



Getting Fertilizer Right - Potassium and Forages

by Matt Lippert, Regional Dairy Educator (Wood, Marathon and Clark Counties)

For many nutrients, there is an input level of fertilizer that provides the greatest yield and a different, slightly lower, level that provides the most economic return for the producer. Then there are unknown variables. Will excessive rain cause the nutrient to be leached into streams and groundwater? Will drought cause the nutrient not to be utilized? Some nutrients, especially nitrogen, can be lost due to these weather conditions. Potassium, K on the fertilizer analysis, is a relatively safe fertilizer nutrient. It is not volatilized into the air; it is bound rather tightly to soil particles and it is not associated water quality problems. But unlike phosphorus and nitrogen, which do cause water quality problems, potassium is a nutrient most often associated with soil deficiency and therefore economic return from its application.

Part of the reasons for the shortage in Wisconsin is we are a major forage producing state - number one in the country, due to corn silage, haylage and hay, feeding all the dairy cows and other livestock. Forage draws much more potassium from the soil than nitrogen or phosphorus.

How frequently a nutrient is applied, how it is incorporated into the soil, when during the season it is applied can all contribute to pollution and lost economic value, but again potassium is in general a safer and less environmentally challenging nutrient. It is not as simple as that we need to apply more of it, but we do need to test soil and plant tissue and manage potassium appropriately. Recently, potassium was expensive but this goes in cycles. When prices are reasonable, it makes sense to increase application to build soil fertility levels.

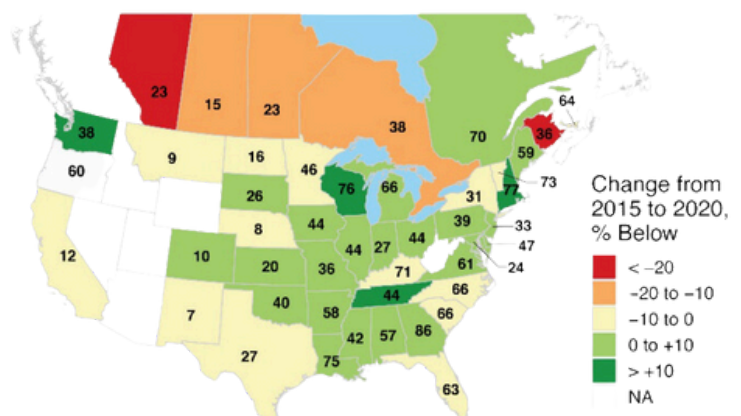
I have authored articles about how many Wisconsin soils are critically low in potassium, that many forage and tissue samples show potassium deficiency and that lactating cows have needs for potassium in their diets. At calving time too much potassium is not desirable for lactating dairy cows but for virtually every other day of the year, potassium is beneficial. Many people apply a "balanced" fertilizer that provides too much phosphorus and not enough potassium, soil testing is a key along with education.

This information will also be in the Midwest Forage Association e-news, our local Extension newsletters and on the Dairy program website discussing potassium needs of dairy animals.

To read the full Midwest Forage Association article, please visit:

midwestforage.org/pdf/1755.pdf

Percent of Samples Testing Below Critical Levels for K in 2020



*Only states with 2,000 samples or more are shown on this map

Wisconsin Rapids Selected as a Host City for Statewide Conference

Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference is June 19-20, 2025, in downtown Wisconsin Rapids

by Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Educator



A view of the Wisconsin River near downtown Wisconsin Rapids.



A breakout session from the 2024 CEC Conference in Platteville, WI.

The City of Wisconsin Rapids has been selected to host the 2025 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference. The conference will be held in downtown Wisconsin Rapids on Thursday and Friday, June 19 and 20, 2025. More than 200 people from across the region and state are expected to attend.

The Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) conference hosts a statewide conversation about how to promote entrepreneurship in Wisconsin's small and rural communities. It gathers business owners, municipal leaders, financial lenders, economic development professionals, and community champions for programming about entrepreneurial ecosystem development on the local level. An annual occurrence in several midwestern states (Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and New Hampshire), this is only the second time CEC will take place in Wisconsin. The inaugural Wisconsin CEC Conference was held in April 2024 in Platteville, WI.

The CEC Conference is unique in that it does not stick to one venue or conference center. When in Wisconsin Rapids next June, attendees will take part in breakout sessions and activities in downtown Wisconsin Rapids on both sides of the Wisconsin River. Multiple venues such as the YMCA, City Hall, County Courthouse, and Library will be used. Attendees will be able to spend time outside and take in the City's Cranberry Blossom Festival which occurs at the same time the conference is being held.

This conference is an exciting opportunity to showcase the entrepreneurial story not only in Wisconsin Rapids, but in Central Wisconsin at large. Our communities see entrepreneurship as a core economic development strategy. Hosting the conference will allow for shared learning and teaching of best practices. Conference planning is underway now and includes a robust team of both state and local partners from government, education, small business, and others.

Save the date to attend the conference on June 19-20, 2025! For more information about the conference or the work of the Wood County Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee, contact Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Extension Educator – krombalski@wisc.edu or 715-421-8445.