

# Nutrient Management Planning

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minimize the impact to farm production.

According to a publication issued by Penn State, the P-Index is a field evaluation tool that was developed to identify areas that have high vulnerability or risk to phosphorus loss to surface water bodies.

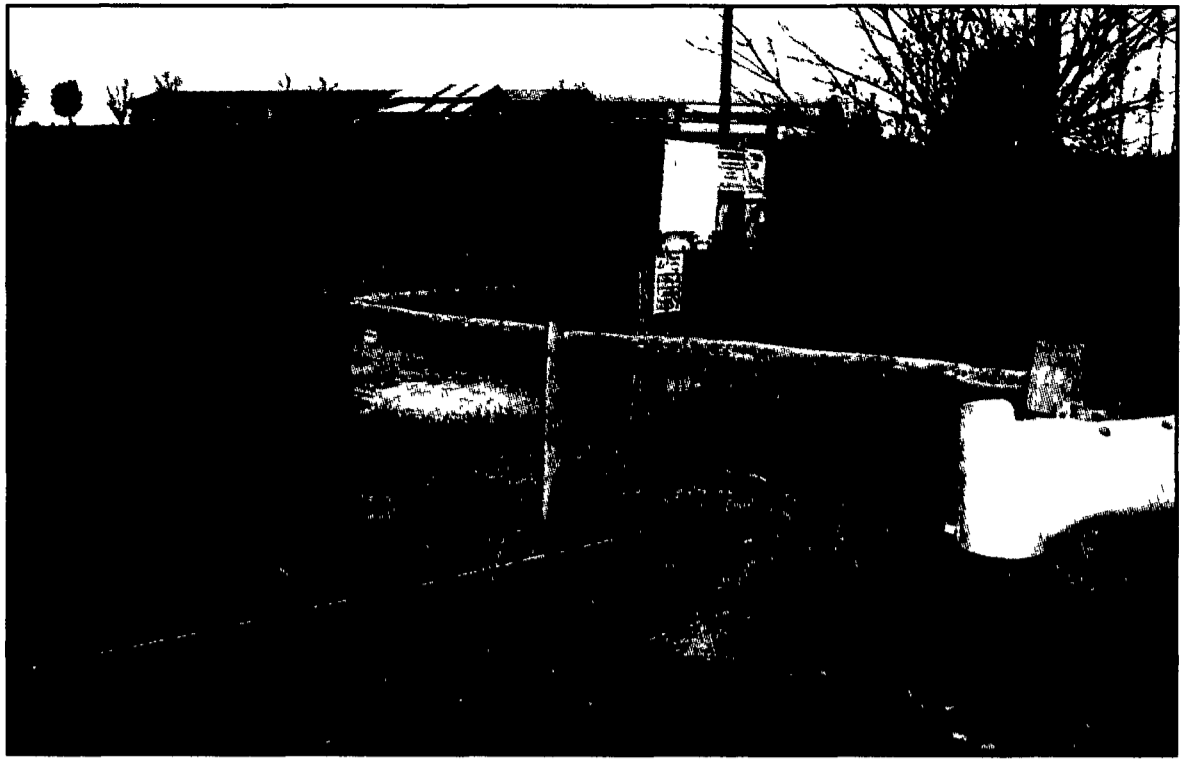
The P-Index is formulated from the phosphorus sources of a field, such as soil test, fertilizer application, and manure application; and transport factors, such as distance to a body of water and any modifications done to a field to reduce or increase the transport of phosphorus.

In Lancaster County, several farms have already begun the conversion from an N-based plan to a P-based plan.

According to Kevin Seibert, nutrient management technician for the Lancaster County Conservation District, his staff has reviewed between 10-12 plans for the P-Index. The main driving factor of a P-based plan at this point is to meet the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's (USDA-NRCS) requirement for a P-based plan for the nutrient management standard called 590.

This standard is used for farm projects that will utilize USDA-NRCS cost-sharing programs such as Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and for technical assistance for manure storages and projects that change the manure handling on a farm.

One farm that has taken the step to adjust to a P-based plan is



Streambank fencing and crossings are two of the best management practices used by the Brubakers to control phosphorus.

Brubaker Farms of Mount Joy. Operated by Luke Brubaker along with his sons, Mike and Tony, they have more than 600 dairy cows, 450 calves and heifers, and 48,000 broiler chickens. This 1,000-acre dairy and poultry operation also is classified as a concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO.)

A CAFO is defined as a farm with greater than 300 animal units and is permitted for operation under the Federal CAFO program, administered by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Under current regulations, the Brubaker Farm is a volunteer farm for the Nutrient Management Act (Act 6).

**“When the milk price is low, it's going to impact dairy farmers very much. Because if they do not get any help from NRCS to build a pit or to do conservation practices, they are going to say, 'I can't do it.'”**

Luke Brubaker

According to Luke Brubaker, the decision to switch from their N-based plan to a P-based plan was simple. It was to keep pace with future plans of the operation. However, as they have switched over, Brubaker notes there has been some management changes.

“It will take more recordkeeping,” said Brubaker, “But we had what we feel were good records beforehand. So, in our case it was not as difficult.”

Brubaker also accounts their management changes because of the P-based plan were minimized because of the farm's long-term

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Brubaker Farms operates a dairy and poultry operation that falls under CAFO regulations. Brubakers work to manage their manure from the farm through effective record keeping and nutrient management planning.

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