This newsletter is designed to facilitate watershed and resource planning, to provide education on the importance and need for natural resource protection, and to bring together local people and partners for successful planning efforts in Illinois. Each edition of Watershed Planning and You explores activities within a different NRCS Field Office District (FOD), but the issues, tools, and strategies discussed here offer guidance to resource professionals and watershed planning groups statewide. This issue highlights efforts in FOD4 in northwest Illinois.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service www.il.nrcs.usda.gov Volume 1, 2002

Locally-Led Group in NW Illinois Looks at Livestock Issues

In northwest Illinois, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) staff are bringing together stakeholders and partners to form a new kind of resource planning committee. Northwest Illinois Waters is a locally-led group specifically geared toward addressing livestock issues and exploring and improving solutions.

The group first gathered when NRCS/SWCD staff brought together landowners from Carroll, Jo Daviess, Ogle, Stephenson and Whiteside Counties to address specific livestock issues. The group began to work with a variety of partners including NRCS, SWCD, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), U of I Extension, and the Farm Bureau.

The first meeting on March 25th brought in over 30 stakeholders from the watershed area. The committee put into motion the process of organizing and delineating specific objectives and action items.

During the second meeting on April 1st, the group prioritized their concerns and selected conservation practices that will help meet project goals.

To widen the scope and understanding of the project, NRCS State Conservationist Bill Gradle toured some typical feedlots in Jo Daviess County on April 9th. Gradle joined local livestock producers to discuss challenges and potential solutions through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

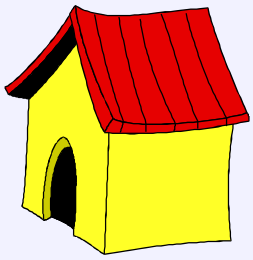
Northwest Illinois is the prime livestock producing area of the state. NRCS works extensively with landowners, primarily through EQIP, to help their livestock systems meet NRCS standards and comply with EPA standards.

The Northwest Illinois Waters planning committee is in a unique position to explore opportunities in the new Farm Bill that will help bring fresh solutions to our livestock issues. Working to enhance livestock systems, as we all know, requires a maximum amount of planning, engineering design, time, and money, yet the problems require expeditious and comprehensive solutions. Our northwestern Illinois planning group will explore possibilities for bringing the funding and engineering assistance needed to help landowners solve their livestock issues on a large scale and in a timely manner.

Submitted by Jerry Misek
NRCS District Conservationist, JoDaviess County

State Conservationist, Bill Gradle, discusses EQIP potentials with dairy producer Ken Williams at his Jo Daviess County farm.

Notes from the Shed



Locally-led groups in FOD4 are working to develop resource plans that will become the framework for maintaining or improving both the quality of natural resources and the quality of life within our area.

Many resource issues have overlapping impact on both rural and urban neighbors. Identifying common concerns and finding acceptable solutions is often both a challenging and rewarding process.

Planning efforts are dependent upon the commitment of citizens who dedicate time and effort to finding local solutions to local problems.

As Resource Planning Specialist for FOD 4, I commend each of you who has or is serving their community on a planning committee. Your participation is the key to success. I hope the watershed groups presented in this issue will encourage and inspire additional individuals to take an active role in the locally-led planning process.

Sharon Hartzold

Resource Planning Specialist FOD 4

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FOD 2 Office
central Illinois
PH: (217) 492-5097

FOD 3 Office
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FOD 4 Office
northwestern Illinois
PH: (309) 342-5138

To locate your County contact, visit the Illinois NRCS Web site at: **www.il.nrcs.usda.gov**

A Note from the FOD 4 ASTC...

Field Operations District 4 (FOD 4) covers 26 counties stretching from Quincy north to the Illinois/Wisconsin boarder. Within these counties, resource concerns cover a variety of issues from soil erosion to wildlife habitat to water quality. NRCS and SWCDs support local planning committees as they develop and implement resource plans.

One example of an active locally-led group is Northwest Illinois Waters. Local stakeholders (landowners, farm operators, and business representatives) are working to address livestock related issues and concerns within a 6-county area. The local planning committee has prioritized concerns, identified goals, and evaluated alternatives. Upon completion, the resource plan will serve as the basis for a funding request through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

At present, FOD 4 is fortunate to have six EQIP Priority Areas where funding is used to implement resource plans. Plum River, Little Missouri Creek, Shelby Creek, McKee Creek, Crow Creek West, and Honey Creek cover parts of 10 counties where approximately $700,000 in cost share for conservation practice application is available in 2002.

