



**Great Lakes Protection Fund**

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### Funded Project

# Strategies to Engage Middle Adopter Farmers on Cover Crops

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Project No.	1089
Timeline	2015 – Active
Award Amount	\$653,000
Team Leader	National Wildlife Federation
Project Website	<a href="https://www.nwf.org/downstream">https://www.nwf.org/downstream</a>

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This team will improve water quality in the Great Lakes by increasing adoption of conservation practices that improve soil health on agricultural lands throughout the basin. They will do this by identifying and testing strategies for engaging middle-to-late adopter farmers to implement conservation practices. Their theory of change is that middle-to-late adopter farmers share psychological and sociological traits, and that current approaches do not resonate with this population.

Current conservation outreach, policies and financial incentives strongly focus on innovators and early adopters, which comprises a small percentage (16%) of the farming population. This team will develop and test a series of outreach and communications strategies to engage the middle and late adopters (comprising 70% of farmers) that will address the fundamental cultural components of their decision making as it pertains to the implementation of conservation practices.

The project team will undertake original research into the mental models of middle-to-late adopter farmers in the Basin, evaluate existing successful strategies and sharpen those strategies based on their research and experiences. The new strategies that are developed will be tested, evaluated and refined in at least two locations in the Basin. The team will develop curricula and host training workshops so that others can take the strategies developed and apply them throughout the Great Lakes basin.