SAMPLE NARRATIVE FOR DISTRICT SHOWCASE AWARD

Excess nutrients entering our rivers and streams and water quality issues are a real concern for most communities across our nation. Environmental groups, concerned citizens and local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are working together to promote awareness of these issues and encouraging implementation of conservation practices that will help protect our water resources.
Over the past 10 years, the (NAME OF RIVER) has been affected by a blue-green algae outbreak that has had a great impact on the community, both environmentally and economically. Results from water sampling events conducted by the Army Corp of Engineers, along with Indiana Department of Environmental Management show that the problem is not developing from within the reservoir boundaries, but is due to excess nutrients carried in through the (NAME OF RIVER) and other tributaries in the watershed.

In (YEAR) the (SPECIFIC DISTRICT) County Soil and Water Conservation District, along with partnering districts of (NAMES OF ADDITIONAL DISTRICTS) SWCDs, were awarded a SPECIFIC GRANT for the NAME OF WATERSHED HERE.

During the course of our grant, the WATERSHED group has been conducting water sampling tests, macro-invertebrate samplings and completed a windshield survey to develop a Watershed Management Plan for the (NAME OF WATERSHED). The information acquired from these sampling events and survey, helped us to identify the most critical areas that need Best Management Practices {BMPs) implemented to help reduce run-off of excess nutrients. The main issues in the critical areas in the watershed showed excess nutrients in the river and streams, soil erosion and lack of conservation tillage. This past year, landowners were able to apply for cost share to implement BMPs such as filter-strips, cover crops, nutrient management, and equipment modifications. Cost share funds of over (DOLLAR AMOUNT) were provided to landowners for implementing BMPs in critical areas and that entailed over 3,000 acres.

Throughout the term of our grant and beyond, conservation agency partners will continue to work with landowners in both the agriculture and rural/urban communities to address the issue of excess nutrients entering our rivers and streams. We will continue to promote implementation of conservation practices such as filter strips, cover crops and grassed waterways, along with proper maintenance of On-Site Sewage Systems and application of lawn and garden fertilizers, and properly disposing of household chemicals.

Outreach efforts throughout the term of the grant have included Annual Meetings, County Fairs and other conservation events and SWCD newsletters. We also hosted an On-Site Sewage System workshop and developed a brochure with information about care of sewage systems. This year we will be hosting a Cover Crop Field Day to promote the benefits of using cover crops. Through these outreach resources, we have provided information about proper care and maintenance of on-site {septic) sewage systems, water sampling data, and the benefits of cover crops, conservation tillage and other BMPs. These resources are not only shared with landowners in the watershed, but to surrounding communities as well.

This project addresses several goals in the SWCDs business plans. Some of those goals include improving soil health, surface and groundwater quality, promoting nutrient management, and the reduction of soil erosion. Identifying and prioritizing local soil and water resource concerns and connecting landowners to sources for education, technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices are also an important element of this project.

This project has brought together several partners with a common goal of working to improve the quality of the water in the (NAME OF RIVER). These partners have put in many hours to help with the planning and implementation of the grant project. Traditional partners involved in the project include (LIST OF TRADITIONAL PARTNERS). These partners have assisted with our project in a variety of ways such as technical input, sampling assistance, financial support, steering committee members and project planning. Non-traditional partners include (LIST OF NON-TRADITIONAL PARTNERS) and volunteers. These partners have assisted with sampling events, provided in-kind support and outreach promotion of our project.
Funding for the project is provided (LIST OF FUNDING SOURCES).

Through this project, the benefits we hope to achieve are first and foremost, the reduction of nutrients entering our rivers and streams. Reducing the amount of nutrients entering our water sources impacts our communities not only environmentally, but also economically and recreationally. Other benefits include improving soil health, reduction of soil erosion and building awareness about protecting and conserving our natural resources.
During the course of the grant project, we have conducted water sampling events nine times each year and one macro-invertebrate sampling. From these sampling events, along with a windshield survey that was completed, we have identified the critical areas in the watershed. Landowners in the Tier 1 and Tier 2 critical areas were able to apply for cost share funds to implement BMPs on over (# OF) acres. These cost share projects provided an estimated load reduction of Sediment of (#) tons/year, Phosphorus load reduction of (#) lbs./year and Nitrogen load reduction of (#) lbs./year.

The term of this (NAME OF GRANT) may be ending this year, but our work does not stop there. We will continue to work with landowners and promote the implementation of BMPs that will help protect and improve water quality and the health of our soil in all watersheds.

This project has strengthened the SWCD by working with other agencies and building new partnerships, as well as helping build awareness in communities about services the SWCDs provide and to local officials on the importance that SWCDs are to the community.