NRCS and SWCD staff are presently working with planning committees such as Bear Creek North in Hancock County and Copperas Creek in Fulton and Peoria Counties. Other counties with a growing interest in watershed planning activities include Mercer, Henry, Stark, Schulyer, and Knox Counties.

We in FOD 4 are proud to continue our encouragement and support of locally-led planning efforts.

L. Robert Dean

NRCS Assistant State Conservationist

Field Operations District 4

WATERSHED PROFILE:
Honey Creek Watershed

Description
Honey Creek is located in West Central Illinois in the southern half of Henderson County and the southwest portion of Warren County. The watershed is 40,021 acres in size, including the entire drainage system of Honey Creek, and it joins the Mississippi River floodplain. It is nineteen miles long and varies from one-fourth mile to five and one half miles in width. It is located in Pool 19 of the Lock and Dam system of Upper Mississippi River System. There has been historic evidence of continuing concerns of the Honey Creek Watershed dating back to 1957. A PL-566 flood protection plan was developed, however the project was not funded.

Counties:
Henderson and Warren

Municipalities:
Village of Raritan

Federal Congressional District
17

IL Senatorial Districts
47, 48

IL Representative Districts
94, 95

Population:
Village of Raritan, population of 200 is the only community in the watershed. The rest of the watershed is primarily farmland with about 468 farms.

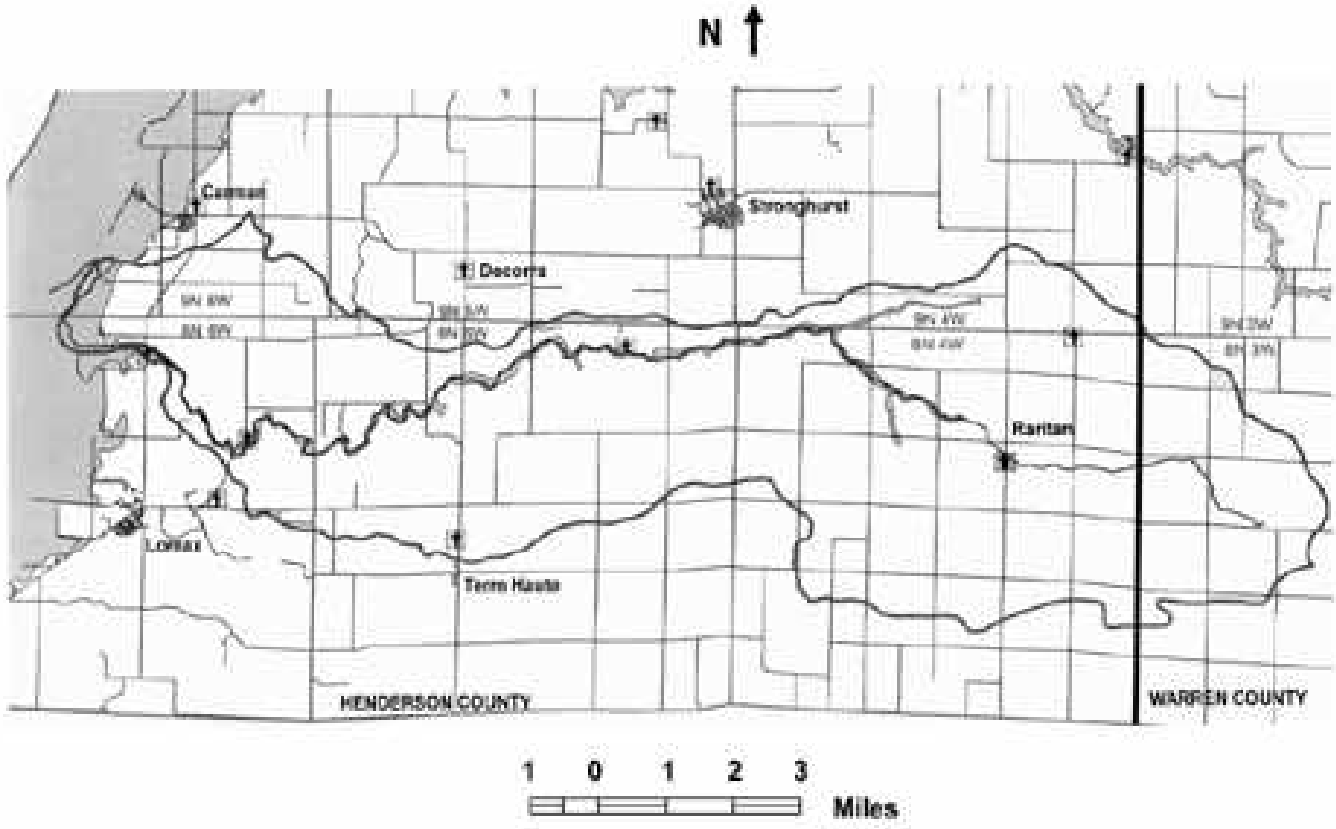
Landuse:
30,853 acres Cropland, 5,685 acres Pasture, 3,312 acres Woodland, 26 acres Open Water, 70 acres Wetland, 75 acres Urban and Urban Grasslands, 29.3 miles of Perennial stream, and 5 Cemeteries

