

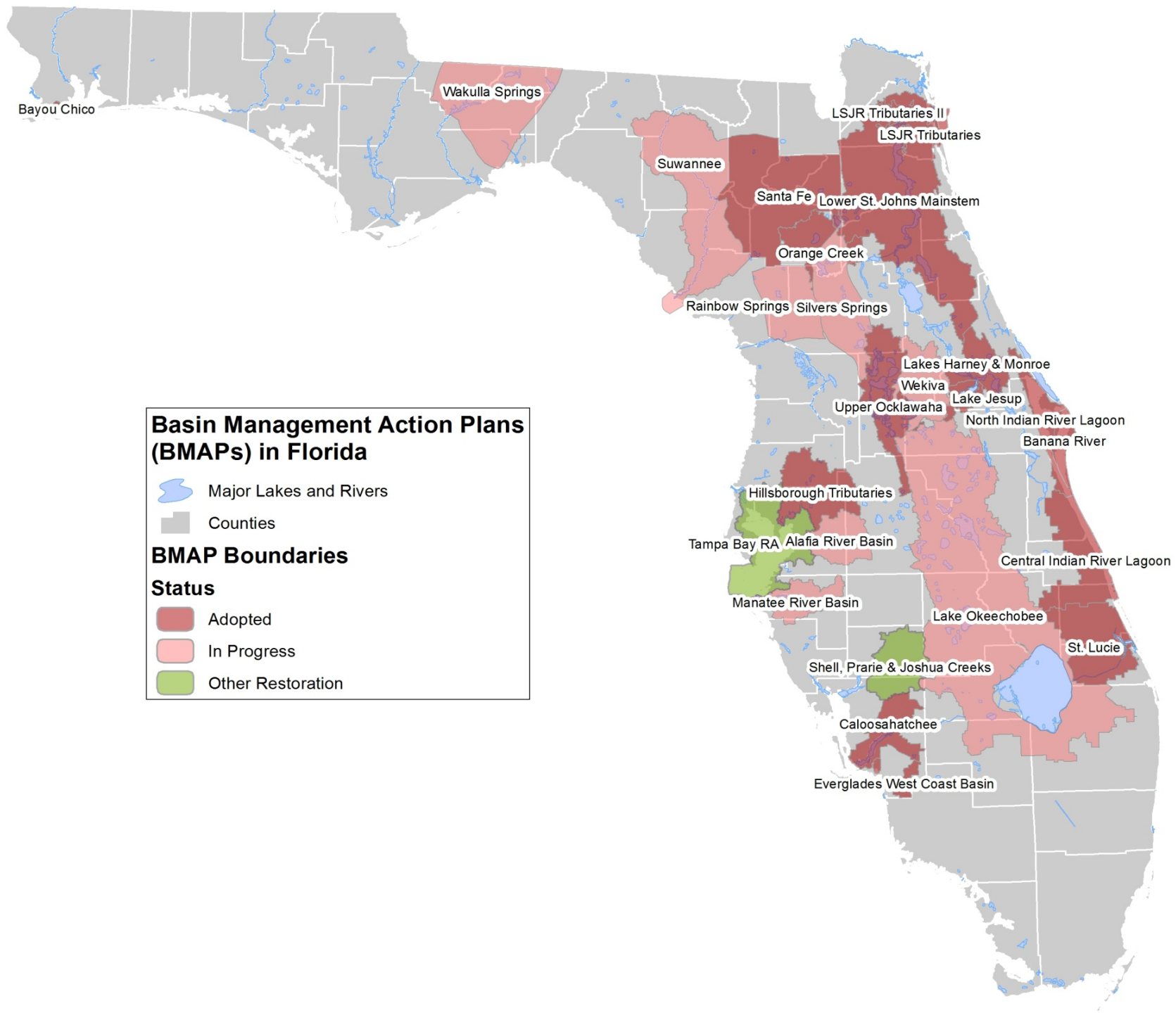
Agricultural Best Management Practices

Perceptions and Awareness within
the Santa Fe and Suwannee Rivers
Basin Management Action Plan Areas



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NRLI Class XIII

BMPs and BMAPs Defined

- Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) are practical measures that reduce the amount of fertilizers, pesticides, animal waste, and other pollutants entering our water resources
 - Designed to improve water quality while maintaining agricultural production
- Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP): the “blueprint” for restoring impaired waters by reducing pollutant loadings to meet the allowable loadings established in a Total Maximum Daily Load, or TMDL
 - A TMDL is the maximum amount of a pollutant/nutrient that a water body can receive while still meeting water quality standards




