

Participant Sign-up

Once an interested farmer has decided to participate in the BMP CHALLENGE, many issues become of interest, such as how to sign-up or how to connect with a certified crop consultant. As trainers, with local expertise, it is important to know how to handle these situations. Below is a step by step listing of the general sign-up process.

Initial Application

The main goal of the training sessions is to spark interest and clear up misunderstandings in the BMP CHALLENGE program. Once farmers have decided they would like to enroll, they are asked to fill out the BMP CHALLENGE Application Form for either the Nutrient or Reduced Tillage BMP CHALLENGE projects.

The application includes the following information:

- 1) **Grower Information** – General information, including a social security or tax ID number, which is used for federal grant processing.
- 2) **Grower Signature** – Farmers must sign to confirm their initial acres and adherence to program rules.
- 3) **Crop Advisor Information** – General information, including advisor's certification type and number.
- 4) **Field Information** (*for Nutrient BMP CHALLENGE only*) – Includes information regarding acreage, previous crop history, nutrient(s) enrolled, soil test information and BMP recommendations.

Finding a Crop Advisor

BMP CHALLENGE can help farmers find crop advisors when they do not already have one or are unsure where to find one in their area. The farmer retains the right to deny any suggested crop advisor, but must work with one to participate in the program. Crop advisors help ensure a third party for BMP rate applications and yield assessments.

Places to search for local crop advisors include:

- 1) **Certified Crop Advisor Program** – Website offers an online search engine which lists all registered crop advisor for a given area/state, <https://www.agronomy.org/cca/?check>.
- 2) **Local Extensions and Co-operatives** – Extension agents and co-op staff may be interested in providing assistance to their farmer contacts, with incentives to help with time costs.

- 3) **Conservation Districts and Watershed Groups** – Many of the conservation and watershed districts and non-profits are looking for means of security for BMP implementation with their regional farmers. BMP CHALLENGE prefers that the district or non-profit staff member working as crop advisor holds a certification, but is willing to work with individuals who hold an in-depth knowledge of local BMP rates, farmers and farming practices.
- 4) **Governmental Staff** – Agencies such as USDA-NRCS, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, among others, may have interested staff members looking to see reductions and conservation work in certain areas. Most governmental agencies have easily accessible employee search engines, some are listed below.

USDA-NRCS

<http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/employeeDirectory/app?state=MN&agency=NRCS>

MN Dept. of Agriculture

<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/phonelist/alpha.htm?SEARCH.X=0\&SEARCH.Y=0>

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

<http://www.pca.state.mn.us/pca/staff/index.cfm>

- 5) **BMP CHALLENGE Contacts** – BMP CHALLENGE has contacts throughout Minnesota, including members of the project and advisory groups, who may be interested in working as a crop advisor. When prior searches do not work, this may be a reasonable option. Contact the BMP CHALLENGE office for more help.
- 6) **Trainers** – Trainers may also participate as crop advisors as they feel comfortable, depending on time commitments and interest.