Planning Committee Co-Chairs:
Peter Schwab and Michael Pence

General Resource Concerns:
Flooding, Soil Erosion/Water Quality, Wildlife Impact, Economics

Lead County Field Office:
Henderson County NRCS and SWCD

Activities to Date:
EQIP FY 01 Funding
EQIP FY 02 Funding
Investigation Outlet possibilities



Partnership Champions

Stakeholder

Richard Spangler

Retired engineer Richard Spangler is Chairman of the Spoon River Ecosystem Partnership and a Fulton County native and landowner. His in-depth knowledge of the area is enhanced by perspectives gained with international work experience and service as a delegate to the fourth Conservation Congress.

"I believe the persons that own the land have the greatest need and interest in protecting this resource. To succeed, everyone must be involved, cooperative and understanding," Richard said.

Richard was born and raised on a farm in Spoon River Valley. After earning an Engineering degree from Bradley University, Richard worked in Italy, Belgium, and China as well as Illinois and Alabama while employed with Texaco and Amoco Chemicals. He has since returned to Fulton County, where he owns and farms 400 acres. The land, some of which has been in the family for 150 years, requires prudent conservation measures.

As Chairman of the Spoon River Eco Partnership, Richard coordinates the group and its efforts to ensure that all projects show a direct correlation to soil conservation as well as other benefits, such as wildlife habitat improvement. "Limited funds for local planning efforts require focus and accountability to reap maximum benefits," he commented.

The Partnership also follows the work of the Court Creek pilot watershed, a subwatershed of the Spoon River and a project Richard is especially proud of. "Court Creek has been a shining light in showing how many individuals can succeed through working together," said Richard.

NRCS/SWCD

Lisa Platt

As a the Court Creek Watershed Coordinator and Resource Conservationist with the Knox County SWCD, Lisa Platt is working to realize her goal of getting conservation on the ground to address current resource issues and to protect those resources for future generations.

Lisa did not grow up on a farm. She became interested in agriculture when she took horticulture and soils classes from her high school Agriculture Department in Aledo, IL. "My Ag teacher saw my enthusiasm and encouraged me to get involved with FFA, continue my education in agriculture, and pursue a career in natural resources," said Lisa.

After high school, Lisa spent a summer working for the Mercer County SWCD, where she cultivated her interest in agriculture and conservation. Over the next two summers, Lisa worked as a crop scout. "Spending my time in the fields of three counties helped me realize that we need to focus on conservation," said Lisa. "That experience showed me that I could make a difference right here in Illinois."

Lisa graduated from Western Illinois University in 1999 with a Bachelors of Science in Agricultural Science with an emphasis on Agronomy. In August 2000, Lisa began her current position as Watershed Coordinator with the Knox County SWCD and, in September 2000, took on the additional role of Resource Conservationist. In her current position, Lisa spends much of her time working with landowners, educating people about their conservation options, and planning watershed activities such as site visits and sign-ups for cost share assistance.