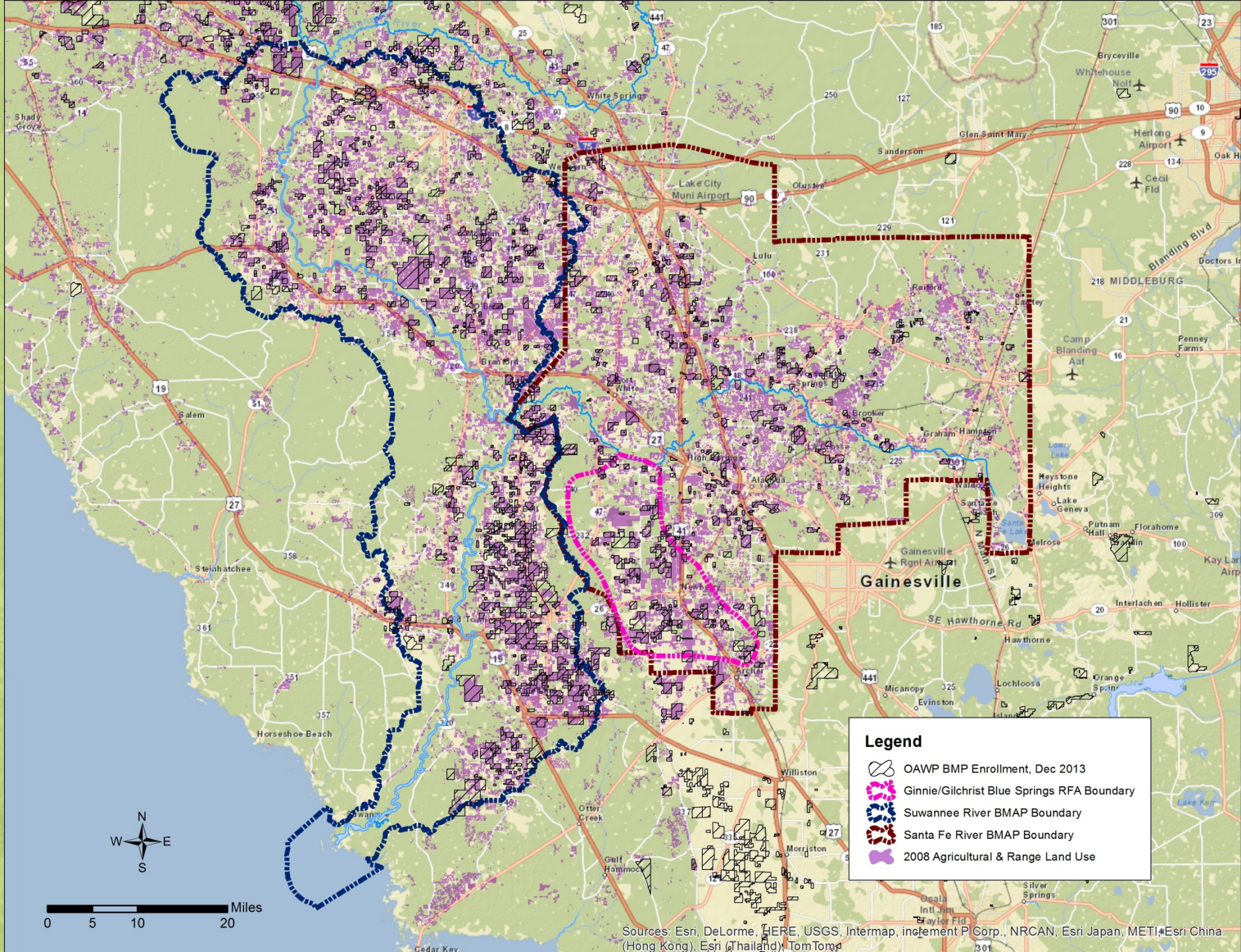
Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs) in Florida

-  Major Lakes and Rivers
-  Counties

BMAP Boundaries

Status

-  Adopted
-  In Progress
-  Other Restoration



Assessing Awareness and Perceptions

Goals:

