

Developing a Nutrient Management Plan

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A nutrient management plan (NMP) has been defined by eXtension as “a specific plan for managing nutrient applications in order to achieve the greatest economic benefit and the greatest environmental protection.” One could argue that this is the goal of every agricultural producer in the nation.

However, while most crop and livestock producers *plan* to raise their products in a profitable fashion with high stewardship standards, not everyone has that *plan* on paper. Having an NMP can help you manage nutrients from animal waste and commercial fertilizer input costs, and improve North Dakota’s surface water quality.

So why is having a plan important, and why should it be down on paper? Besides having hardcopy records in the event of a dispute, a plan gives your operation a direction and purpose. Knowing what you plan to do in the future can alter decisions (financial and production) you make today.

An NMP basically is recordkeeping on paper (not by memory). Records of soil test results, manure nutrient analysis results, cropping history, commercial fertilizer use, manure spreading, field maps and weather constitute an NMP and can help an operation benchmark and plan for the future.

For help creating an NMP for your operation, whether you raise crops, livestock, vegetables or a combination of these, contact Mary Berg, area Extension livestock environmental management specialist at the Carrington Research Extension Center, at mary.berg@ndsu.edu.



Field trials assessing crop response to manure applications.