

Analysis of 500 lake catchments reveals the relationship between crop type, fertilizer and manure inputs and lake nutrient concentrations

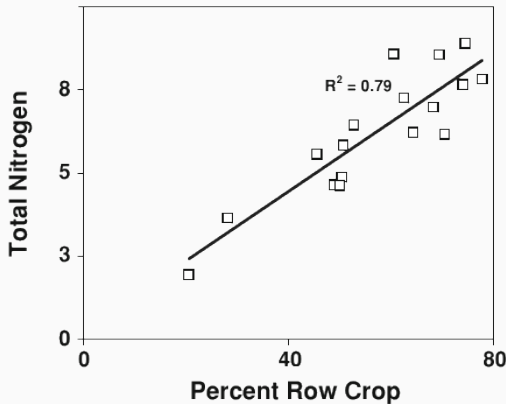
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Introduction

Ag land-use is associated with increased nutrient loading to lakes and higher nutrient concentrations.

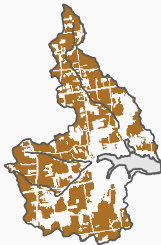


(Daniel, Griffith, and Troyer 2010)

Background

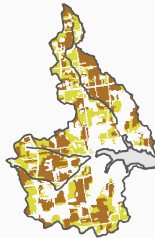
Ag land-use is an aggregated measure that may mask underlying relationships.

Total Ag



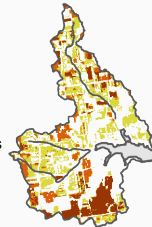
Total Ag

Row Crops



Pasture
Row Crops

Individual Crops

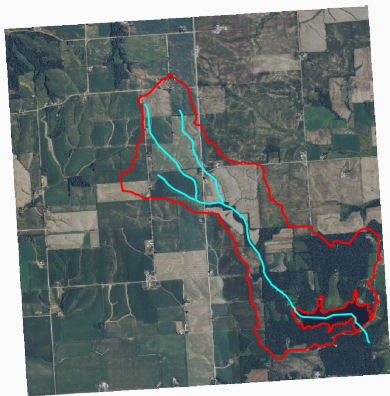


Corn
Soybeans
Pasture

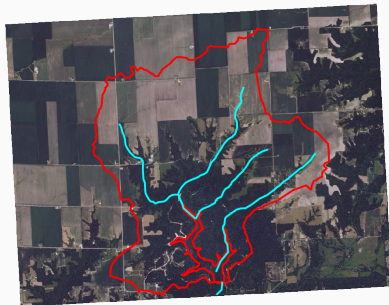
Background

Ag land-use is an aggregated measure that may mask underlying relationships.

7026



6992



Research Question(s)

Are more granular measures of Ag activity related to lake water quality across hundreds of lakes and their watersheds?



