



NEWS REPORT

A & L GREAT LAKES LABORATORIES, INC. SPRING 2006

List of Contacts at A&L Great Lakes

Agronomy:

Randall Warden,
Dan Kite,
Tim Bailey
& Myron Warner

Billing & Accounting:

Sharon Topp
& Shawn Tinnel

Land Application:

Keith Henley

Quality Assurance:

Greg Neyman

GPS Mapping:

Dan Kite

Telecommunications:

Randall Warden
& Greg Neyman

Soil Trak:

Randall Warden,
Greg Neyman
& Dan Kite

Feed Testing:

Lois Parker
& Randall Warden

Water Analysis:

Keith Henley

Pesticide Residues:

Keith Henley
& Dan Kite

Fertilizer Analysis:

Jo Ann Nichols

Compost Analysis:

Lois Parker

Area Agronomists:

Tim Bailey
& Myron Warner

Enjoying Growing Pains

One of the best challenges a business can have is growing pains. A & L Great Lakes is currently undergoing major building renovations to assure that our clients continue to receive quality results in a timely manner.

Because of increased soil sample volume, we are remodeling some of our labs so that we can operate more efficiently. We are also installing a state of the art heating and ventilation system that will assure the lab equipment will operate at peak performance.

Other growth segments of our business include plant tissue, manure, fertilizer and pesticide testing. We are also making renovations in these labs to improve our efficiency.

Contact us to arrange for a tour of the lab when you are in the area.

Moving to Daylight Savings Time

This spring Indiana starts observing Daylight Saving Time. Most of the state, including Fort Wayne, will be in the Eastern Time zone. Please remember this when contacting us.

Soil Report Customization

A & L Great Lakes Labs has adapted and changed in many different ways over the years, and one of those is how we handle analytical report styles. We currently offer over 100 different soil report styles, and close to 200 when including environmental, feed, fertilizer, manure and plant tissue formats.

Having these different report style options allows us to provide a customized report where the information is laid out exactly the way the customer requires. We also have customers who have custom forms with their company logo or their own pre-printed forms.

If you would like to discuss how we can create a solution to meet your reporting needs, contact Randall Warden or Greg Neyman.



Hello...Goodbye

Transitions are a part of business, and life in general. A&L Great Lakes Labs is experiencing a change in personnel as we say “Happy Trails” to retiring employees Debbie Hohla and Gary Elliott, and welcome Patti Knuth and Tim Bailey to our service team.

Debbie Hohla joined our lab team in 1994, and she has been part of the helpful office staff since 1999. Debbie is known for her attention to detail, as she became the queen of soil sample logging during our busy soil seasons. Debbie is looking forward to her next adventure, as she leaves her friends at A&L and gets ready to travel with her husband, Jerry.

The most recent addition to our office team is Patti Knuth. Patti was a laboratory technician in the Agricultural Department for many years, and left the lab to pursue a new career with her husband, Norm. When Norm and Patti returned to the Fort Wayne area, we were very pleased to rehire Patti as our receptionist. Patti’s knowledge of the laboratory processes along with her office skills makes her a great addition to our office staff.

A&L Great Lakes Laboratories is honored (and saddened) to announce the retirement of Gary Elliott. Gary has served as our western area customer service representative since 1988, and has witnessed many changes in the agricultural business community. Gary and Myron Warner will be forever linked as the Laurel and Hardy of the A&L soil fertility workshops, and we will all miss Gary’s spontaneous laugh and great smile. Gary and his wife Marilyn are looking forward to their retirement and extra time to spend with their family.



Replacing Gary (if that’s even possible) is our newest agronomist, Tim Bailey. Tim joins us with broad experience in the retail and wholesale fertilizer industry. Tim is an avid golfer, and an overall sports fan. Tim and his wife, Kathy, enjoy travel opportunities, including international trips. Tim brings new ideas and energy to our client services team, and is a very welcome addition. Tim is in the process of contacting clients and making introductions, and looks forward to conquering the agronomic challenges he’ll be facing. Join with us in welcoming Tim to the A&L Team.

PSNT Finds Value

Interest in the pre-sidedress nitrogen test for managing nitrogen on corn continues to increase, especially for manured soils. This test can help producers make more efficient and economical use of N fertilizer by taking advantage of N present in the soil due to carryover or release from manure and other organic materials. Contact us or check our website for Fact Sheet #18 for more information on this important nitrogen management tool.



