**What are the main nutrient of concern in Illinois?**

**What is nutrient pollution?**

Plants and animals need nitrogen and phosphorus to survive. But when too much of either is carried in runoff from city streets and farm fields or flows out of wastewater treatment plants, it can fuel algae blooms that decrease oxygen needed by aquatic plants and animals. In the Gulf of Mexico, nutrients washed down by the Mississippi River have created a ‘dead zone’ that covers thousands of square miles. Algae blooms also lower property values, hinder recreation, and threaten public health. In addition, nutrient pollution can degrade drinking water quality and require utilities to install costly treatment equipment.

**What is Illinois doing to address the problem?**

To help protect local streams and the Gulf, Illinois and 11 other states in the Mississippi River Basin have pledged to develop strategies to reduce the nutrient loads leaving their borders. These strategies are part of a national plan developed by the Mississippi River, Gulf of Mexico Watershed Nutrient Task Force to reduce the size of the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone.

The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy builds on existing efforts by state and local governments, as well as non-profits and industry, to protect and restore Illinois waterways.

**What does the strategy call for?**

The Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy lays out a comprehensive suite of best management practices for reducing loads from wastewater treatment plants and urban and agricultural runoff. Recommended activities target the state’s most critical watersheds and are based on the latest science and best-available technologies. Along with water quality standards currently being developed,

these practices will help the state achieve its ultimate goal of reducing phosphorus and nitrate loads by 45 percent.

The strategy also calls for more collaboration among state and federal agencies, cities, non-profits, and technical experts on issues like water quality monitoring programs, funding, and nutrient reduction outreach.

**How was the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy developed?**

The strategy was developed by a policy working group led by the Illinois Water Resources Center, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, and the Illinois Department of Agriculture. Group members included representatives from state and federal agencies, agriculture, and non-profit organizations as well as scientists and wastewater treatment professionals. By relying on the expertise of diverse stakeholders, the working group developed a cost-effective strategy that meets community and industry needs while still reducing the negative impacts of nutrient pollution on environmental and public health.