



USDA-CSREES 2006 National Water Quality Conference

Environmental Improvement Using CNMPs & EMSs

Two separate programs assisted western Iowa producers in implementing voluntarily practices to protect water quality. Participants in the Livestock Environmental Management System program (LEMS) or Western Iowa Livestock External Stewardship Pilot Project (WILESPP) were surveyed to identify the outcomes of two different educational approaches and voluntary environmental programs.

Each project took approximately a year to develop, a year to implement, and participants were surveyed a year after implementation. The programs differ fundamentally in content and delivery. The WILESPP used consultants to complete a comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP), a prescriptive process. The Environmental Management System (EMS) is an educational process in which the producer develops his or her own plan based on site specific requirements and priorities.

The two pilot projects produced similar responses to the survey questions. Participants in each thought there was too much paperwork, but would participate again, recommend it to a neighbor, and would be willing to pay for the service. The results of the survey indicate that both programs were successful in moving producers toward improved stewardship and practices that will better protect water quality. Results indicate that:

- All survey respondents continue to use the plans set up in their respective projects.
- Requiring targeted outcomes (like nutrient plans) improves conformity. WILESPP participants implemented a CNMP. LEMS participants completed several individual priorities but few completed nutrient plans.
- The LEMS project represented a journey of continuous improvement towards environmental stewardship while the WILESPP project represented a destination of completing and implementing a CNMP. As a result LEMS participants had plans for future environmental improvements and WILESPP did not.
- Activities that involve agencies and organizations with common goals and/or that allow producers to learn together and from each other are still effective methods of achieving behavior change.

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