Blanchard River
DEMONSTRATION
FARMS NETWORK

The Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network is a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative project designed to showcase and demonstrate leading edge conservation practices to improve Great Lakes water quality.

BACKGROUND

Lake Erie is part of the Great Lakes System which contains 20 percent of all the freshwater in the world. Studies have identified Lake Erie as severely impacted due to excessive loadings of sediment and nutrients. Long-term water quality monitoring has identified the Maumee River as being a key contributor of nonpoint source pollution to the lake. In 2009, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) committed the federal government to significantly advance Great Lakes protection and restoration. As part of this effort, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation (OFBF) have announced an agreement to establish a Blanchard River Demonstration Farm Network, the first of its kind, in Ohio.
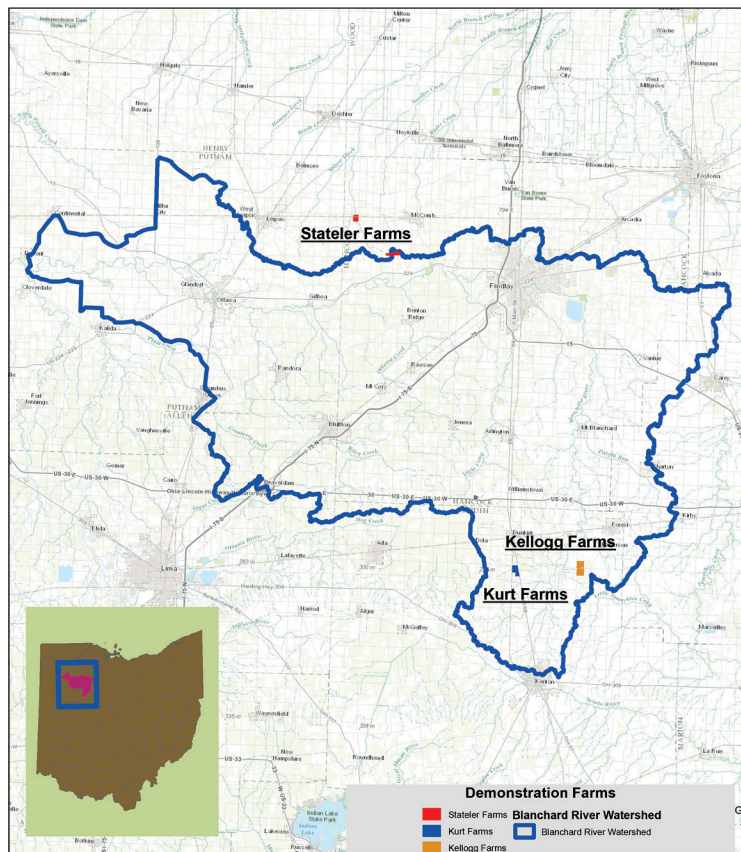
PARTNERSHIPS

The Blanchard River Watershed, in the Western Lake Erie Basin, will be home to a network of farms that will demonstrate standard and innovative conservation systems to reduce sediment and phosphorus entering the Western Basin of Lake Erie. To initiate this network, OFBF began work with stakeholders in Hardin and Hancock counties in the fall of 2015 to identify the farms in the Blanchard River Watershed.

The agreement between the USDA and OFBF is a five-year, $1 million project. OFBF collaborated with stakeholders in Hardin and Hancock counties, as well as NRCS and other partners, in identifying the farms and farmers who are participating and in establishing the demonstration sites.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the project are to:
• Establish sites within the Blanchard River Watershed to test new and standard conservation systems in reducing phosphorus and sediment.

Demonstration Farms

■ Stateler Farms	**Blanchard River Watershed**	
■ Kurt Farms	□ Blanchard River Watershed	
■ Kellogg Farms		

• Establish an efficient mechanism to share this technology and information with farmers, agribusiness, conservation agencies and the public.
• Create opportunities for others to test their research, technical and program ideas at the demonstration farms.
• Share information and lessons learned from the Blanchard River Watershed throughout the Lake Erie and Great Lakes basin.

OHIO FARM BUREAU

USDA

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STATELER FAMILY FARMS

Stateler Family Farms is located in McComb, Ohio and owned and operated by Duane and Anthony Stateler. The Statelers farm corn, soybeans, and wheat on approximately 500 acres in Hancock County and also operate a 7,200 head wean to finish swine operation. The Statelers have committed 243 acres to the Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network.

As new legislation reduces the time frame for livestock manure applications, other spreading options need to be explored. This farm will look at spreading manure on growing crops and how that practice affects yields and water quality. There also will be a focus on increasing cover crop usage to reduce the effects of compaction from large manure application equipment. Other practices that will be demonstrated include drainage water management structures, an animal mortality composting pad, and wetlands. Two fields in the demonstration farm will have edge of field monitoring equipment managed by Kevin King with USDA-Agricultural Research Service to measure the impacts of the Stateler's conservation practices.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY USDA

KURT FARM

Chris Kurt owns and operates Kurt Farm in Dunkirk, Ohio in Hardin County. The farm is 470 acres of corn and soybeans. Chris has committed 168 acres to the Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network. Chris has worked with The Nature Conservancy to construct a two stage ditch on the demonstration farm site. This ditch works to reduce sediment and nutrient loading downstream and will be monitored to gauge the impact of two stage construction on water quality.

This site also will test steel slag filter beds to measure their ability to reduce phosphorus losses out of subsurface tile and surface flow. Edge of field monitoring will be placed on site by Kevin King with USDA-Agricultural Research Service. Other practices will include transitioning to no-till corn, increased cover crop usage, and installation of blind inlets. There will also be the removal of an abandoned gas well from the field.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY USDA

KELLOGG FARMS

Bill and Shane Kellogg own and operate Kellogg Farms in Forest, Ohio in Hardin County. The farm consists of 4,200 acres of corn, soybeans, and wheat. The Kelloggs have committed 305 acres to the Blanchard River Demonstration Farms Network. Existing edge of field research shows that placing nutrients below ground dramatically decreases potential for nutrient losses. This farm will focus on the subsurface placement of nutrients using strip tillage techniques. Cost savings and yield benefits that can be achieved by improving nutrient efficiencies by placing nutrients subsurfacely will be measured. In addition, various crop rotations will be compared while testing how to best implement cover crops and reduce tillage in those rotations. An abandoned water well will also be properly capped to prevent potential nutrient loss into the water table.

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