

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
September Regional Teleconference Notes
September 27 (SE & SW) and September 29 (NE & NW)

Participants

Jody Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (NE)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension Asst. Program Leader for Soil Health (all)
Jon Charlesworth, Purdue Extension-Benton and Warren County (SW)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)
Joe Rorick, CCSI Agronomist (all)
Sheila Schroeder (SE, SW)
Tony Bailey, NRCS State Conservation Agronomist (NW)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Geneva Tyler, ISDA (NE)
Genny Helt, NRCS (SE)
Scott Sanders, Decatur County SWCD (SE)
Don Donovan, Parke and Vermillion County NRCS District Conservationist (SW)
Bryan Overstreet, Purdue Extension-Jasper County (NW)
Marian Rodriguez-Soto, Regional Urban Soil Health Specialist (NW)
Ashley Adair, Purdue Extension Organic Agriculture Specialist (all)
Robert Zupancic, SE NRCS Grazing Specialist (SE)
Heather Bacher, Women4TheLand (SE)
Darrell Nicholson, SE Area Conservationist (SE)
Dave Lefforge, ISDA Resource Specialist (NE)
Judi Brown, Dubois County SWCD (SW)
Deb Barnette, Parke County SWCD (SW)
Jeff Baker, IASWCD (SW)
Janel Meyer, Steuben County SWCD (NE)
Troy Manges, Marshall County NRCS (NE)
Beth Vansickle, Purdue Extension-Madison County (NE)
Curt Emanuel, Purdue Extension-Boone County (NW)

- **Partner Updates**

- **IASWCD**

- Annual Conference of Indiana SWCDs will be January 23-25 at The Westin Indianapolis (downtown). Registration is set to open by November 1. Max Armstrong is the keynote speaker.

- **Purdue**

- National Farm Safety and Health Week was held on the 3rd week in September. It is held in conjunction with the start of harvest time. Bill Fields and his staff at Purdue have released the farm fatality report for Indiana.

- <https://extension.purdue.edu/INPREPared/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Indiana-Farm-Fatality-Summary-2020.pdf>

- Tar spot has been really bad for much of the state. Some corn fields are expected to suffer significant yield loss.

- There has been an unusual outbreak of army worms this year. There are commonly

pockets of army worm outbreaks, but they are more widely severe this year.

- Sarah Vaughn is the new ANR Administrative Assistant.
- Interviews have taken place for the new ANR program leader—to replace Rick Foster after his retirement. Hopefully their will be an announcement before the next CCSI Regional teleconferences.
- The 2021-2026 College of Agriculture Strategic Plan is available online. https://ag.purdue.edu/strategic_plan/Pages/default.aspx
- A virtual Manure Management Workshop will be offered. Flyer should be available soon.
- Boone County cover crop plots have been harvested. They haven't seen yields yet. Some of the plots had cover crops aerially seeded in August and plan to drill cover crops by the end of September on rest of the plots. This allows for a side-by-side comparison. Boone County is also planning a fall field day on December 1st. No details yet. Curt Emanuel will be retiring December 31st.
- Benton and Warren County hosted a Crops Field Day at ACRE center west of Lafayette with an in-person format. It was a good field day, but there wasn't a huge crowd. Working on digging soils pits for area soils which will host 100+ students. Also putting together a digital Ag 4-H project which most of the work will be completed online, including quizzes. There will be no manual or record sheets. Will work with Leslie Fisher on a presentation for Benton County kids.

○ **ISDA**

- CWI grants were due in early September. 18 were submitted, which was about 8-10 fewer applications that usually. However, the about the same amount of total money was requested as in years past. Applications are currently being reviewed and the selections will be announced at the October 26th SSCB meeting.
- Working with deadlines for elections and election committees.
- There are a couple of vacant positions that will hopefully be posted soon.
- Dave Lefforge has been helping with several soils contests. Area contests are the beginning of October.
- Dave Lefforge and Lindsey Blume hosted a mock soils judging contest with resource specialist and one SWCD staff. Turned into more of a training session. Will likely do again next year since they had a lot of good feedback and will open it up to more partnership staff.

