

MCPR response to Southeast Minnesota Nitrate Strategies Collaborative Work Group recommendations

The Minnesota Crop Production Retailers (MCPR) is disappointed by the incomplete recommendations delivered by the Southeast Minnesota Nitrate Strategies Collaborative Work Group. Key agriculture voices would have added valuable input but were left out of the conversation.

In 2024, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture began convening a group of residents to discuss nitrates in southeast Minnesota. The group consisted of representatives from a variety of stakeholder constituencies. Unfortunately, the group did not include anyone representing ag retail or sales agronomists. Over the past year, the group reviewed various reports, heard several presentations and participated in site visits. Again, the group did not visit ag retailers or engage with any of the leading-edge co-ops serving the region. As a result of this gap in information, MCPR maintains the report fails to capture the level of precision agricultural practices and the high-quality agronomic recommendations that are currently being implemented across southeast Minnesota.

Minnesota already has a robust approach to nitrate management that builds on industry best management practices, grounded in a science-based approach. We applaud the working group's efforts to provide context for developing a regional response to nitrates in groundwater and highlighting the importance of protecting drinking water supplies. However, we are frustrated that industry leaders in agriculture retail weren't given the opportunity to contribute to the dialogue.

MCPR supports ongoing public education and best management practices addressing nitrate management. MCPR actively promotes utilizing the 4Rs of nutrient management, including Right Source, Right Rate, Right Time and Right Place. These principles guide farmers and agricultural professionals to optimize fertilizer use, reduce environmental impact and improve crop yield.

However, MCPR is concerned that the language of the report's recommendations continues to push a regulatory approach with potential financial penalties. The recommendations to add ag retailer level reporting would be cumbersome, adding to costs and demands on staff time. The report recommendations rely heavily on the University of Minnesota's nitrogen recommendations, failing to account for changes in crop varieties, weather conditions and the extensive infield trial data available.

MCPR remains committed to supporting its grower customers in optimizing fertilizer efficiency and implementing cutting-edge best management practices. Production agriculture contributes positively to the overall economy of southeast Minnesota. In 2024, the corn crop alone was worth well over \$1 billion in economic activity flowing through our communities and enhancing the regional tax base. In total, southeast Minnesota's agriculture industry contributes over \$8 billion in economic activity each year.

About the Minnesota Crop Production Retailers

MCPR exists to promote the proper use, storage and application of crop production inputs in an environmentally safe and agronomically sound management practices