EPA UPDATES: NONPOINT SOURCE PROGRAM, AGRICULTURE, AND WATER QUALITY COLLABORATIONS

Presentation by U.S. EPA for ICCA Board Meeting
August 20, 2025

United States Environmental Protection Agency

Clean Water Act (CWA) §319 Grant Program

- Established in 1987 CWA amendments
  - 319(b) - State Management Programs
  - 319(h) - Grant Program
- States, territories, and tribes receive grant money that supports technical & financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects, and monitoring
- The §319 grant program continues to be EPA's 1st line of defense against nonpoint source (NPS) pollution
  - ≈40% of 319 projects address agricultural nonpoint sources
  - ≈10% of 319 projects specifically address cropland agriculture

More about the §319 program

§319 Program Influences State Programs and Powers Local Watershed Projects

Funds are distributed to states annually

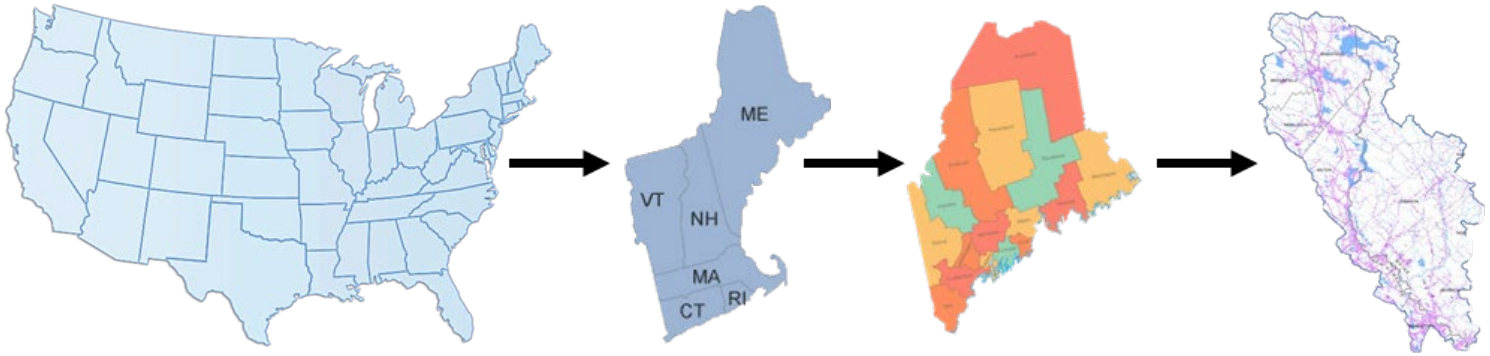
- FY24: $161.2M distributed to states/$13.2M to tribes
- 40% non-federal match required

319 funds are a catalyst

- Provides initial funding that is leveraged to secure additional partner resources

Guidelines - Use of funds requires:

- **Watershed projects:** ≥50% of funds allocated must support on-the-ground projects
- **NPS program work:** staffing, administrative
- 319 watershed projects must be guided by watershed-based plans

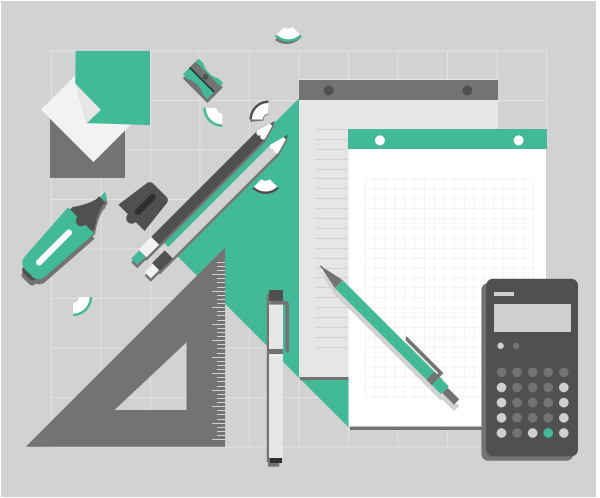


Clean Water State Revolving Fund

- The Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) program is a federal-state partnership that provides low-cost financing for a wide range of water quality needs, including NPS needs
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) infuses ≈$12.7B into states' CWSRF programs FY22-26
- There is great potential to invest more CWSRF dollars in agricultural conservation
  - To date, $900M of CWSRF has gone towards ag. conservation
  - 29 states have used CWSRF for ag. conservation
  - Other states can learn from their examples, like Kansas used CWSRF funding to purchase a fleet of cover crop interseeders in a targeted priority watershed

