Buffers for every farm?

- Implementation is an important component of a successful VEB initiative
- Three critical challenges:
  - Funding
  - Fundamentals
  - Follow-up

Challenge: Funding

- Money does not grow on trees!
- The “bottom line” can be an obvious limiting factor for the poultry grower
  - Significant cost potential
  - Less obvious return on investment
  - Just one more expense

Challenge: Fundamentals

- Effective buffers require more than simply “sticking trees in the ground” and watching them grow
- Two important fundamentals:
  - Proper planning
  - Proper installation

Challenge: Follow-up

- Basic care is essential for long-term success
  - Irrigation
  - Weed control
  - Pest management
- Expectations should be obvious, but it is risky to assume they are!
Finding Solutions

- How can we best address these challenges?
- What resources and programs are available to help?

Communication Is Critical

Success depends on understanding at every level!

Solutions for Funding

- Government cost-share forms the basis for current VEB funding
  - EQIP
  - WHIP
  - CREP
  - State/Soil District Programs
- Self-financing is sometimes a possibility

Funding: EQIP

- Environmental Quality Incentives Program
  - Set payment schedule
  - Contract according to NRCS standards
  - Penalty for not meeting obligations under the contract
  - Priority of buffers vs. other practices may be an issue

Funding: Other Sources

- Availability of other options depends on specific criteria
  - WHIP – Primary goal is wildlife concern
  - CREP – Primary criteria is farmland connection
  - Soil District – Local policy may dictate priority
  - Other State Funds – Subject to agency rules
Funding: Potential Sources

- Direct loans
- Conservation grants
- Tree bank arrangements
- Agroforestry opportunities
  - Biomass for energy
  - Marketable derivatives

Solutions for Fundamentals

- Pre-planning is a pivotal aspect
  - It is strongly recommended that a VEB plan be completed for every new poultry house before construction begins
- Education & outreach must continue throughout the process

Fundamentals: VEB Tool-Kit

- The VEB Tool-Kit provides accessible information for growers
- Further DPI resources include brochures and related outreach material

Fundamentals: “Tree Guy”

- Boring, but effective!
- Here is how the VEB Coordinator can help:
  - Design consultation
  - Plan writing
  - Training and outreach
  - Individual follow-up
  - Services coordination
  - Problem-solving

Fundamentals: Other Help

- Networking with local Cooperative Extension can be a valuable source of information and insight
- Many other sources of help exist

Solutions for Follow-up

- Proper design and installation will go a long way in minimizing follow-up problems
- Planning should take into account the necessary particulars of buffer maintenance and care
Follow-up: Education
- Growers must appreciate the value of maintaining a buffer as a long-term investment.
- Individual grower responsibility must be clearly articulated.

Follow-up: Visual Evaluation
- Most problems can be identified by simple observation.
- Nothing formal, just look for obvious signs of trouble:
  - Dieback, dust-loading, insect damage, etc.

Follow-up: Problem Referral
- Identified problems need to be corrected or referred for proper handling.
- Referral options include:
  - VEB Coordinator
  - NRCS/Soil District
  - Cooperative Extension
  - Tree Care Professional

The Vital Link
- A critical program for VEB implementation is **your involvement**.
  - Company contact with growers and the ability to encourage adoption of buffers can greatly influence the success of this endeavor.
- Here are some points to remember...

Be Resourceful
- **Use what is available to you!**
- Take advantage of every resource to help growers adopt buffers as a BMP on their farm.

Support the Cause
- **Get the word out!**
- Your growers need to be reminded that vegetative buffers are still the most cost-effective solution to many issues our industry faces.
Consider the Obvious
- Never assume anything!
- Your growers may not know what you think they know
  - May not understand the importance of a buffer
  - May not know there is help available to install a buffer
  - May not recognize the need for maintaining a buffer

Remain Flexible
- Go with the flow!
- VEB projects can be an adventure
  - Sometimes programs take a while to get moving
  - The process of a installation can be slow
  - As buffers are installed the more we learn

Actions Speak Loudest
- We can talk about buffers, but, if we are not all doing our part, what difference does it make?
  - It is too late once a neighbor complaint or regulatory agency forces action

Working Together
- Cooperation between DPI and poultry personnel is the decisive link
- Teamwork requires…
  - Communicating freely
  - Identifying needs
  - Making referrals
  - Responding mutually

A Fresh Focus
- The VEB Coordinator position will be changing to better meet current needs
  - Understanding of program needs has evolved
  - The planning and resource phase is complete
  - Plant materials experience has emerged as a critical need
- The result is a transition to a new “tree guy” who can focus on getting trees in the ground

THE END!
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