

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

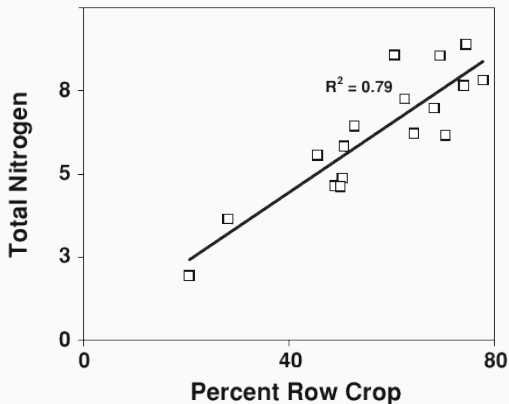
Joe Stachelek, Cayelan C. Carey, Kelly M. Cobourn, Armen R. Kemanian, Tyler Wagner, Kathleen C. Weathers, Weizhe Weng and Patricia A. Soranno

Ecological Society of America, 2019 August



Introduction

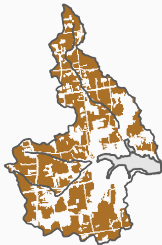
Ag land-use is associated with increased nutrient loading to lakes and higher nutrient concentrations.



Background

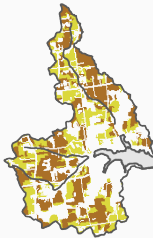
Ag land-use is an aggregated measure that may mask underlying relationships.

Total Ag



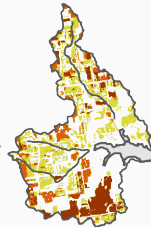
Total Ag

Row Crops



Pasture
Row Crops

Individual Crops

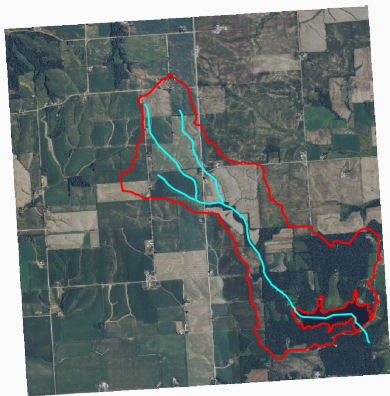


Corn
Soybeans
Pasture

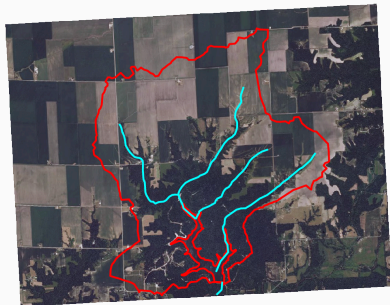
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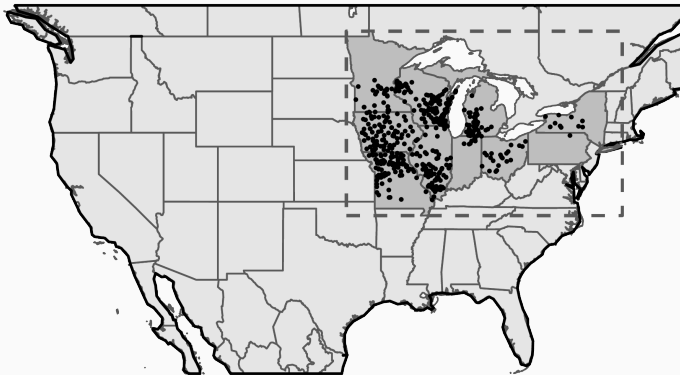


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Research Question(s)

Are more granular measures of Ag activity related to lake water quality (TN, TP) across hundreds of lakes and their watersheds?



Methods - Conceptual Model



Nutrient inputs - Fertilizer and manure applications



Nutrient transport - Baseflow, soils, precipitation



Nutrient proxies - Land use, specific, crops, etc.