Partnership

Ross Adams

Ross Adams manages the 12,000 acres of the Illinois River National Wildlife and Fish Refuges for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Much of Ross' 31 years of federal service has been in Illinois, managing and restoring habitat on Chautauqua, Meredosia, and Emiquon Refuges on the Illinois River and at Crab Orchard and Mark Twain Refuges.

Ross believes that addressing watershed issues with private landowners and partners such as NRCS, local SWCDs, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Ducks Unlimited, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and others is critical for the long term protection and maintenance of biological resources and habitats on refuges. A good example of this synergy is the working relationship between the Cameron Unit of Chautauqua Refuge and the Crow Creek West watershed.

Ross has a BS in Agriculture with emphasis on Wildlife Management from Purdue University and an MS from Oregon State University in Wildlife Science. Ross became interested in fish and wildlife when, as a child on his grandfather's farm in southern Indiana, he waded barefoot into pools left by receding floodwaters of the Wabash River and sorted through fish, crayfish, and other critters.

In addition to refuge management, Ross is involved in several planning efforts, including the Crow Creek Planning Committee. Ross said, "I am strongly encouraged by the efforts of diverse individuals and groups in restoring the biological diversity of the Illinois River. This is bound to have a positive effect on the Illinois River, enhancing the quality of life for all who love wildlife and all critters who depend on sustained, high quality natural systems."

Crow Creek West

Locally-Led Group Works with Midwest Group to Address Large Scale Issues on the Local Level

The Crow Creek West watershed encompasses 81 square miles of primarily cropland in Marshall, Putnam and Bureau Counties and includes a few acres in northeast Stark County in west-central Illinois. Crow Creek West watershed is located on the western side of the Illinois River, distinguishing it from the Crow Creek watershed just east of the river.

The first public meeting was held to bring together landowners and stakeholders in 1999 after the Marshall-Putnam County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)/Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) recommended that the watershed be considered a high priority for planning. Main concerns listed by area landowners were surface erosion, high cost of land treatment, education on watershed dynamics, creek bank maintenance, and the speed and quantity of water runoff. These issues are linked closely with larger issues within the Illinois River Basin, since over 62 miles of stream, including Crow Creek, outlet into the Illinois River at the Cameron Wildlife Refuge.

In June 2000, Crow Creek West became a focus area for the Midwest Natural Resources Group, a multi-agency organization working to boost the health and vitality of the Illinois River Basin by restoring declining fish and waterfowl populations. NRCS, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and Ducks Unlimited are partners in this project. This Midwest group is assisting the local planning committee in identifying funding sources and programs.

Crow Creek West has recently gained status as an EQIP priority area. The locally-led Planning Committee is working with local SWCD/NRCS staff to conduct signups with local landowners to be evaluated and ranked for consideration for contract development with EQIP funds. Having assessed the natural resources in the watershed, the Planning Committee discovered that cropland was relatively well protected from sheet and rill erosion. Through EQIP, the watershed planners hope to make available livestock practices not currently common in the watershed.

"We have a very proactive Conservation District," said NRCS District Conservationist Randy Edwards. "The subcommittees have done a good job of prioritizing subwatersheds, while the Midwest Natural Resources Group has evaluated and sequenced those priorities."

For more information contact
Randy Edwards, NRCS District Conservationist, Henry, IL

Calendar of Events

May 23
The Conservation Foundation Spring Luncheon.
White Eagle Golf Club, Naperville, IL. Presentation of the DuPage Clean Water Awards and discussion of the proposed Peotone Airport and tollway extensions. Call (630) 428-4500.

May 30
Asset-Based Community Development Workshop.
South Shore Cultural Center, Chicago, IL. Contact Betsy Quail at: bquail@fieldmuseum.org or (312) 665-7444.

Aug. 12-15
StormCon 2002: North American Surface Water Quality Conference & Exposition.
Marco Island Marriott, Marco Island, FL. Visit: www.StormCon.com or call (805) 681-1300 x 29.

Nov. 21-24
2002 Midwest Environmental Education Conference, "Something to Give, Something to Gain."
Anderson Center for Professional Education, St. Charles, IL. Visit: www.eeai.net.

