



**ILLINOIS  
CORN  
GROWERS  
ASSOCIATION**

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Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Working Group  
National Center for Coastal Ocean Science  
WS 13446 SSMC4  
1305 East-west Hwy.  
Silver Springs, MD 20910

### Comments on CENR Hypoxia Reports

From: Doug Wilson, President  
Illinois Corn Growers Association

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments from the Illinois Corn Growers Association (ICGA) regarding the Committee on Environmental and Natural Resource on the Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia issue. ICGA is trade association representing corn producers in Illinois and as such we have a significant interest in this topic.

#### **Science First**

You will be receiving abundant information from other groups documenting problems or concerns with the CENR report so I will keep my comments short and to the point. First and foremost ICGA is concerned the hypoxia issue has become political and from the public perspective it is being tainted by emotion rather than reason.

There are several key flaws with the reports which provide enough reason to reevaluate the report and the entire approach to the issue at this point. We need to step back and re-establish focus on the issue from a strictly science-based perspective.

#### **Farming Management Has Changed**

Agriculture has made, and continues to make, remarkable gains in addressing soil management and water quality. Farm management techniques today have changed to the point of being almost unrecognizable to our fathers and grandfathers.

Today, nitrogen rates per bushel have decreased significantly. Corn growers have cut nitrogen application rates by 22 percent from 1984 to 1998. Most growers today are using 1.02 pounds of nitrogen today compared to 1.31 in 1984.

ICGA is working to expand and accelerate this trend through promoting government conservation incentives and through direct producer education efforts on proper nitrogen application rates and other Best Management Practices.

## "T" By 2000

One of the best ways to address nitrogen movement to water without adversely effecting farmer's optimal yields is to fight soil erosion. Nitrogen in runoff from farm fields has been a concern in the past, and continues to be a concern. However, we have made significant gains in fighting erosion, and thus nitrogen movement, through the "T" by 2000 program. The "T" stands for tolerable soil loss and relates to lowering soil loss to a level that nature can replace any minimal soil losses.

Keeping the soil in place and the nitrogen in the soil profile allows plants to utilize the nitrogen directly or for natural degradation of the nitrogen to take place. We have almost attained "T" across Illinois. Having done so means we are also reducing the amount of phosphorus loss from farm fields.

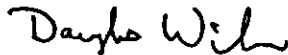
Conservation tillage, conservation buffers, soil testing, variable rate technology, integrated pest management, global positioning, precision agriculture techniques, and biotechnology are providing us with new tools and success stories.

Agriculture is doing its part in addressing environmental issues through ongoing voluntary programs. The industry has earned the right to fair treatment on the Hypoxia issue and this will only come about if impartial science rules our choices and decides our future direction.

Heavy handed and cumbersome regulations, excessive taxes or outside entities trying to micro-manage a farmers business operations will not provide a long term or sustainable resolution on this issue. Unbiased scientific evidence is a must, and once obtained, will help guide agriculture in additional steps which may be needed.

Thanks you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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President

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