



ILLINOIS NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY

Improving our
water resources
with collaboration
and innovation

Nutrient pollution is a major threat to water quality in Illinois. Over the decades, state and local efforts to control nutrients have yielded positive results, but new strategies are needed to improve the effectiveness of existing water quality programs and secure the long-term health of water bodies in Illinois and throughout the Mississippi River Basin.

What is nutrient pollution?

Plants and animals need nitrogen and phosphorus to survive. But when too much of either is carried in runoff from city streets and farm fields or flows out of wastewater treatment plants, it can fuel algal blooms that decrease oxygen needed by aquatic plants and animals. In the Gulf of Mexico, nutrients washed down by the Mississippi River have created a 'dead zone' that covers thousands of square miles. Algal blooms also lower property values, hinder recreation, and threaten public health. In addition, nutrient pollution can degrade drinking water quality and require utilities to install costly treatment equipment.



What is Illinois doing to address the problem?

To help protect local streams and the Gulf, Illinois and 11 other states in the Mississippi River Basin have pledged to develop strategies to reduce the nutrient loads leaving their borders.

These strategies are part

of a national plan developed by the Mississippi River, Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force to reduce the size of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone.

The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy builds on existing efforts by state and local governments, as well as non-profits and industry, to protect and restore Illinois waterways.

Key Strategy Components

1. Extends ongoing regulatory and voluntary efforts
2. Identifies priority watersheds for nutrient loss reduction efforts
3. Establishes the Nutrient Monitoring Council to coordinate water quality monitoring efforts by government agencies, universities, non-profits, and industry
4. Creates the Nutrient Science Advisory Committee to develop numeric nutrient criteria for Illinois waters
5. Forms the Agricultural Water Quality Partnership Forum to oversee outreach and education efforts
6. Establishes the Urban Stormwater Working Group to coordinate and improve stormwater programs and education
7. Lays out strategies for improving collaboration among government, non-profits, and industry
8. Defines a process for regular review and revision

What does the strategy call for?

The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy lays out a comprehensive suite of best management practices for reducing loads from wastewater treatment plants and urban and agricultural runoff. Recommended activities target the state's most critical watersheds and are based on the latest science and best-available technologies. Along with water quality standards currently being developed, these practices will help the state achieve its ultimate goal of reducing phosphorus and nitrate loads by 45 percent.

The strategy also calls for more collaboration among state and federal agencies, cities, non-profits, and technical experts.



How was the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy developed?

The strategy was developed by a policy working group led by the Illinois Water Resources Center, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Group members included representatives from state and federal agencies, agriculture, and non-profit organizations as well as scientists and wastewater treatment professionals. By relying on the expertise of diverse stakeholders, the working group developed a cost-effective strategy that meets community and industry needs while still reducing the negative impacts of nutrient pollution on environmental and public health.

For more information:

- www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/water-quality/watershed-management/excess-nutrients/nutrient-loss-reduction-strategy/index
- water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/named/msbasin/



Photo courtesy of David Riecks; other photos courtesy of Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant

This report was prepared using United States Environmental Protection Agency funds under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act distributed through the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The findings and recommendations contained herein are not necessarily those of the funding agencies.

