Engaging Agricultural Partners in Conservation Practice Adoption in the Wisconsin River Basin

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TMDL Implementation

Industrial Wastewater
Municipal Wastewater
Urban Stormwater

Rural/Agricultural Nonpoint Source
Agricultural Phosphorus Loads

This slide is for illustrative purposes only - does not represent actual WI River basin data
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The usual approach...
Attitudes are like rocks in a rapids. Trying to solve (environmental) problems by changing attitudes is like packing dynamite on a canoe trip and trying to blow up every rock in your way. – Dr. Thomas Heberlein
Acceptance and Diffusion of Hybrid Corn Seed in Two Iowa Communities

By Bryce Ryan and Neal Gross

Agricultural Experiment Station
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Sociology Subsection
Economics and Sociology Section

[Diagram showing the diffusion of hybrid corn seed adoption over years]
Diffusion of Innovations

- **Venturesome**
  - Has access to capital
  - Seeks out ideas from outside the local group

- **Respected**
  - Opinion leader
  - Embodiment of successful, discrete use of new ideas
  - Decreases uncertainty in others about a new idea by adopting it

- **Deliberate**
  - Deliberates for some time before adopting a new practice
  - Looks to early adopters for advice and information

- **Skeptical**
  - Adopts new ideas due to the increasing weight of peer pressure

- **Traditional**
  - Decision making is based on what was done in the past
A different approach

• Help make behavior more visible
• Carefully identify **who to start with** - be strategic in identifying partners/early adopters
• Deliver message through an individual (or organization) who has **credibility** with the audience you are trying to reach.
• **Focus on areas of common interest** (NOT green water!)
• Gain **commitments** from early adopters to speak to others about the behavior.
• Instead of a threatening messages, **focus on specific actions an individual can take**
• Use **two-sided messages**
Healthy Soil, Healthy Water Partnership
• 70% personal contact/word of mouth
• 27% letter or email from someone they knew personally
How do you plan to use the information you heard at today’s workshop?

- Implementing changes and passing it on
- Share back home
- Diversify cover crops
- Incorporation into farm operation
- No till and cover crops
- Change farm methods
- Plant more cover crops
- Pass it on to others and try to lead the way
- Implement on a small portion of my farm

62% of producers indicated that they intended to modify operations.
Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed
- Dairy producers (100-500 head farms)
- Cash grain producers (collectively farm ~8,600 acres)

Lakes Petenwell & Castle Rock Stewards (PACRs)
“Regular people who love these lakes”
Farmers of Mill Creek Field Tour, June 2016
Farmers of Mill Creek Field Tour, June 2016
Questions?