

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
August Regional Teleconference Notes
August 29, 2022

Participants

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Becca McClellan, Jennings County SWCD (S)
Holly McCutcheon, Warrick Co SWCD/Urban Soil Health (S)
Tara Wessler-Henry (S)
Scott Sanders, Decatur SWCD (S)
Leah Harmon, ISDA (N)
Stacy White, Randolph County SWCD (N)
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Jodie Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (N)
Lais McCartney, SARE / Purdue (N)
Bri Styck, Newton SWCD (N)
Mary Lou Watson, Miami SWCD (N)

- **CCSI**

- “Summer Meeting Season” is drawing to a close after a busy and successful year. Good turnouts across the board. CCSI has been able to support a large number of locally-led events featuring top speakers from across the US. See summer meetings below for more info.
- Podcasts are resuming after a hiatus. Future guests include:
 - John & Denise Jamerson, Lyles Station / Legacy Taste of the Garden <https://legacytasteofthegarden.com/> Lyles Station is an historic Black farming community located in Gibson County. The Jamersons held an inaugural series of Black Loam Conferences in 2022 that focused on urban ag, economic enterprise and more in underserved communities.
 - Pat Bittner, SW Indiana farmer and one or more of the researchers from Ecdysis <https://www.ecdysis.bio/> Ecdysis was founded by Jon Lundgren, a research entomologist
- Strategic Planning
 - Approximately 200 individuals have taken part in an e-Survey deployed earlier in the summer. THANK YOU to everyone who took the time to complete the survey and especially for your additional comments. This input is critical to the strategic planning process.

- Due to circumstances beyond our control, a small-group (25+/- individuals) planning session scheduled for early September has been postponed and will be rescheduled for later in the year.
- “Ag 101” Training
 - With a large influx across the Indiana Conservation Partnership of new(er) employees who are not from a farming background, there is a need for “Ag 101” trainings. This is seen as a priority need across the ICP
 - CCSI has been communicating with NRCS State Office staff re collaboration efforts for their CAMP (Conservation Ag Mentorship Program) that would include other conservation partnership staff.
 - The CCSI Training Committee is in the process of gathering existing resources that may be of use for virtual and/or in-person trainings, especially those resources that are very basic in nature. **PARTNERS – PLEASE FORWARD RESOURCES YOU FEEL COULD BE VALUABLE (VIDEOS, TRAINING MODULES, ETC) TO THE PROCESS TO INFO@CCSIN.ORG**
 - ISDA has indicated their willingness to support the process, especially development of virtual modules
- **Partner Updates**
 - **IASWCD**
 - There are 2 more region meetings – tonight (8/29) in Daviess County and 8/31 in Huntington County. Contact Joe or Amy if you’d like to attend.
 - IASWCD will have an October technical training webinar series as in the past couple years. Most likely Wednesdays at noon. Watch for details.
 - **SARE**
 - Research and Education and Partnership Grant RFPs are out both with October submission deadlines. Farmer Rancher and Youth Educator RFPs are also open with deadlines in November-December. These are all excellent opportunities for conservation partners. Lais McCartney is happy to read and edit grant drafts and give advice. <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants/> Call Lais at 317-919-2691 or email lmccartn@purdue.edu with any questions at all.
 - **Purdue Extension**
 - Extension educators were able to participate in the Soil Health Nexus in-service training in Minnesota – 6 people for 2 day training. Extremely beneficial to view agricultural operation differences between states. In addition to soil health, there was communications training - Attendees created a piece of media to train others in soil health – podcast and videos.. In a field of wheat stubble they made a couple of passes with different equipment (VT, strip till, disc, plow) and attendees walked through each of the passes to see how deep they went, advantages and disadvantages of the different passes; seeing it happen and seeing the effects is powerful – the tillage passes could be replicated at farmer focused events in Indiana for similar impacts
 - Purdue Ag Center (PAC) field days have been well attended. Soil health topics have been on agendas this year. Hans Schmitz completed infield diagnostics at several field days