Watersheds on the Web

Adopt-a-Watershed: *www.adopt-a-watershed.org*

Center for Watershed Protection: *www.cwp.org*

Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC)
www.ctic.purdue.edu/ctic/ctic.html

Des Plaines Watershed Alliance:
www.desplaineswatershed.org/alliance/links.html

DuPage River, Big Rock Creek and Blackberry Creek:
www.theconservationfoundation.org

EPA Surf Your Watershed: *www.epa.gov/surf*

Fox River Ecosystem Partnership:
www.foxriverecosystem.org

Ilinois Watershed Management Clearinghouse:
web.aces.uiuc.edu/watershed

Kishwaukee River Watershed:
www.mcdef.org/kwke.htm

Salt Creek Watershed (COMING SOON):
www.saltcreek.org

Silver Creek Watershed:
www.silvercreekwatershed.com

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service:
www.il.nrcs.usda.gov

Wisconsin-Illinois Upper Des Plaines River Ecosystem Partnership:
homepage.interaccess.com/~niwca/desplaines.htm

Court Creek

Communication Enhancing Conservation

Watershed planning efforts in the Court Creek Watershed are enjoying progress made with the help of superior public involvement and effective communication with local landowners.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) selected the 62,080-acre Court Creek Watershed in 1997 to be one of four pilot watershed projects in the state of Illinois. Fifty-three people attended the first Court Creek public meeting on March 31, 1998. At this meeting, stakeholders decided to focus efforts on three major resource concerns in the watershed: soil erosion, water quality, and fish and wildlife. Presently, the Court Creek committee meets once a month to discuss issues within the watershed.

In 2001, a total of four projects were implemented, including wetland restorations and water retention structures. In January 2002, the Planning Committee held their second concentrated landowner sign-up for cost-share assistance with the establishment of conservation practices that reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and enhance wildlife habitats. This sign up was a huge success, with a total of 45 sign-ups. Eleven of those landowners applied for assistance in the top 10 priority areas, areas within the watershed where conservation practices will have the greatest benefit to the watershed.

This sign-up also raised landowner awareness of products and services offered by the NRCS/SWCD Service Center. Approximately one-fourth of these applicants were new clients to the Knox County SWCD/NRCS office.

The Planning Committee can attribute much of this success to their efforts in communicating with and educating the public about the benefits of watershed based planning and conservation practices. Over the past two years, many articles, advertisements, newsletters, and personal interaction have helped to raise awareness.

The Court Creek Watershed Planning Committee also recently released the findings of a landowner survey conducted in coordination IDNR and the University of Illinois. Through the survey, landowners expressed positive attitudes about conservation efforts in the watershed. Survey respondents identified the loss of family farms, eroding streambanks, stream sedimentation, urban sprawl and water quality as top concerns. Many landowners requested more information about watershed planning and conservation practices.

Survey results also indicate that planning efforts in the Court Creek Watershed are largely in line with the concerns and goals of area landowners who may not attend watershed planning meetings to voice their opinions. The survey noted that the opinions expressed in public meetings do, in fact, reflect those of the majority of landowners in the watershed.

Full survey results can be obtained through the Knox County Farm Service Agency.

The Court Creek Watershed Planning Committee will use this information as they continue to provide education, information and assistance to area landowners in the future. In the next year, the Planning Committee will continue to implement many more projects to address our resource concerns.

Submitted by Lisa Platt
Resource Conservationist, Knox County SWCD

CF Industries National Watershed Award

Applications due June 1st!

The CF Industries National Watershed Award recognizes corporate and community excellence in watershed protection. Each year, one corproation and three communities nationwide are recognized for outstanding leadership in protecting America's water resources. The awards, administered by The Conservation Fund, focuses on innovative, nonregulatory approaches to improving water quality. Particular emphasis is placed on local partnerships that demonstrate the success of economic incentives, voluntary incentives, and education.

Corporate and community winners will be honored at a ceremony in Washington D.C. in the fall. Travel will be paid for the person accepting for each community winner. Cash awards will be given for each community winner.

Applications and information are available at The Conservation Fund web site at www.conservationfund.org or contact Beth Koonse at (304) 876-2815 or b.koonse@freshwaterinstitute.org.

The Low Down on Total Maximum Daily Loads

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program has received an enormous amount of attention over the last few years at national, state, and local levels. In 1998, USEPA directed each state to develop TMDLs for all impaired waters listed in the state 303(d) report by 2013. In Illinois, 336 watersheds will require TMDL development as listed in the 1998 report. Currently, 18 Illinois watersheds are in the midst of the TMDL process through consulting firms with another 14 watersheds to be released for bid this spring.

