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The Human Dimension of Targeting Watershed Practices

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Abstract Text:

When focusing on getting the biggest improvements in water quality with the limited funds and resources available, people look at targeting the land area as the way of moving forward. Identifying targeted watershed areas may be a vital step but it isn't going to get the practices on the ground. To do this we need to work directly with the landowners and land managers and determine why they may or may not participate in many of the programs or practices that are recommended. Land owners may have a series of reasons why they don't participate that must be resolved before management practices can be put into place.

There are necessary strategies for getting producers and landowners to participate in efforts to implement management practices that will improve water quality. To make targeting BMPs work, we need to:

- Understand how producers and land owners consider the issues
- Understand the conditions for which farmers will accept support
- Prepare them for making the leap from farm producer to conservationist
- Provide them with input and decision making capabilities for practice selection
- Provide them with opportunities to participate in educational/information activities.

Understanding that field-by-field planning is important but watershed management discussions with neighbors are more important.

We will investigate the characteristics of landowners, the roles they need to play and how to effectively get them involved in implementing BMPs in targeted areas of the watershed and how to promote watershed thinking and decision making. Two watershed case studies will be examined to show how landowners moved from field-to-field to watershed planning to reduce pesticide loading.

Impact Statement:

Being able to convince landowners that they have a role in watershed protection and getting them to change practices that will improve water quality is a key step in long-term water quality protect. Taking the practice from field-to-field to watershed planning creates more unity and responsibility in the farming community.