviews	11 interviews	(Ongoing)	<b>24 interviews in 80 rural markets across Illinois</b>
Social media and Tele-Town Hall	Social media campaign reached 45,459/ Tele-town hall reached 93,000	Social media campaign reached 58,244	N/A	(Ongoing)	<b>196,703 people reached</b>
External/Earned Media/Websites	N/A	7,709,699 people reached through 65 sources	11,678,492 people reached through 52 sources	(Ongoing)	<b>19,388,191 unique viewership through 117 sources</b>

## **Regulatory Compliance**

*Illinois Farm Bureau® (IFB®), 1701 Towanda Avenue, Bloomington, IL, 61701, is not subject to an environmental enforcement action or notice of violation from the U.S. EPA or Illinois EPA.*



**Metrics Tables Reflecting Details of 2015, 2016 and 2017**

2015		
Description	Number	Attendance
Presentations	34 NLRs Presentations at workshops/meetings	2500+ members and agricultural partners
	1 Live Webinar	150+
Conferences	IFB Governmental Affairs & Leadership Conference	325+ farmers and ag stakeholders
	IFB Commodities Conference	320+
	IFB Annual Meeting	1000+ farmers, landowners, farm families, ag partners, legislators, commodity groups
Print or Media	74 FarmWeek articles about the nutrient issue	74,000 farm owner/operator members receive weekly FarmWeek publication
	4 farmer profiles sharing their best management practices	
	1 NLRs page on our website	
	1 Ag in the Classroom website dedicated to environmental issues	
	1 CBMP Website population and improvements	
	1 Social media campaign for CBMP and NLRs events and resources	45,459 reached in social media campaign
	1 NLRs brochure for sharing with elected officials	
Radio & Television	7 interviews on RFD radio	RFD radio reaches rural audiences in 80 markets in Illinois
Newsletters	Contributed ideas and information to the first quarterly CBMP Newsletter in Dec. 2015	300+
Awards/Recognition	1 Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Award, given to a CCA that goes above and beyond for customers and incorporates ideas of nutrient stewardship	1 winner each year
Surveys	CBMP survey at Roadshow meetings	480 responded about nutrient management practices and other BMPs
	IFB Annual Meeting survey	327 farmer members responded about awareness of the NLRs and specific BMPs
Tele-town hall with CBMP	NLRs content and release information, encourage farmers to implement BMPs, driving people to the CBMP website	64,000 dialed 93,000 personalized touches made 13,000 participated for some length on the calls

2016		
Description	Number	Attendance
Presentations	40 NLRS Presentations at workshops/meetings	2500+ members and agricultural partners
	2 webinars in a four-part series throughout 2016, highlighting NREC-funded research projects	
	34 Ag in the Classroom Summer Ag Institute presentations	427 teachers, AITC County Coordinators
Conferences	IFB Governmental Affairs & Leadership Conference	370+ farmers and ag stakeholders
	IFB Commodities Conference	320+
	IL AITC Literacy Coordinators	96 Ag Literacy Coordinators
	IFB Annual Meeting	1000+ farmers, landowners, farm families, ag partners, legislators, commodity groups
Print or Media	127 FarmWeek articles about the nutrient issue	74,000 farm owner/operator members receive weekly FarmWeek publication
	2 farmer profiles sharing their best management practices	
	63 External media stories and articles	7,600,000+ unique viewership
	8 IFB In Action front page stories	
	1 NLRS page on our website	
	1 AITC website dedicated to environmental issues	492 teachers
	1 AITC Soil Ag Mag	963 pre-service teachers
	1 AITC Soybean Ag Mag	50,000 students
	1 AITC Social media campaign #everydayisearthdayonthefarm	
	1 IFB Social media campaign regarding water quality and nutrient loss reduction	58,244 reached in social media campaign
	1 NLRS brochure for passing out at meetings/workshops	
	Letter to the editor about the importance of NLRS	To all of our County Farm Bureaus (102 CFBs)
Radio & Television	6 interviews on RFD radio	RFD radio reaches rural audiences in 80 markets in Illinois
Newsletters	Contributed ideas and information to the first 3 CBMP e-newsletters	1672 farmers and ag stakeholders
Awards/Recognition	1 CCA Award, given to a CCA that goes above and beyond for customers and incorporates ideas of nutrient stewardship	1 winner each year
Surveys	IFB NLRS survey at farmer meetings	83% were aware of the NLRS
	IFB Annual Meeting survey	327 farmer members responded about awareness of the NLRS and specific BMPs

2017		
Description	Number	Attendance
Field Days	Edge of Field Partnership: Woodchip Bioreactor Install Field Day 9/27/17	60
	Nutrient Stewardship of Northern IL Field Day 8/22/17	110
	Dudley Smith Research Farm Field Day 6/21/17	60
	Clinton County Farm Bureau March Field Day	60
	Clinton County Farm Bureau July Field Day	65
	Effingham County Farm Bureau cover crop meeting	35
	Ford-Iroquois Farm Bureau cover crop Field Day	37
	Jo Daviess cover crop Field Days	50
	Vermillion Headwaters cover crop tour & Field Day	100+
	Peoria County Farm Bureau Woodchip Bioreactor Field Day	35
	Pike County Farm Bureau Water Testing Field Day	50
	Wayne County Farm Bureau Nutrient Loss Inhibitor Demonstration	60
	24 AITC Field Days focusing on NLRs	990 educators 19,412 students 3,991 community members
Presentations	43 NLRs Presentations at workshops/meetings	2,359 members and ag partners
	35 AITC Summer Ag Institute presentations	541 teachers
Conferences	IFB Governmental Affairs & Leadership Conference	370+ farmers and ag stakeholders
	IFB Commodities Conference	300+
	IL Inaugural NLRs Workshop	150+
	IFB Annual Meeting	1000+ farmers, landowners, farm families, ag partners, legislators, commodity groups
Print or Media	161 FarmWeek articles about the NLRs	74,000 farm owner/operator members receive weekly FarmWeek publication
	50 External media stories and articles	265,569+ Circulation 11,307,578+ unique viewership
	1 AITC website dedicated to environmental issues	1,848 teachers 1,104 pre-service teachers 78,000 students
	1 2017 Natural and Environmental Resources End of Year Report	570 copies distributed to farmer members in Dec. alone.
	1 Ag in the Classroom website dedicated to environmental issues and "Ag Mags"	990 educators 19,412 students 3,991 community members
	1 IFB Social media campaign regarding NLRs and environmental stewardship	26 Facebook posts 234 likes 7 comments 43 shares
Radio & Television	11 interviews on RFD radio	RFD radio reaches rural audiences in 80 markets in IL
Newsletters	Contributed ideas and information to the first 3 CBMP Newsletter in Dec. 2015	1672 farmers and ag stakeholders
Awards/Recognition	1 Recipient of the New Horizon Award from the American Farm Bureau Federation in January 2017.	1 winner each year
	1 CCA Award, presented to a CCA that goes above & beyond for customers and incorporates ideas of nutrient stewardship	1 winner each year