WHEN TWO WORLDS COLLIDE
THE FISH-MEETS-MANURE EXPERIENCE

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2005 was a year when the worlds of fisheries and agriculture met too frequently under less than ideal conditions. The delivery of animal waste to the ground and surface water resources of the state resulted in widespread impacts to the public trust. These impacts included private drinking water contamination, fish kills, and chronic effects that impair habitat, recreation, aesthetics, and systemic health of public resources.

These events elevated manure management to a Governors' priority. Recommendations set forth by an appointed task force have raised public awareness and jump-started a long overdue dialogue between the agricultural community and regular citizens. Long held beliefs and practices concerning the volume, timing, and location of winter-spread manure are being discussed and challenged. The Departments of Natural Resources and Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection are advancing a suite of actions that seek to balance economic, logistic, and environmental concerns.

The mechanisms of how manure is delivered to surface waters are discussed in respect to components that drive an event. The vulnerability of fisheries resources to ammonia toxicity in relation to pH, slope, application rate, and distance from water are examined using a case study from winter 2005. Strategies to mitigate a manure spill once it occurs are presented.

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