Assess knowledge of BMAPs and related requirements

Identify gaps in outreach / education

Obtain feedback on BMP program

Improve BMP program enrollment process

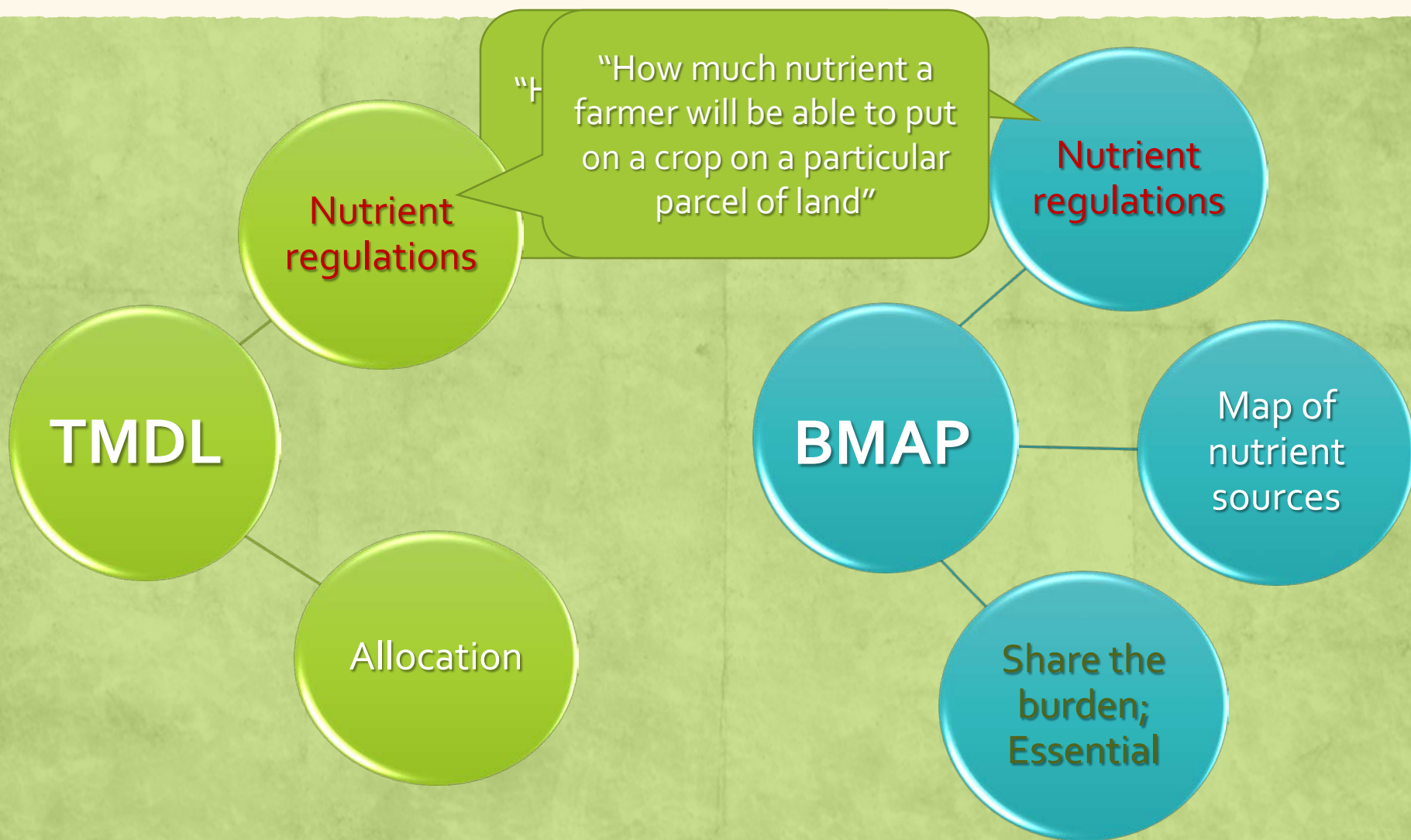
Methodology:

Interview enrolled producers within the BMAP, specifically within the Restoration Focus Area

- Engage both new and longtime participants

Future: Interview producers who have not yet enrolled

What do TMDLs and BMAPs mean to farmers?