Nutrient inputs



Nutrient transport



Nutrient proxies



Buffer composition

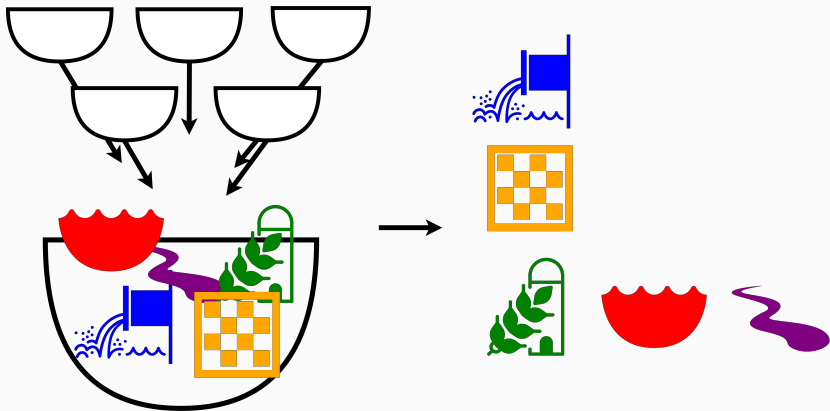


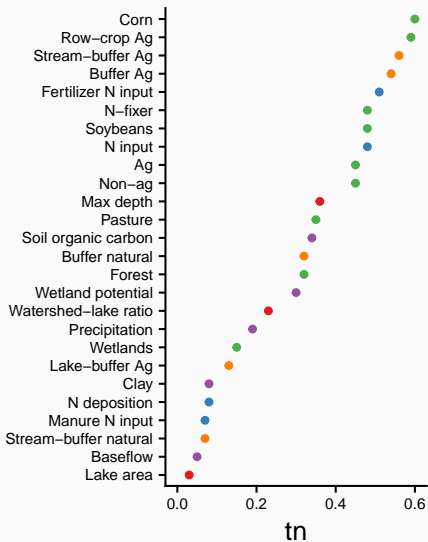
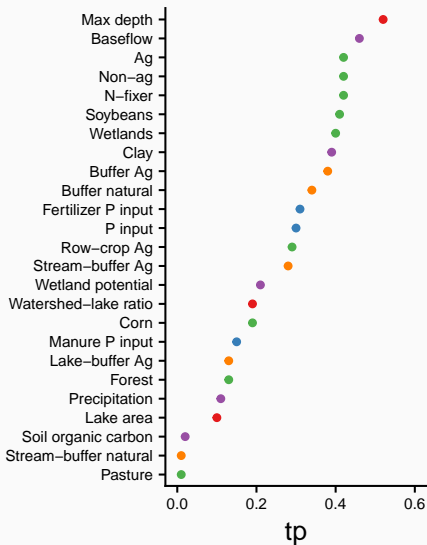
Lake characteristics

(Collins et al. 2017)

Methods - Correlation analysis

Exploratory analysis to determine how lake nutrients are related to predictors from each category.

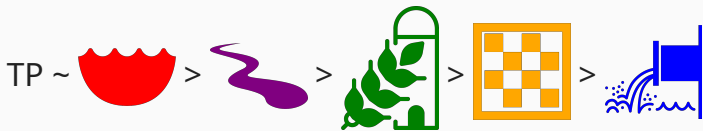




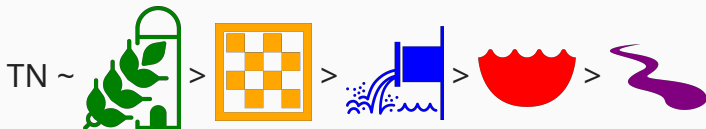
● Lake ● Nutrient sources ● Nutrient proxies ● Transport capacity ● Buffer composition

Results - Correlation analysis

Lake phosphorus concentrations were most strongly associated with lake characteristics and measures of watershed nutrient transport.



Lake nitrogen concentrations were most strongly associated with agricultural land use and the composition of riparian buffers.



Methods - Regression Modelling

Many of the variables among predictor categories are related.

Choose the single strongest relationship from the prior correlation analysis to interpret the relative influence of each *category* of predictors.

For TP, this is Buffer Ag, P fertilizer input, Baseflow, and Max depth.

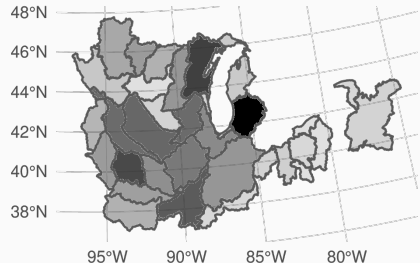
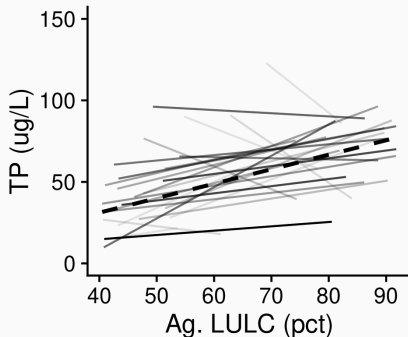
For TN, this is Buffer Ag, N fertilizer input, Soil organic carbon, and Max depth.

Methods - Regression Modelling

Ag land use is a proxy for many different specific activities which are likely to be regionally variable.

