

Water Resources Coordinator Group
Better Water Quality through Improved Farming Practices
Summary of Meeting on March 17th

Steps in engaging the farming community in water quality discussions:

- 1) Identify the goal or key question and know your community
 - a. It's different in every city/organization. What type of pollutant are you looking to reduce or do you have a different goal?
 - b. What type of agricultural community do you have?
 - i. Owners vs. Renters
 - ii. Hay, Row Crops, Animals, other
 - iii. Rural vs. semi-urban (Hennepin County)
 - c. What is the Ag footprint of your community?
- 2) Apply multiple principles to engaging the farming community
 - a. Know and understand your audience
 - b. Engage during the development of water plans, if possible or as soon as possible
 - c. One-on-one communication with farmers is effective, trust-building is important.
 - d. Go out to farming groups or collaboratives and reach out to existing groups
 - e. Ask them what they are doing already-many farmers have a connection with their land and an understanding of good practices
- 3) Explain water quality process
 - a. Key presentations should be simple (non-jargon) for residents and farmers
 - b. Include all sources of pollution in the discussion-recognize the importance of everyone's role in the problem and the solutions
 - c. What do we know through observation/tests and where are we making educated guesses? Non-point source pollution is harder to pinpoint.
 - d. Can we tweak our TDML process to incorporate water plan implementation and work more directly with producers rather than create an adversarial relationship?
- 4) Strategies for Incentivizing Good Practices
 - a. Reward and highlight the work of farmers who are employing good practices-work on changing the social norm
 - b. "River friendly farmer" designation
 - c. Work together as MS4, SCWD and/or watersheds on improved communication/education efforts
- 5) What are some good practices that have worked or should work?
 - a. Different for each site
 - b. Buffering, contour cropping
 - c. Tier-based cash programs
 - d. Education program targeted toward children
 - e. Blue Thumb or NEMO-mold an education program after those programs
 - f. Cost-share programs- supplement CRP and RIM
 - g. Easement acquisition or land purchase (lake associations or others)