Buffer composition - *Land use*

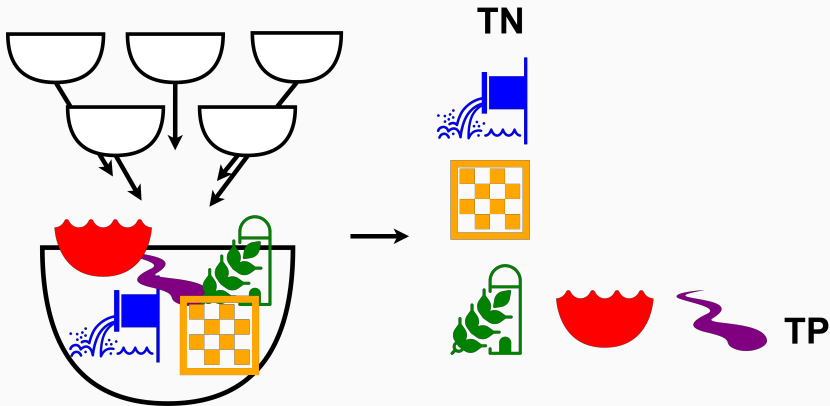


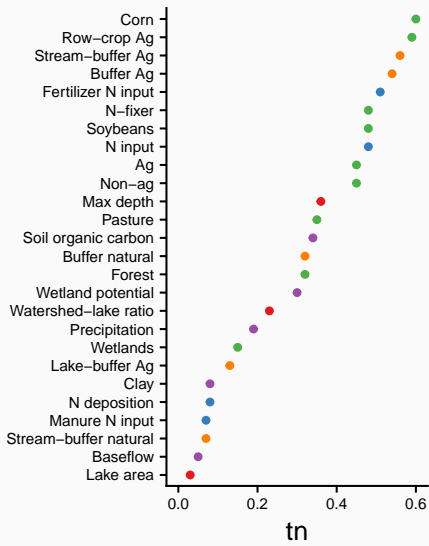
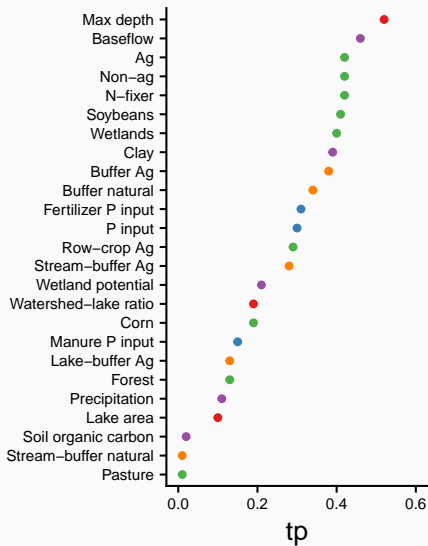
Lake characteristics - Depth, area, etc.

(Collins et al. 2017)

Methods - Correlation analysis

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

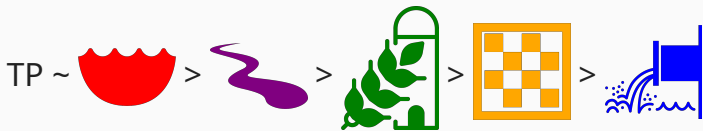




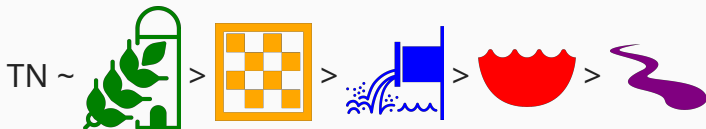
● Lake ● Nutrient sources ● Nutrient proxies ● Transport capacity ● Buffer composition

Results - Correlation analysis

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



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



Methods - Regression Modelling

Choose fixed effect variables based on the single strongest relationship from the prior correlation analysis.

