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NEWS

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First Great Lakes Demonstration Farm Network to Launch in Green Bay Area

MADISON, Wis. - The Lower Fox River Watershed, just south of Green Bay, will be home to a network of farms that will demonstrate the best, leading-edge conservation practices to reduce phosphorus entering Green Bay and Lake Michigan. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Great Lakes Commission (GLC) have announced an agreement to establish a Great Lakes Demonstration Farm Network, the first of its kind, in Wisconsin. To initiate this network, the GLC will begin work with the Brown County Land & Water Conservation Department and Outagamie County Land Conservation Department to identify the farms in the Lower Fox Watershed.

Funding for this agreement is made available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI). In 2009, President Obama announced the GLRI, committing the Federal government to significantly advance Great Lakes protection and restoration.

“Through this collaboration and funding, we can publicly highlight the most effective conservation systems for this area,” says Jimmy Bramblett, USDA NRCS State Conservationist for Wisconsin. “With the right combination of traditional conservation practices and new technologies, we can produce viable, sustainable economic and environmental results. This Agreement supports phosphorus reduction efforts in the Lower Fox River Watershed, Green Bay and Lake Michigan.”

The agreement between the USDA and the GLC is a five-year, \$1 million project. The GLC will collaborate with the Brown County Land & Water Conservation Department and the Outagamie County Land Conservation Department, as well as NRCS and other partners, to identify the farms and farmers who will participate, and to establish the demonstration sites.

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“We are excited to work side-by-side with Brown and Outagamie county conservation staff and leverage their experience in getting conservation practices on the ground, reducing runoff to Green Bay, and helping farmers with erosion and nutrient management,” says Great Lakes Commission Chair Kenneth G. Johnson, water division administrator at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. “What we learn here will be exported to other watersheds in the Great Lakes Basin.”

“One of my goals for the Phosphorus Committee that I created in Brown County in 2012 was to work with all stakeholders to identify strategies that could be implemented to ultimately reduce phosphorus going into the watershed. As part of our 2014 Budget we included funding to partner with GLC and NRCS to create an opportunity for the agriculture community to be part of the overall solution, which in the end, will benefit the environment, water quality and the municipal rate payers,” said Troy Streckenbach, Brown County Executive.

The farms will showcase conservation systems that reduce erosion and sediment loss leading to nonpoint source pollution. The farms will also serve to spread the word about the technology, research findings and experience gained on the demonstrations.

The specific objectives of the project are to:

- Establish 2-4 demonstration farms within the Lower Fox Watershed to test new and standard conservation systems in reducing phosphorus and sediment
- Establish an efficient mechanism to share this technology and information with farmers, agribusiness, conservation agencies and the public
- Create opportunities for others to test their research, technical and program ideas at the demonstration farms
- Share information and lessons learned from the Lower Fox Watershed throughout the Great Lakes basin

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