Agricultural Soil Testing Quality



Quality control is an essential part of our business. Each of our testing areas has an internal quality control program that is monitored closely. However, a lab must look beyond its walls to be sure that it is actually generating quality test results. A & L Great Lakes Labs participates in several external quality control and certification programs for agricultural soil testing.

The largest external quality control program we participate in is the North American Proficiency Testing Program (NAPT). This is a voluntary program administered by the Soil Science Society of America to help labs improve their quality control systems. Soil samples are periodically sent to us (and over 150 other labs) around North America for various analyses. We perform analyses that are appropriate for the soils of this region as well as “try” other tests that are not common. We forward these soil test results to the NAPT Coordinator for processing and statistical analysis, and then receive a report where we can anonymously compare our results with other labs that run the same tests. This helps us in many ways to maintain and improve our quality.

We have gained “certification” as an approved soil testing lab in several states. Each state has a different approach, but most ask that our data from the NAPT program be submitted to the appropriate agency or entity for review. A few states (e.g. Wisconsin) do not participate in the NAPT program, but conduct their own soil sample exchange program. Each of these programs requires that a lab achieve a certain level of proficiency on specific soil test methods.

Quality control is a continuous process. Our staff closely monitors a variety of check samples and standards to assure that our instrumentation and methods are performing properly. We utilize external sample exchange programs to benchmark ourselves. This resource investment helps assure that we are providing quality data to our clients so they can make important financial and crop management decisions.

Using Soil Testing Summary Information

Soil testing is an invaluable layer of information when managing a field for crop production. A sample taken at a given time provides a current inventory of soil pH and nutrients levels. However, the greatest value of soil testing is gained from evaluating long term trends for a field, or areas within the field, of samples taken over multiple years. This provides a much better measure of how the current soil fertility program is performing with varying weather conditions and crop yields.

Each year we summarize soil test results on a geographic and client basis. These summaries show the high, low and median values of nutrient levels for the soil samples submitted that year. Along with this information, we also provide the percent of samples that fall into the various soil test rating categories. This is valuable information for consultants, fertilizer dealers, and their growers by pointing out

general deficiencies or build-up of nutrients in fields in their area.

Geographic soil test summaries since 1996 are available for viewing on our website. Use of these regional summaries along with a client’s individual summary to review recent soil test results from a field can add another layer of information to aid in making recommendations.

A geographic summary may not provide enough information for particular situations. Soil test summaries specific to growers, or even individual fields, can be produced with our SoilTrak software, allowing closer evaluation of fertility trends. GIS systems can perform trend analysis on an individual sample basis.

Regardless of the scale of a soil test summary, there is much information and value to be gained by reviewing and studying it. Value can be realized by using soil test summaries to identify nutrient needs or modify soil fertility programs.

Sample Receipt Checklist: Introduction and Review

Our Environmental Division recently added a procedure which records the shipping details and condition of samples arriving at the laboratory. Upon receipt of samples, we go through a detailed “sample receipt checklist”, which is recorded in our system. This checklist is available to clients as part of their final report.

We want to help make sure that client samples are collected using proper containers and correct preservation techniques, and arrive at the lab in time for us to complete the analysis within the required holding time. Guidelines for sampling, shipping and receiving environmental samples come from the EPA code of Federal Regulations (40-CFR). Our Fact Sheet No. 17 lists the sampling, preservation and holding time requirements for most common analyses.

If we receive samples that do not conform to these guidelines, the integrity of the sample results could be in question and the results might not be accepted for regulatory purposes. For example, if samples for bacteria analysis are received at room temperature and outside the 24-hour holding time, the samples would qualify for nonconformance. If samples are received with nonconformance issues, we contact our client to get instructions on whether to proceed or cancel the requested analysis.

A & L can provide sample containers, coolers, ice packs and chain of custody forms to assist with your sampling requirements. We also have trained staff to assist with any questions you may have concerning sampling or shipment of samples.

Web Site Has Fresh New Look

The A&L Great Lakes Lab website www.algreatlakes.com has recently undergone a facelift with updated graphics and a more intuitive layout to facilitate navigation.

Many of our customers enjoy the convenience of ordering supplies on-line. We also have a repository of Fact Sheet documents available. You can print out a variety of submittal forms, soil test summaries and an account application directly from the home page. Additionally, we have maintained an archive of all newsletters for your reference.

We are constantly trying to find ways to improve our customer service. If you have any comments about the web site or suggestions for content, e-mail lab@algreatlakes.com.

www.algreatlakes.com



**A & L GREAT LAKES
LABORATORIES, INC.**

3505 Conestoga Drive
Fort Wayne, Indiana 46808-4414

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