§604(b) Water Quality Management Planning Program

- Under §604(b) of the CWA, each year states reserve 1% of their CWSRF allotment to conduct water quality management planning
- FY25 state allotments: $43,074,000
- IIJA infuses approximately $127M into state programs FY22-26
- Funds may be used for a wide range of planning activities including: ambient monitoring; watershed-based plan development; Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development; water quality standards development



EPA's 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning webpage

Tackling Nutrient Pollution

- Nutrient pollution is one of the most widespread and challenging environmental problems our nation faces
- EPA is committed to partnerships with agricultural stakeholders to address nutrient and other water quality issues
  - Collaboration with USDA and other stakeholders is critical
  - CCAs are the doers, providing on-the-ground technical assistance
  - Advanced 4R nutrient management certification can help!

Gulf Hypoxia Grant Program

- FY22-26: IIJA provides $60M to the 12 Hypoxia Task Force (HTF) states, 15 Tribes and several regional partners to advance the HTF Action Plan goals of improving water quality in the Mississippi River Basin and the Gulf of America and reducing low oxygen (hypoxic) conditions, or "dead," zone in the northern Gulf
- Funds can be used to:
  - Support staff in accomplishing goals of the GHP
  - Prioritize and target watersheds with the greatest opportunities for nutrient reductions
  - Develop new or expand existing water quality programs
  - Collaborate with HTF partners
  - Build capacity for nutrient reduction activities

More Information: https://www.epa.gov/ms-htf/gulf-hypoxia-program

Hypoxia Task Force

- HTF established 1997 to:
  - Understand the causes and effects of eutrophication in the Gulf of America;
  - Coordinate activities to reduce the size, severity, and duration of the hypoxic zone
- Activities include:
  - Coordinating and supporting nutrient management activities from all sources;
  - Restoring habitats to trap and assimilate nutrients; and
  - Supporting other hypoxia related activities in the Mississippi River and Gulf of America watersheds
- Goal: reduce the five-year running average areal extent of the Gulf of America hypoxic zone to less than 5,000 square kilometers by the year 2035

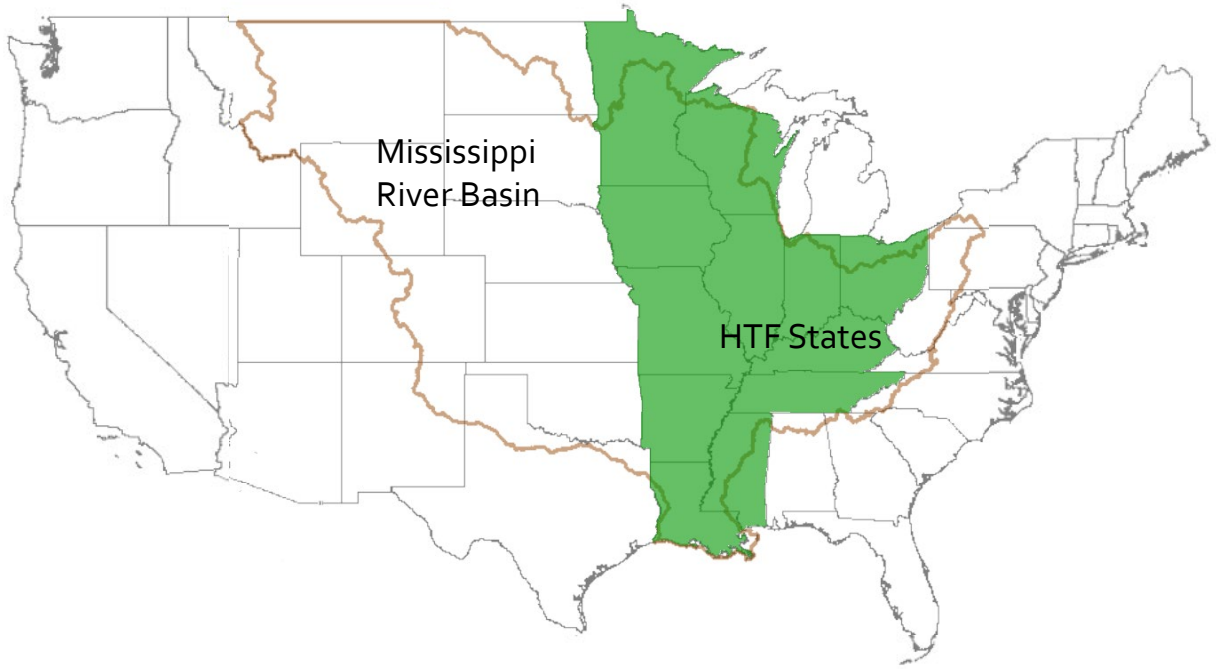
Hypoxia Task Force (cont.)

