

**Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)**  
**August Regional Teleconference Notes**  
**August 25 (NE & NW) and August 30 (SE & SW)**

## Participants

Jody Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (NW)  
Stacy White, Randolph County SWCD (NE)  
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension Asst. Program Leader for Soil Health (all)  
Jon Charlesworth, Purdue Extension-Benton and Warren County (NE)  
Frank Jones, NRCS Planning Team Lead (NE)  
Brad Kohlhagen, Purdue Extension-Adams County (NE)  
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)  
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)  
Stephanie Wulpenry, Regional Urban Soil Health Specialist (NE)  
Joe Rorick, CCSI Agronomist (NE, NW)  
Sheila Schroeder (all)  
Tony Bailey, NRCS State Conservation Agronomist (NW)  
Marc Roberts, Montgomery County SWCD and IASWCD (NW)  
Kerry Nielson, NRCS CS Pulaski Co (NW)  
Danielle Waldschmidt, NW Area Conservationist (NW)  
Celia Tharp, Carroll County NRCS (NW)  
Amanda Studor-Bond, IDEM (NW)  
Geneva Tyler, ISDA (NW)  
Genny Helt, NRCS (SE)  
Mark Thomas, ISDA (SE)  
Tara Wessler-Henry, ISDA (SE)  
Scott Sanders, Decatur County SWCD (SE)  
Stephanie McLain, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist (SE)  
Laura Fribley, ISDA (SE)  
Don Donovan, Park and Vermillion County NRCS District Conservationist (SW)  
Bryan Overstreet, Purdue Extension-Jasper County (SW)  
Hans Schmitz, Purdue Extension-Posey County (SW)

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- **Partner Updates**

- **IASWCD**

- Indiana Conservation Award nominations can be submitted now through September 10. Information regarding the awards: Supervisor of the Year, Conservation Farmer of the Year AND Friend of Conservation can be found on the IASWCD website. Or, contact Amy Work with any questions.
- Districts need to submit any resolutions they may have by Sept 17 via the online form on the IASWCD website or directly to Joe Schmees.
- The August 17 ICP Leaders webinar was recorded and is posted on the ICP website (<http://icp.iaswcd.org/resources/webinars/>).
- IASWCD and ISDA are hosting four VirTuesday trainings for Indiana District Staff and Supervisors. These are Virtual Trainings via Zoom on Tuesday evenings at 7 pm (ET). The previous two sessions were recorded and posted on the IASWCD website (<http://wordpress.iaswcd.org/virtuesdays/>). The remaining two are September 21

(Topic: Records Retention) and October 19 (Topic: Turning Data in Action). You must register for each of these to receive the Zoom link. More information can be found on the IASWCD website.

-The River Friendly Farmer Awards Ceremony took place on August 18 at the Indiana State Fairgrounds. We had over 175 people attend this year and forty-seven farmers were honored. A complete list of award recipients can be found on the IASWCD website (<http://wordpress.iaswcd.org/river-friendly-farmer-award/>).

## ○ **Purdue**

-Students are back on campus at Purdue and activities are pretty normal. Masks are required indoors

-State Fair has come and gone with 4-H activities going well

-Wrapping up the Purdue Ag Center Field Days throughout the state

-Soil Health Nexus Inservice Training September 13-15 at the KBS

-Ashley Adair is the Purdue Organic Row Crop specialist replacing Michael O'Donnell

-Urban Farm Signature Program-hoping to roll out the program this fall. It will be available in-person and on-line (perhaps hybrid).

-IN Watershed Leadership Academy – will be taking enrollment soon for the 2022 class

-Purdue Soil Health Educator Website for Teachers of High School and Middle School students – has been recently revised and updated ([https://www.purdue.edu/dffs/soil-health/educator\\_resources/](https://www.purdue.edu/dffs/soil-health/educator_resources/)).

-Sept 11 SIPAC Forestry Field Day

-Sept 18 SIPAC Small Ruminant Field Day

-Sept 22 “Recognizing Hazards Around the Farm” Webinar

- Benton County Field Day will be at the Agronomy Farm on September 2. Speakers and topics include: Nathaniel Thompson, Purdue Ag Econ Dept. speaking about carbon markets; Daniel Quinn, new Purdue Extension Corn Specialist; John Scott with drones; Dan Klein to speak on bulk chemical tank safety.

-NEPAC field day August 26<sup>th</sup> and will be mostly a morning program. In-person events have had attendance a little lower than normal

-ICP webinar on August 17. 158 ppl attended. Recorded and on ICP website.

<http://icp.iaswcd.org/resources/webinars/>

## ○ **ISDA**

- New Employees Crawford County Kelly Thompson. Lawrence County Technician Hannah Martin

- District Staff Meeting September 14 (Corydon) and 23 (Perry County)

- CWI applications are due September 9<sup>th</sup>. Up to 3 documents can be attached to application.

- Working on filling vacant ISDA positions, particularly CREP and the DSS positions

- ISDA will continue to be driver for parts of the Infield Advantage program. 100 farmers in 52 counties have signed up for Cover Crop trials Look for added Nitrogen and Tillage trials in the coming months.

## ○ **NRCS**

- Local work groups have met (or will meet shortly) that focus on agriculture and natural resource issues that are found in community. The groups rank these issues to determine the top 10 concerns for the county. This will direct EQIP and CSP

funding. Deadline is October 15, 2021. Each DC job is to communicate to partners that a meeting will be held.