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

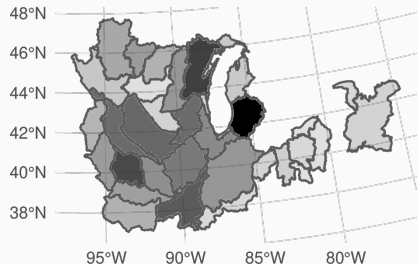
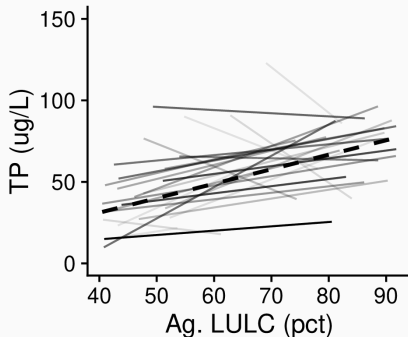
For TN, this is Buffer Ag, N fertilizer input, Soil organic carbon, and Max depth.

Methods - Regression Modelling

Choose random effect variable(s) that we expect to vary regionally.

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

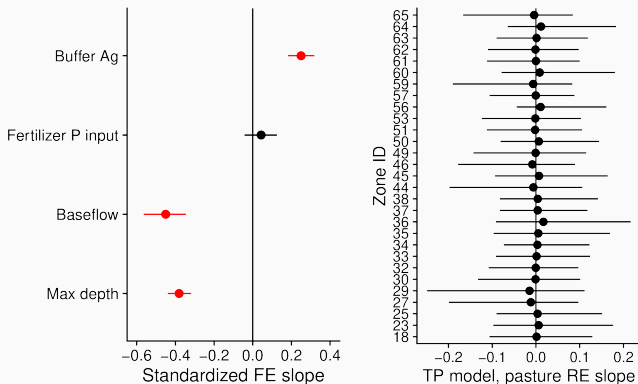
(Burcher, Valett, and Benfield 2007)



Results - TP Model

Fixed effect coefficients were markedly different among predictor categories.

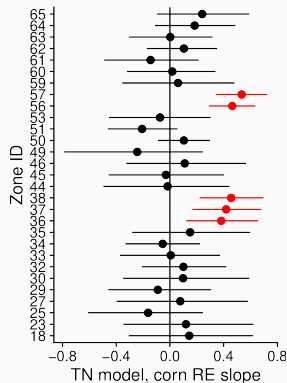
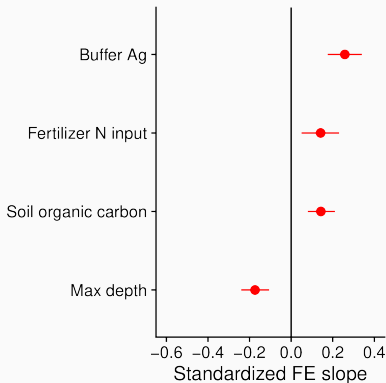
Spatial random effects cleanly capture additional variation.



Results - TN Model

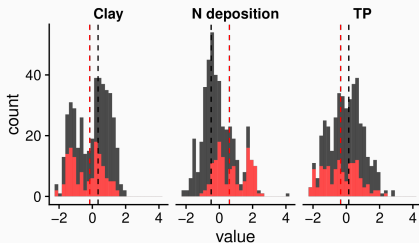
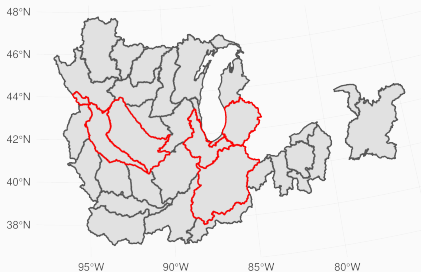
Fixed effect coefficients similar among predictor categories.

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 be more sensitive to Ag because:

Fields in these regions have more direct drainage because they have wetland soils.

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

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

Lakes in these regions are affected by an interaction among multiple land use types.

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

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