IL NUTRIENT LOSS REDUCTION STRATEGY  
AUDIENCE TALKING POINTS

ON-THE-GROUND (Farmers, landowners, operators, commodity groups, etc.)

* American farmers have been able to feed the world for generations because of our fertile fields, hard work and common sense practices. We embrace technology when it makes sense and learn from each other.
* One of the most important decisions landowners and operators can make to increase land productivity and improve yields is to strategically manage our soil health. **CONSERVATION FARMING** is simply the process of applying smart sets of practices strategically on your fields to improve soil health.
* As long-time stewards of your land, you know better than anyone else how some acres behave differently than others. You already have a system on your land that is tailor-made for your land. Likewise some soil health practices see the greatest results when paired with others.
* One practice alone is often not enough to truly improve soil health. **CONSERVATION** **FARMING** offers a system of practices that can [improve soil health, reduce nutrient loss, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, etc.]. You choose the right set of practices for you, for that field, for that acre.
* These practices keep nutrients available for your crops, preventing them from running off and polluting streams and rivers. Healthy rivers and streams are part of our community’s character, quality drinking water, family memories and good fishing and hunting spots.
* Data shows these practices increase yields and improve soil health. Pilot projects have shown success. By delaying implementation, we’re losing more nutrients—and money—than we need to.
* This field uses cover crops and no-till to improve soil health. What’s *your* strategy?

POLICY INFLUENCERS (Constituents, activists, nonprofits)

* According to USDA, 80% of nitrogen pollution in our rivers comes from nutrients that have been washed away from agricultural fields. All of these nutrients in our streams and rivers harm fish and threaten drinking water, damaging the water resources that are important parts of our communities and memories.
* Nutrient pollution has impacts in our backyard. Nitrates from fertilizer flow from our fields to our faucets, a serious public health risk. Conservation farming practices can stop nutrient pollution before it enters our water sources and are more cost-effective than expensive water treatment plant upgrades.
* Conservation farming offers farmers a voluntary system of practices that can simultaneously improve soil health and improve water quality by reducing the amount of nutrients coming off their fields.
* Conservation Farming practices improve water quality, which is essential for our local rivers and streams. Healthy rivers and streams are part of our communities’ character, family memories and good fishing and hunting spots.
* Illinois is now significantly behind neighboring states in embracing modern, smart and strategic conservation practices. Even worse, because state programs that could be used to promote these practices have been unfunded since 2015, we have literally lost access to federal dollars, pushing us further behind.
* Illinois is an agricultural state. We are the number one producer of soybeans and number two producer of corn. This also means that we are one of the biggest contributors of nutrient pollution to our region’s rivers and streams. This is NOT the kind of reputation Illinois should have.
* To protect Illinois’s valuable soil and water, our legislators and the governor should fully fund state SWCDs and work harder to bring federal dollars to Illinois conservation programs.

**DECISION-MAKERS**

* According to USDA, 80% of nitrogen pollution in our rivers comes from nutrients that have been washed away from agricultural fields. All of these nutrients in our streams and rivers harm fish and threaten drinking water, damaging the water resources that are important parts of our communities and memories.
* Data shows conservation practices increase yields and improve soil health. Pilot projects have shown success. By delaying implementation, we’re losing more nutrients than we need to—which hurts farms and our rivers.
* To protect Illinois’s valuable soil and water, legislators and the governor should fully fund state SWCDs and work harder to bring federal dollars to Illinois conservation programs.
* As a decision maker, you have the ability to ensure that the state reaches the goals laid out in the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy by promoting policies and funds aimed at improving soil health. **CONSERVATION FARMING** practices are proven to increase yields and reduce nutrient runoff, but farmers need access to resources and tools to learn about and implement these practices.
* Illinois has a commitment to reduce nutrient pollution through its Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy — and county-based SWCDs are the most important local infrastructure in place currently to address the problem.
* As a bonus, Conservation Farming practices also improve water quality, which is essential for our local rivers and streams. Healthy rivers and streams are part of our communities’ character, family memories and good fishing and hunting spots.