5 Federal Agencies and Tribes

- US Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- US Department of Agriculture
- US Department of Interior
- National Tribal Water Council

12 States

- Arkansas
- Missouri
- Iowa
- Tennessee
- Minnesota
- Indiana
- Ohio
- Louisiana
- Illinois
- Mississippi
- Kentucky
- Wisconsin



Each state member represents one of the following state agencies, with multiple agencies engaged with the Coordinating Committee:

Agriculture, Environmental Quality, and/or

Natural Resources agencies

EPA and the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

- A partnership between USDA NRCS, EPA, and state water quality agencies (since 2012)
- Goal: accelerate adoption of water quality focused conservation practices in high priority watersheds
  - Focus on nutrients, sediment, and pathogens
- Leverages 319 funding and USDA Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) $ to maximize impacts in priority watersheds
  - Between FY23-24, $9.8M in 319 funding was invested in NWQI watersheds, which was matched by $9.2M in nonfederal funding*
- FY23-24: of 89 NWQI waters monitored, states reported improvements in 29 waters, with most attributed to agricultural conservation

Check out: *Planning and Implementing Agricultural Water Quality Projects Through the National Water Quality Initiative: a Practitioners Guide* (May 2021)

*Budget amounts applied across the entirety of the project regardless of the footprint of the project which could include one or many HUC12 watersheds. Funds could have been applied in the HUC12 watershed from the NWQI listing or from an adjacent one if multiple are listed. Data are entered continuously in GRTS and additional projects/funds for open grants can be added daily. These projects represent a snapshot from a data download completed on 7-22-25.

Water Quality Improvements to Broken Sword Creek Watershed

- 2013: Broken Sword Creek (BSC) selected as NWQI priority watershed
- 2013: BSC assessed as impaired for aquatic life use due to excessive nutrients, direct habitat alterations, flow alterations and excessive sedimentation/siltation.
- 10 sites in watershed sampled before the funding and implementation of conservation practices.
- 2013: local, state and federal agencies worked with partners to implement BMPs on ag lands in BSC and surrounding watersheds (nutrient management, cover crops, drainage mgmt.)
- Performance-based reimbursement for purchasing or upgrading cover crop planting equipment and accelerated nutrient mgmt.
- 2018: The Ohio EPA re-assessed ten sites in BSC following adoption and installation of the agricultural BMPs. Water quality improvements were demonstrated by a lift in aquatic life use metrics.