(Burcher, Valett, and Benfield 2007)

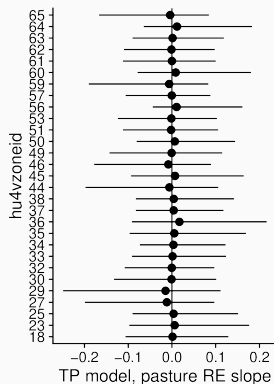
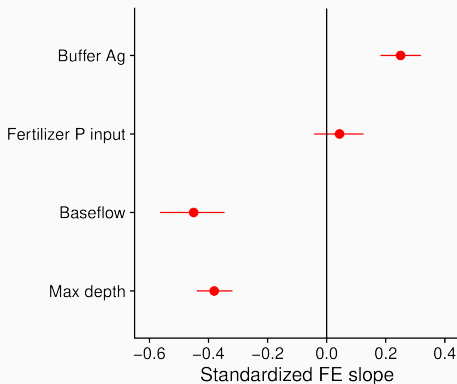
Evaluate spatial variation in the relationships between lake nutrients and Ag proxies.



Results - TP Model

Fixed effect coefficients were markedly different among predictor categories.

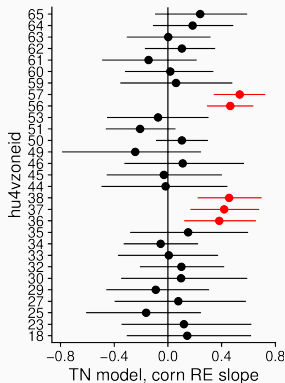
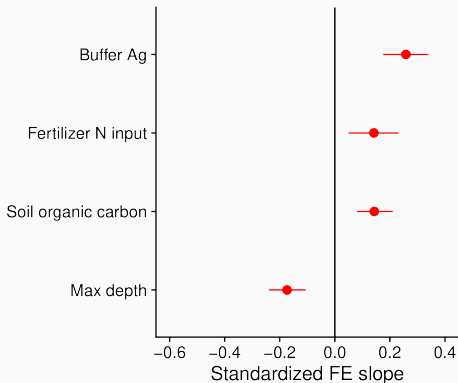
Spatial random effects cleanly capture additional variation.



Results - TN Model

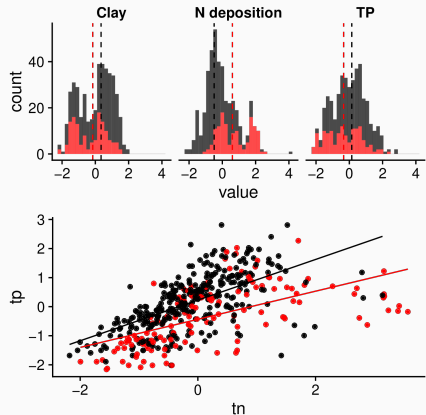
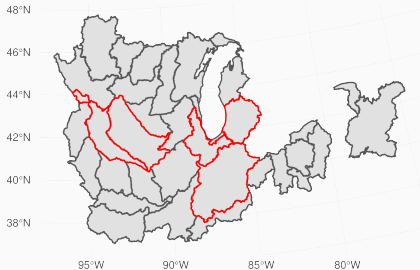
Fixed effect coefficients similar among predictor categories.

Specific regions have markedly different spatial random effect slopes.



Results - TN Model

Lake TN in highlighted regions is more sensitive to Ag relative to other regions.



Discussion

Lake TN in highlighted regions may more sensitive to Ag because:

Lakes in these regions are less hypereutrophic (Wagner et al. 2011)

Lakes in these regions are P limiteds so excess TN accumulates in the water column (Filstrup and Downing 2017)

Conclusions

Lake TP was most strongly related to Non-ag and transport variables like lake depth and baseflow.

Lake TP is well described by a global model not accounting for inter-regional variation in predictor relationships.

Lake TN models were notably improved by using more granular Ag information (Corn cover, riparian buffer composition).

Lake TN is well described by a hierarchical model where relationships with land use are allowed to vary among regions.

Regional differences may be related to lake TP, atmospheric nitrogen deposition, or soil clay content.

References

Burcher, C. L., H. M. Valett, and E. F. Benfield. 2007. "THE LAND-COVER CASCADE: RELATIONSHIPS COUPLING LAND AND WATER." *Ecology* 88 (1): 228–42. [https://doi.org/10.1890/0012-9658\(2007\)88\[228:TLCRCL\]2.0.CO;2](https://doi.org/10.1890/0012-9658(2007)88[228:TLCRCL]2.0.CO;2).

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Filstrup, Christopher T., and John A. Downing. 2017. "Relationship of Chlorophyll to Phosphorus and Nitrogen in Nutrient-Rich Lakes." *Inland Waters* 7 (4): 385–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20442041.2017.1375176>.

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