Wisconsin DATCP: Coming Feb. 1, new, more local runoff risk forecast tool

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MADISON – A new version of Wisconsin's Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast will debut Feb. 1, offering farmers a much more detailed and localized look at the threat of runoff before they plan to spread manure.

The runoff forecast, available at manureadvisorysystem.wi.gov, provides maps showing short-term runoff risk for daily application planning, taking into account factors including soil moisture, weather forecast, crop cover, snow cover, and slope. It is updated three times daily by the National Weather Service.

The first version of the RRAF provided all this data by watershed basins. Now, the data will be based on a system using four-kilometer grids, providing data at a finer scale and allowing farmers to look at conditions closer to home. It uses the same computer models that the National Weather Service uses to forecast floods.

In addition to the precipitation forecast, the new version will also provide soil temperatures and saturation, based on computer models. And it will make it easier to find previous day snapshots, a tool that farmers often use to document adherence to their nutrient management plans.

When farmers open the RRAF, they will see a statewide map. By clicking on the map, they will be able to zoom in on their areas. There will also be a link to a video tutorial to show them how to use the tool.

“The Runoff Risk Advisory Forecast does not replace nutrient management planning or emergency planning in case of manure spills,” said Lacey Cochart, director of the Bureau of Land and Water Resources in the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. “It’s one tool to help farmers make informed decisions, and now that tool can be more effective.”