Reasons for Participation

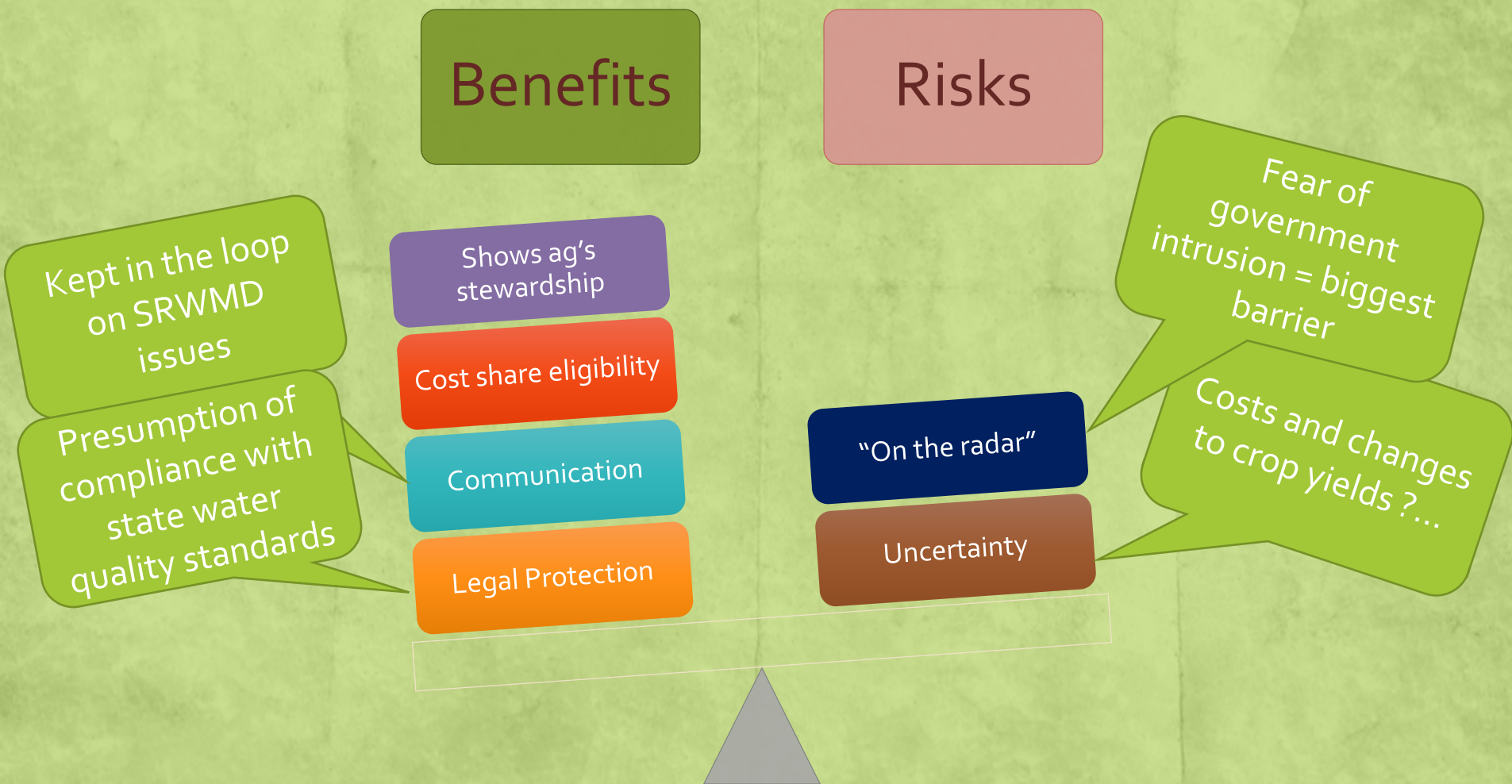
Pre-BMAP Participants:

- BMPs are common sense; already doing most of the practices
- Hoping to improve record keeping
- Prove that farmers are good stewards of the land; doing the “right thing”
- Improve efficiency / bottom line
- Preserve the ability to continue farming

Post-BMAP Participants:

- Felt forced to enroll
- Improve efficiency / bottom line
- Potential legal protection
- Prove that farmers are good stewards of the land; doing the “right thing”
- Eligibility for SRWMD and DACS cost share programs

Weighing Responses on Participation



What's Working?

- Field staff are helpful, knowledgeable, and have good people skills. They make the enrollment process easy.
- Practices support precision / scientific farming
- BMP programs show other stakeholders that agriculture is onboard with restoration programs
- Education and communication – especially news from the SRWMD
 - Meetings are held throughout district so all have the opportunity to attend
- Program was “eased in” and not forced upon farmers

What Can We Improve?

- Communication and education
 - Producers may not realize all of the benefits of the BMP program, especially if they enroll mostly for cost share eligibility
 - Many don't understand / aren't aware of the BMAPs
- Small farms fall through the cracks but could be large part of nutrient/pollutant loading
- More field staff needed

If You Were the Boss...

- Increase field staff
- Hire someone (or small group) to be “jack of all trades” and bridge the gap among agencies/programs, ensure communication and information sharing
- Stress the importance of the presumption of compliance with water quality standards. Make sure farmers know this is more than a gateway to cost share money.
- Tie cost share money to implementation assurance visits; require enrollment for at least one year.
- Provide funding for seeding native grasses to control erosion

Conclusions

- Most participants are happy with BMP program
- Emphasis placed on need for staff augmentation and communication / education
- Even elected officials aren't sure what a TMDL or BMAP is, so we probably need to work more with farmers on the concepts