- Event at Purdue ACRE on 9/8 focusing on all aspects of digital technology and incorporating it into the farm and the benefits it provides <https://ccsin.info/3w11Xrg>
- **NRCS**
 - Closing fiscal year (9/30)
 - Staff are busy attending field days and outside trainings
 - Local Workgroup meetings are going on right now to rank resource concerns that have farm bill funding (CSP, EQIP) attached to them; partners are encouraged to participate.
 - New DCs include Russ Sparks, New Castle, Drew McCutcheon, Charlestown and Kim Lampert, Vevay
- **ISDA**
 - INFA does not have as many people enrolled; deadline was earlier this year for the cover crop trials. Cover crop seed is currently being delivered to participating growers.
 - Clean Water Indiana (CWI) and Watershed programs with cost-share are ongoing. CWI applications are due 9/8, not as many applications as prior years. <https://www.in.gov/isda/divisions/soil-conservation/clean-water-indiana/>
 - Finishing up CREP re-enrollment, deadline 10/1
 - There is A LOT of new staff for districts
 - SWCD supervisors expressing interest in soil health speakers for district annual meetings
 - Cover crop premium discount program (crop insurance discount) will continue this year. Upper White Watershed – increased acreage cap to 750; opens around 12/1
- **Urban Soil Health**
 - Urban Soil Health training in Knox Co was postponed due to high COVID numbers; will be rescheduled
 - PHISH (People Helping Improve Soil Health / Sullivan-Terre Haute) will be hosting event featuring Cara Bergschneider, NRCS.
 - PUSHIT (Promoting Urban Soil Health In Towns / Evansville) is planning a composting workshop this fall.
 - 9/19 Vermillion SWCD event on “putting garden to bed”
- **Other Partner Updates**
 - **Warrick and Vanderburgh** Counties holding a workshop 10/1.
 - **Blue River Grazing** received an RCPP. Blue River RCPP is mostly Harrison Co, plus a little in Crawford and Floyd. Purdue has been doing a lot of work in Hellbender protection. Purdue, NRCS, TNC, and others banded together to get an RCPP sponsored for Hellbender in the Blue River. Will start w/ new EQIP signup in FY 23. Will be 3 years – lots of money, short time frame.
 - **Big Pine Watershed** held 2 one-day events. Day 1 was for newly hired conservation staff. Day 2 was for producers in the watershed. Hands-on activities were included. Dug up roots, looked at soybean field. Laura Cooper, Benton SWCD, did slake demos. Went to John Deere dealership with Loran Steinlage, IA farmer and Mitchell Hora, IA farmer/podcaster.
 - **Scott County** held a Pasture Walk 8/11, partnered with Purdue and NRCS, more than 30 attendees; PARP and CCA credits were offered

- **SEPAC** has a PARP meeting 8/30/2022
- **Lawrenceburg** will host a Conservation Tillage Meeting 11/4. Robert Zupancic will speak on Pasture Management, Bill Johnson on Weed Management, Bee Aware will be PARP topic
- **Shelbyville** hosts a beginning farmer field day at Schoentrup Farms 9/7; topics include farm finances and viability; Ag professionals can [register here](#).
- **Hancock County** holding a W4tL event 9/20
- **IDEA** Fall Conference is October 25-27 at Brown County State Park; deadline to register is 9/16
- **Randolph County SWCD** is selling rain barrels
- **Marshall County SWCD** is working on a field day for this fall; district owns a drill seeder that they rent but currently researching to purchase a smaller one that can be used with a smaller tractor; have an RC&D grant for partial funding
- **Miami County SWCD** will again participate with the river rafting expedition with Arrowhead RC&D; 5 days of rafting for high school students in a 10 county area

● **Summer Events (What worked/what didn't)**

- Adams County held a Conservation Conversation with Community Leaders. Later that same day had a more traditional field day. Both very well attended. Attendees of the Community Leaders program were highly engaged, staying well beyond the official ending time. This program might be readily duplicated by other districts/partners across the state.
- Southwest Soil Health Expo (Princeton) with Russell Hedrick, NC farmer and Cam Mills, Cass County; well attended, very good attendee response
- Decatur County, Roger Wenning field day with a round table the night before with Loran Steinlage and Dave Brandt; The field day featured a session by Nathan Brown, OH on mental health in the ag community and was very well received
- Ray Ward from Ward Labs, in his mid 80s, in the soil pit at Rulon Enterprises along with Keith Berns, Green Cover Seeds was very engaging and informative
- Newton County SWCD worked with AgVenture seed company to present soil health info at their meeting for their producers; Hans Schmitz put together a great presentation; Kathryn Weiss (Purdue Extension) and Bri Styck assisted; climatologist spoke as well and tag teamed with Hans
- Miami County held their annual summer cover crops meeting with PARP; Joe Nester from Nester Ag spoke; 75 people; adding PARP really helps get the soil health/conservation message to people who might not be seeking that information
- Miami County hosted W4tL with Wabash County at White's Institute south of Wabash, a whole campus with on-site farming; it's in the heart of the Wabash River Treaty Creek initiative; conservation topics and outreach for that initiative

● **Winter Events**

- A workshop is likely to be held in Salem (Washington County) in January
- Southern Grazing Conference likely