



DEC 04 2018

Mr. Jeff Andersen
Secretary
Department of Health and Environment
1000 Southwest Jackson, Suite 540
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1368

RE: Agency Engagement in Addressing Nutrient Pollution

Dear Mr. Andersen:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have been working for decades to reduce nutrient losses from agricultural lands and improve water quality. Thanks to the hard work of states, tribes, and stakeholders we have made significant progress reducing excess nutrients in some watersheds. Nationally available water quality data, however, indicate that nutrient pollution continues to be widespread, particularly in the Mississippi River Basin.

To better address this challenge, the EPA and the USDA are working to identify opportunities for meaningful reductions in nonpoint nutrient losses and improvements in water quality. These opportunities will require using all the tools available to address excess nutrients in watersheds, including non-regulatory and market-based programs. The EPA and the USDA are committed to working together to improve water quality while improving the efficiency of land use practices and optimizing treatment technologies.

The EPA and the USDA recognize that making progress in nutrient management depends largely, if not entirely, on the efforts of state, tribal, and local programs working in partnership with stakeholders. The EPA and the USDA can provide technical and financial support, including mobilizing federal research and implementation dollars, and participating in creative problem solving; however, at the end of the day reducing excess nutrients in watersheds will require local solutions. To that end, the agencies are committed to engaging with local stakeholders, leveraging our collective resources, and helping to remove regulatory or other barriers that impede progress in this space.

Over the last six months, the EPA and the USDA have been engaging informally with states and stakeholders as opportunities have been presented. Through that process, we have heard that providing additional flexibility in TMDL implementation may facilitate market-based efforts, potential opportunities to streamline federal approvals for land management activities that can capture and reduce nutrient inputs into watersheds, and that there is a need for information sharing and education regarding financing opportunities for nonpoint management strategies.

We are now building on this engagement by inviting each state environmental and agricultural agency to engage with the EPA and the USDA to identify local opportunities and challenges to reducing excess nutrients in watersheds and improving water quality. The agencies are open to meeting one-on-one with state authorities, as well as coordinating regional meetings between states and stakeholders.

Please have your staff email nutrients@epa.gov to discuss how the EPA and the USDA can support your efforts to reduce excess nitrogen and phosphorus in local watersheds.

Sincerely,



David P. Ross
Assistant Administrator
Office of Water
United States Environmental Protection Agency



Bill Northey
Under Secretary
Farm Production and Conservation
United States Department of Agriculture