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## **Using Social Indicators to Improve Adoption of Land Management Practices to Protect Water Quality in Three Midwestern Watersheds**

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### **Abstract Text:**

This USDA-CSREES funded project proposes to increase our understanding of the factors that foster and impede adoption of agricultural best management practices and to develop tools that will enable practitioners to develop more effective education, outreach, and incentive programs, ultimately resulting in improvements in water quality. Research and outreach activities are being conducted in four agricultural watersheds in the Midwest (Sandusky River-Tiffin and Upper Scioto Watersheds in Ohio, Clifty Creek Watershed in Indiana, and La Moine Watershed in Illinois). We are currently using a developed framework for social indicators to identify the specific factors that led to measurable behavior change of farmers and land managers in the three watersheds over the past ten years. From this information, we will isolate factors that fostered or impeded adoption of practices. Based on this knowledge, we will develop tools that can be used to promote adoption of recommended BMPs in environmentally critical areas. These tools will be developed based upon our understanding of what motivates land managers to adopt practices. In the final year of the study, we will analyze the effectiveness of the tools, disseminate results to watershed managers around the country, and develop educational modules for undergraduate and graduate courses on watershed management.

### **Impact Statement:**

Results of this project will enhance our understanding of the complex social dynamics that lead to adoption and rejection of conservation practices by farmers and farm managers. It will also provide new knowledge and tools for designing more effective education, outreach, and incentive programs by paying attention to the target audience and the context in which farm management decisions are made.