Engineering consulting firms hired by Illinois EPA will collect data and host meetings throughout Illinois for the next eleven years. Being aware of water quality concerns in a watershed, attending public meetings, providing information on resource planning activities to TMDL contractors and, most importantly, continuing with local resource planning efforts are items that local people can do to assist the TMDL process. Keep in mind that developing and implementing a local resource plan prior to the scheduled development of a TMDL may improve water quality to the point that the water body is no longer considered "impaired," thereby eliminating the need for a TMDL. As always, NRCS resource planning assistance through the locally led process is available to all planning groups, regardless of past, current, or future involvement with TMDLs.

One question frequently asked by planning groups is what happens once a TMDL is written. It is important for groups to realize that a TMDL is a plan to address each pollutant in a water body and even though it is not obtained through the locally led process, a TMDL is still a plan. Once written, it is then up to local watershed groups to decide what, if anything, is to be implemented from the TMDL. If inclined, groups can choose to obtain Section 319 of the Clean Water Act funding to implement all or portions of the TMDL implementation schedule.

While TMDLs may at first appear to be complicated to deal with, remember that they could potentially address some of the same issues as your planning group. The best way to understand TMDLs is to get involved with the public participation processes in place and to use TMDLs to meet your group's resource planning needs.

Submitted by Jeff White
NRCS/IEPA Liason

Water Quality

Consider 1 ST Things 1 ST

Whether concerns stem from issues with urban development, industry, livestock waste, nutrients in field runoff, or sedimentation from erosion, watershed planning groups invariably list improving water quality high on their list of objectives. When establishing a plan of action for addressing water quality issues, planning groups should first consider what "water quality" actually is.

On some level, we all think of water quality in terms of the clean, clear, potable water that runs from the kitchen tap. But drinking water is only one of our water needs. The water we use for irrigation, industry, recreation, and wildlife may all have different qualities. All of these water sources need not, and should not, have the same properties as our drinking water supply.

"Water quality" is not a measure of the purity of water. Rather, it is a statement of the condition of the resource related to its intended use. A *water quality problem* is an expression of the condition of a water body related to an impairment in the intended use of that water.

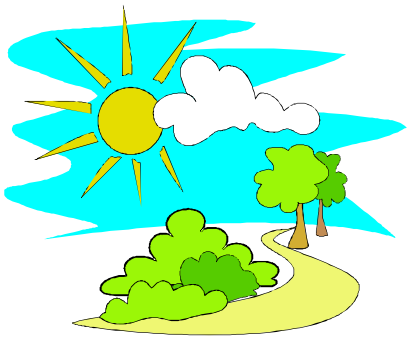
The first step in identification of water quality issues is to define the designated uses of the water body, i.e. public water supply, recreation, etc. For most water bodies in Illinois, designated uses are listed in the IEPA 305(B) report. For instance, a reservoir used by local industry for cooling purposes is taking in an excessive amount of sediment each year. Therefore, the community may be concerned with the decreasing carrying capacity of that reservoir, or the volume of water available for use. However, if that same reservoir is also used as a public drinking supply, then the community will need to look closely at other possible pollutants that may degrade the water resource as a drinking water supply.

The second step is to assess the condition of the water body in quantifiable terms. This is where the process gets tricky. When assessing water quality, it is easy to confuse symptoms with problems. Excess algae in a water body may appear to be a problem. In reality, however, the presence of excess nutrients in the water promotes excessive algae growth. In this case, the nutrients are the problem and algae is a symptom. The next step is to identify where those nutrients originate. This process may take you from the lake to sources within the watershed.

The point is: the success of any attempt to improve water quality depends on the development of an accurate problem statement before any solutions or actions are considered. The key is to first accurately identify intended uses and to then identify the problem, cause and source. Without laying this groundwork, a group can easily spend much time, effort and expense treating something that is not the cause of their concerns!

For additional information contact
Don Pitts, NRCS Water Quality Specialist, Champaign, IL

Natural Resources Conservation Service
2118 W. Park Court
Champaign, IL 61821



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Highlights:

Northwest Illinois Waters

Honey Creek Watershed Profile

Crow Creek West

Water Quality: Consider 1ST Things 1ST

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