

CONGRESSIONAL FACT SHEET ON WATERSHED CONSERVATION

Making the Case for the Impact and Effectiveness of Conservation

Conservation Impact. New research on eight watersheds selected to each fall in a different Congressional District provides compelling support for the effectiveness of conservation programs, with the data demonstrating that employing conservation practices upstream reduces the flow of nutrients into freshwater and so both protects agricultural land and improves water quality. Crop cover with rye was found to be the most effective conservation practice in reducing nutrient losses in each of the eight watersheds.

Percentage Reduction in Nutrients. This scientific research documents that conservation programs reduce nutrients leaching into fresh water in the eight watersheds studied, with the reduction ranging from 6 percent to 43 percent in terms of the reduction in nitrogen loss and ranging from 7 percent to 31 percent in terms of the reduction in phosphorous loss.

Climate Change Impact. The impact of conservation practices is documented both under historical conditions and when modeling the impact of climate change, which in seven of the eight watersheds predicted reduced precipitation and reduced water flow in the range of 9 percent to 70 percent by 2050.

Watersheds Studied. The eight watersheds studied in this research include two in each of four Upper Mississippi River Basin states – Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. Each of the eight watersheds falls primarily in a different Congressional District, with a separate research report provided for each one.

Significance. This new research supports policy-making that continues and strengthens conservation programs, including federal programs to incentivize farmers to implement effective conservation programs. Both continued and increased appropriations for conservation, and also other legislation to authorize future conservation programs, are supported by this research.

For More Information. To see the newly released research including reports on each of the eight watersheds studied, go to www.nemw.org or see: <https://www.nemw.org/conservation-program-effectiveness-supported-in-new-nemwi-research-reports-on-eight-watersheds-in-four-states-in-the-upper-mississippi-river-basin/> For additional information, contact Dr. Michael J. Goff, President, Northeast-Midwest Institute, at mgoff@nemw.org or 410-615-4951.