

# Long-term Nutrient Fate Research

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## Objectives:

1. Determine nitrate-nitrogen and phosphorus leaching from a turfgrass stand that has been continually fertilized for 18 years.
2. Continue data collection from the Long Term Nutrient Fate Research Area at MSU; currently we have data collection for 11 years consecutively.

**Start Date:** 2003

**Project Duration:** 11 years

**Total Funding:**

2008-2010: \$34,800

2003-2007: \$68,886

2000-2002: \$64,612

The USGA initially funded research at Michigan State University to determine nitrogen fate and leaching from a Kentucky bluegrass turf in 1991. Similar to previous research, the initial research at MSU conducted from 1991 through 1993 indicated that there was minimal risk of nitrate-nitrogen leaching from Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis* L.) turfgrass. Since the summer of 1998, percolate samples have been collected from the same monolith lysimeters and analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ). As of 2009, the turfgrass area has now been under continual fertilization practices for 19 years with percolate collection for the last 11 years consecutively.

From July 1998 through 2002, lysimeters were treated annually with urea at a N rate  $98 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  ( $24.5 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  application $^{-1}$ ) and a high N rate of  $245 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  ( $61.25 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  application $^{-1}$ ).



Since the summer of 1998, percolate samples have been collected from the same monolith lysimeters and analyzed for nitrate-nitrogen ( $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$ ).



The concentration of phosphorus detected in leachate remains very low regardless of treatment. The mean concentration of phosphorus detected in leachate since initiating phosphorus treatments in 2003 has been less than  $0.02 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ .

$\text{N ha}^{-1}$  ( $49 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  application $^{-1}$ ). From 1998-2002 for the high N rate, there was a dramatic increase in  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  leaching from  $5 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$  in 1998 to  $25 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$  in 2002. During the same time frame, there was a modest increase in  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  leaching from  $3 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$  in 1998 to  $5 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$  in 2002.

In 2003 the N rate was reduced to  $196 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$  for the high N rate, while the low N rate remained at  $98 \text{ kg N ha}^{-1}$ . Since 2003, phosphorus from triple superphosphate (20% P) has been applied at two rates,  $49$  and  $98 \text{ kg P ha}^{-1}$  split over two applications. The phosphorus application dates coincide with nitrogen application dates in the spring and autumn.

In 2003, the concentration of  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  leaching from the high N rate treatment did not decline from the previous years. The average  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  concentration leached from the low and high N rate treatments was  $6.3$  and  $31.6 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ . In 2004, the concentration of  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  leaching from

the high N rate treatment declined drastically from previous years. The average concentration of  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  in leachate for the high N rate was  $8.5 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ . This was a decrease in  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  concentration of  $23.1 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$  from 2003.

For the low N rate, the average concentration of  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  in leachate for the low N rate was  $1.2 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ . From 2004 through 2009, the mean  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  concentration for the low and high N rates was  $2.6$  and  $7.9 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ .

The concentration of phosphorus detected in leachate remains very low regardless of treatment. The mean concentration of phosphorus detected in leachate since initiating phosphorus treatments in 2003 has been less than  $0.02 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ .

## Summary Points

- The mean  $\text{NO}_3\text{-N}$  concentration from 2004 through 2009 is less than  $8 \text{ mg L}^{-1}$ .
- Results continue to indicate low amounts of phosphorus leaching.