

Yahara WINS: Partnership continues progress on phosphorus reduction

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MADISON, WI – During 2017, work by the Yahara Watershed Improvement Network and its partners kept more than 40,000 pounds of phosphorus from area surface waters, more than 40 percent of the total reduction of 96,000 pounds per year needed over the next 20 years to meet project goals.

The reduction came from a combination of efforts by farmers, Dane County, Rock County and area communities to implement practices aimed at capturing nutrients and reducing runoff. Phosphorus reduction totals included 18,859 pounds held back by members of Yahara Pride Farms, 18,015 pounds reported by Dane County; 566 pounds reported by Rock County and 2,629 pounds as a result of grants funded by Yahara WINS.

Practices implemented by farmers that contributed to the savings ranged from planting cover crops and harvestable buffers to stabilizing stream banks and using low-disturbance manure injection. Local municipalities and homeowners made further reductions through leaf management, erosion control and stormwater management.

“We are pleased by the progress of all the Yahara WINS partners during 2017 and our collaborative work was recognized in July when we earned the prestigious U.S. Water Prize from the U.S. Water Alliance,” said Martye Griffin, Yahara WINS executive committee president. “While the results from the partnership’s first full year of operation in 2017 represent a significant reduction in phosphorus from the

documented practices, we also know that variability in precipitation including the timing and intensity of storms may affect phosphorus loading in the Yahara Watershed.”

As a result, Griffin said, progress made through the phosphorus reducing practices may not be evident in water quality sampling reports during the early years of the project. Over the 20 year length of the project, however, implementation of new and continued practices is expected to achieve water quality goals.

Also during 2017, Yahara WINS gained new partnerships and agreements with Rock County, Town of Burke and Clean Lakes Alliance. There are now 24 governmental bodies contributing funds to the project as part of an intergovernmental agreement that enables municipalities with requirements to reduce phosphorus or sediment to meet their requirements through Yahara WINS reductions.

Project background

The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, known as Yahara WINS, is a groundbreaking initiative to achieve clean water goals for the Yahara Watershed. In this effort, community partners led by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District are collaborating on a strategy called watershed adaptive management in which all sources of phosphorus in a watershed work together to reduce phosphorus. The effort began in 2012 as a pilot project and in 2017 transitioned to a full scale effort.

The 20 year adaptive management project aims to achieve permit requirements and regional Clean Water Act goals identified through the Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load by 2036. To accomplish these goals, the group facilitates partnerships, conducts outreach, pools resources to fund phosphorus reducing practices in the watershed, analyzes stream samples and works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to address regulatory needs for the project. For more information and to view a copy of the annual report, check out the Yahara WINS webpage, <http://www.madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Yahara-WINS>.