- COVID- CDC indoor masking guidance. Hopefully information communicated by local DC. Several USDA offices have moved to 25% staffing levels and are currently open by appointment only.
- Soil Health Trailer was at state fair and at Becknology days. This is a great way to develop relationship with Beck's
- Vole damage seen in no-till fields--mostly bean fields. Affected fields don't involve cover crops. Working to revise NRCS vole agronomy crib notes.

○ **IDEM**

- In the final stages of receiving 319 grant applications (deadline 9/1)
- Story map that describes how IDEM navigates NPS pollution recently made available. <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c19586108c304c779509e3ccbfeff4709>.

○ **Other Partner Updates and Events**

- Pulaski/Fulton SWCD Cover Crop Equipment Field Day on September 23<sup>rd</sup> (5-8 PM). Reach out to Kerry Nielson ([Kerry.nielson@usda.gov](mailto:Kerry.nielson@usda.gov)) for more details.
- 3-day training (Soil Health and Sustainability for Midwestern Field Staff) is August 21-September 2. Megan Sweeney new SWCD coordinator started (Montgomery County)
- Marc Roberts testified for the state association last week
- Marshall County lost Erica Wyss to NRCS in Corydon. Wrote 319 watershed plan. Hired Tim Kroeker and will start beginning of year. They have 2 ongoing LARE grants and are starting CISMA. Arrowhead RC&D rafting trip will occur in September with 200-250 students on the Tippecanoe River.
- Rita Sieg, new SWCD staff in Franklin County.
- CWI – CCSI can write letters of support for CWI and 319 grants.
- Decatur County great field day at Roger's. 60 plus in attendance. Jim and Robert did great. Nathan Brown from Ohio presented a great short segment on farmer mental health. Round Table the night before with 15 producers. September 17<sup>th</sup>- Farm Safety event with Fred Whitford will be hosted in Decatur County
- Park and Vermillion field day good crowd even though it was hot. Field day focused on getting started with Strip-tilling and cover crops
- IDEA conference to be held in October
- Cover Crop Walk and Talk hosted in Fayette County. Informal opportunity for attendees to drop-in to the farm, see some plots, talk to farmer and conservation staff. Very happy with the event. Several farmers made appointment to discuss conservation and available programs.

● **CCSI Funding Request Updates / Event support funding moving forward**

○ **Local Partner Funding Requests**

- Requests were reviewed by a 4-person review team from oversight committee.
- Support soil health on Indiana cropland---particularly targeting farmers new or new to soil health practices/systems.

- After careful review of remaining balances in expiring agreement, funded \$40,500 in projects.
- Groups were inventive with fewer guard rails with these requests. Several replicated requests like Porter County distributing Cover Crop Field Guides. Sullivan County- handed out harvest goodie basket which includes cover crop guide to area agronomists, co-ops and others who work one-on-one with farmers.
- **Purdue Ag Centers-**
  - Additional funds due to expire were directed to soil health demonstration/research plots at Purdue Ag Centers
  - In addition, CCSI arranged discounts and donations from cover crop and equipment suppliers to implement those plots. i
  - Also able to connect researchers To cover crop breeders and suppliers to support research.
  - Relationship building was great. Was also a great way to build relationship/establish foundation of communication with the PAC superintendents.
- If you are considering ordering Cover Crop Guides, you may want to wait. A new version is expected soon and the current version will be discounted, or you may want to wait for the updated version.
- The new NRCS Agreement will continue to fund event support. However, event support funding will be at a lower annual level. Demand from local partners will be reviewed on an ongoing basis to identify additional revenue needs and streams.
- CCSI has supported several round tables lately. A simple, conversational event with 20-25 people or less. This gives an atmosphere that is often more comfortable for sharing ideas and experiences. Since, we've had more requests for these type of events.

- **Advanced Cover Crop Training – Your thoughts on what should this look like**

Below are comments/suggestions/thoughts of those who participated in the CCSI regional teleconference

- Travel
  - Travel budgets will likely be an issue for several partners
  - Use of virtual events to limit travel – especially more PowerPoint focused will be beneficial time management
- Combination of Virtual and In-person
  - Mixing virtual + in-person can help increase amount of actual hands-on activities when meeting in-person; In-general hands-on is “better”
  - Consider using assignments before events to help generate questions
  - Purdue Extension training participation increased phenomenally with virtual training. (So did CCSI-SARE Core Soil Health) Purdue continues to examine what has worked well and build from that. Will likely be a combination of in-person and virtual.
- Virtual

- NRCS Trainings have been focused internally. MSTeams channel has been created and they are using break-out session. There is also potential to administer quizzes in Teams
  - Zoom-based trainings can also use break-out rooms / and uses less band-width for the broadband challenged. Zoom polls and/or Sli.do can be incorporated to as attendees questions.
  - Might consider very short trainings similar to SWCD Supervisor trainings. They are 5-10 minutes long followed by a short quiz and documented in a database.
  - Keep in mind that people sign up for virtual trainings and events, miss the event and plan to watch the recording... but never seem to get around to it.
  - Starting to see decline in technical abilities because not doing trainings in person. Times when virtual is OK, but still need to get back to some in -person training. Long term technical abilities will suffer if we don't return to in person.
- In-Person
    - Attendance for in-person events is down across the board for everyone.
    - When possible, there is value to brining people together in a room – specifically for networking. This can provide opportunities for more seasoned staff to meet and engage with newer staff and help them navigate their agencies (as well as learn more about soil health)
  - Survey results (what type of training staff prefer) = 1/3 in person, 1/3 virtual, 1/3 hybrid. Some topics can't be covered virtually though (getting in a soil pit) Looking at different species of cover crops, planting dates, etc.
  - Potential topics – Intercropping, relay cropping weed zappers?? Too far advanced?? Maybe need another level—Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced trainings??