

Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District

News Release

March 6, 2017

## **Montgomery SWCD Offering Voluntary Drainage Water Testing**

The Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District will soon be holding their Field Tile Water Testing dates for the Spring and Summer. Confidential testing for nutrient losses will be held the second Thursday of the month beginning on April 13<sup>th</sup> between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. No appointment is necessary. Remaining dates are May 11, June 8, and July 13 and all testing will be done at the SWCD office located in the USDA Service Center, 1621 Vandalia Rd, Hillsboro.

This program was designed to engage farmers in the nutrient and water quality issues facing agriculture by providing information on possible nutrient losses from their production operations. The sensors are being provided in part from Illinois Corn, the IL Council for Best Management Practices and the Zea Mays Foundation. They are meant to provide a way for farmers and landowners to confidentially test their water (tile, ditch, stream) for nitrate nitrogen. By comparing their own water testing results to other known concentrations and research results, farmers can begin to understand their own impact on water quality and consider management practices which may reduce their losses. These results are simply a snapshot in time of ambient nutrient levels in water collected from tile drainage, surface runoff or nearby streams. Nutrient levels in runoff water can vary greatly depending on the time of year, temperature, rainfall and in-field practices. A measurement of flow (the volume of water leaving a site) would also be needed to determine the total nutrient loading into a waterbody and a measurement of acreage being drained would be needed to know the pounds per acre leaving the field. These test results are just a starting point for learning and for discussion of the practices available for farmers to reduce their nutrient losses. **Sample Collection Instructions:**

- ❖ Sample containers should be clean and free of any residual chemicals or detergents.
- ❖ Water samples need to be at least 8 ounces.
- ❖ Samples should be taken as close to the testing time as possible (preferably within 48hrs).
- ❖ Samples should be kept refrigerated if not being tested immediately.
- ❖ An estimate of flow will allow additional calculations (load in lbs/day) – simply record the seconds it takes to fill up a bucket of known volume (this would only apply to tile drain samples).
- ❖ With the load calculation and an estimate of acres being drained, the lbs/acre/day can also be determined.

Please stop by the office or phone 217-532-3361, ext. 3 for more details.