

## GOOD NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT—A CONSULTANT’S PERSPECTIVE

Paul Knutzen, CCA <sup>1/</sup>

### Land Conservation Department

A good Nutrient Management plan begins with maps from the county’s Land Conservation Department. Maps are necessary to identify areas restricted for winter applications of manure and in order to comply with local conservation plans. Early involvement from the Land Conservation Department also helps in developing a relationship with the grower by providing added and continuing information that is vital for growers to know what is expected of them.

### Soil Samples

Next it is essential to have good and accurate soil samples to work with over a three to four year time period. Soil samples can be used to separate fields according to soil type and for marking maps for easy reference. Soil sample results help define recommendations regarding manure applications, fertility needs, and crop selection.

### Manure Samples

Farms with cattle need to provide accurate head counts for manure out-put, storage and handling data. Manure tests provide insights into use and volumes of coolant and/or wash water, bedding material and trapped nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen.

### Implementation

A major part of implementing the Nutrient Management Plan is communication with the grower and other agencies. Each person has different personalities and has ideas and experiences to share to make the plan most effective. Sharing successes and failures is important as well as side by side yield checks. For consistent and superior plan management I have found that by combining Nutrient Management and Pest Management implementation is highly improved. Frequent farm checks and the regular communication greatly reduce issues slipping through the cracks and questions from the grower can be reviewed and answered before actions are taken. With frequent visits the grower is able to see and appreciate the benefits of their management plan and are then likely to follow them more closely.

For ease in implementation, it is necessary for the plan to be easy to handle and must be understood by both the grower and the fertilizer dealer. Multiple rates for different fields can be very confusing and combining some fields is often needed even though it may result in some reasonable over application. Manure haulers also need to be a part of the communications to apply planned rates to fields. Keeping in step with busy farm schedules to oversee timing in actions is very important. If the plan components are not implemented on a timely basis, overall effectiveness is reduced. Often it is necessary for the consultant to take a role in coordinating efforts between farm and service agencies.

<sup>1/</sup> Knutzen Crop Consulting, Inc.

As a consultant, it is essential to be aware of and prepare for coming rule changes. An open mind is needed to not only make changes within the Nutrient Management Plan but also in its implementation. Change takes time. Striving each year to improve each plan is the way to progress.