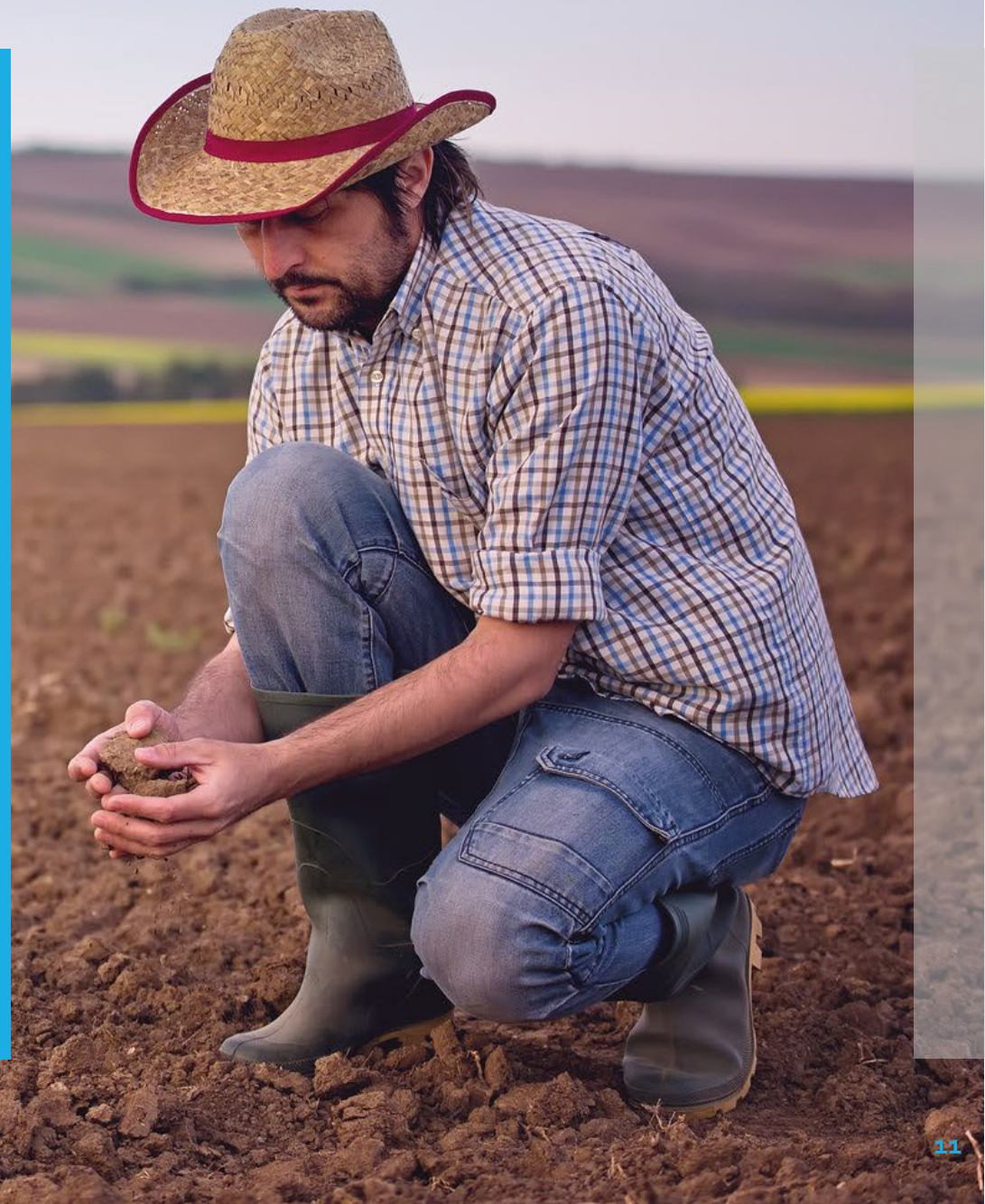
Controlled drainage water management system.

Read the story HERE.

No-till corn planted into cereal rye.

CCC-EPA Engagement Opportunities

- CCA board members can participate in state and local water quality partnerships
- Information exchange between EPA, state water quality agencies, and CCAs
- Technical exchange on agricultural topics (e.g., webinars)
- Engagement opportunities to explore:
    - Watershed planning and implementation
    - Collaborating on high impact water quality conservation practices
    - Collaborating in priority areas
    - States' Nonpoint Source Management Program priorities and milestones
    - Know your state's 319 request for proposals (RFP) processes and timing where applicable
    - Review and comment on State Revolving Fund Intended Use Plans (IUPs)
    - Other ideas unique to local boards/regions?



Nonpoint Source Resources

- Resources for Watershed Planning
- Section 319 Project Mapper
- Section 319 NPS State Contacts
- NPS Success Stories
- EPA's Pollutant Load Estimation Tool (PLET)
- Leveraging 319 funds and State Revolving Funds
- Local Source Water Collaborative Map
- Compendium of Tools and Methods to Estimate Environmental Benefits for Nature-Based Solutions

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Thank You!

Questions and Discussion