○ **NRCS**

- Fiscal year 2021 is wrapping up at the end of September. The department has released guidance to return to service centers (all staff and customers) after the beginning of the new year. With back to normal entry for all by mid-March. (pending COVID rates)
- The soil health trailer was used for a 3-day event for 8th graders in Sullivan County.
- The state soil health teams had a virtual meeting. Dan Quinn, Purdue Extension Corn Specialist, was introduced and shared his background and projects he is working on.
- Tony Bailey gave reminder that tillage is a common fix for some of the problems we are seeing in the field this year (i.e. voles, slugs, etc.). Remember to keep those things in context and is curious how the advanced soil health farmers are dealing with those issues/if they are seeing those issues.

- **IDEM**
 - Reviewing 319 grant applications now (deadline 9/1).
 - DNR’s Indiana Stream and Wetland Program is looking for land in most of the northeast Indiana watershed that could potentially be used for stream and wetland mitigation. Let Kristi (Kmtodd@idem.in.gov) know if you know of any potential sites and she’ll get you connected with the right person at DNR. The land does require a conservation easement and DNR does pay to do the restoration.

- **Training Updates**
 - Advanced Cover Crop 2021 will not be held this year. Due to the hands-on nature of the training and taking stock in the COVID numbers across the state and training restrictions, schedules, deadlines, etc.---it’s just not feasible.
 - 2022 training dates will hopefully be out in October.
 - A few extension educators attended the Soil Health Nexxus training in Michigan in September. Plan to include some of the speakers from this event in future Indiana trainings.
 - Social Science Pilot trainings have been put on hold. Stephanie McLain was the lead. In talking with Stephanie and Linda Prokopy—this event was not a great fit to execute virtually. Possibly target next spring for in-person training.

- **Ashley Adair, Purdue Extension Organic Agriculture Specialist**
 - Ashley started in this position in September is currently housed in the Purdue Horticulture and Landscape Architecture Department. She will have Horticulture Crop and grain crop responsibilities. She previously spent 5 years as an extension educator in Montgomery County.
 - Ashley will have a strong emphasis on soil health. She will work to see how organic systems can include soil health practices to use for the farms and the environment’s advantage.
 - Currently working on a project with the AgEcon department testing out an organic agriculture risk calculator geared towards grain farmers. She is sending info out to farmers to test out this tool.
 - Indiana Hort Conference is the next event she will be working on.

- **Women4theLand**
 - Continuing to move forward with virtual circles.
 - Willing to work with SWCDs and other partners who would like to host an in-person circle.
 - Let Heather know if any counties are interested in hosting or have any topic suggestions.

- **Other Partner Updates and Events**
 - Urban Soil Health Program- working with local and master gardeners to set up demo sites to be used for future workshop host sites. Planting cover crops into different gardens that they manage. Lake County will be hosting an event on November 3rd focusing on cover crops and soil health. Also involved in new Legacy Taste of the Garden project. Working on contacting people that they might be able to work with

in the Gary area and possibly host workshops. Also in planning stages to host soil health in high tunnels event.

- Dubois County working on 2022-2025 strategic plan which will include a lot of soil health and small farmers, pollinators, native plants, native species. Land Stewardship Initiative hosted a successful Women4theLand circle that focused on soil health with 10 ladies. They will also have an Ag Economic Summit on the VUJC campus that they are helping find speakers for.
- Parke County- ramping up for the Bridge Festival. Their resource specialist is moving to NRCS, so they will be hiring a new person to fill the district resource specialist position.
- Decatur County hosted a Farm Safety Workshop. They were hoping for 40 people and had 91 show up. Fred Whitford was the speaker who presented virtually. Also had 15 FFA students in attendance.
- Search Soil Nerd on YouTube for videos with tips for soil judges.

○ **Requests from our partners**

- CCSI's The Root Project was featured in John Deere's *The Furrow* magazine. Being distributed to over a half million people, our website has seen a substantial uptick in traffic, more newsletter subscribers, Root Project downloads, etc. We need to up our game on the newsletter and can also use this opportunity to highlight things our partners are doing. We need pictures from soil health events with a short blurb that can be highlighted to shine a spotlight on our partners across the state. This could be used for the website, newsletter, blog post, etc.
- Dr. Bill Johnson has noted that herbicide carryover due to lack of break down from unusually dry weather could cause cover crop establishment issues. Bill has put a nice publication out on this topic <https://iwilltakeaction.com/uploads/files/20210623-factsheet-cover-crop-carryover-usdadraft.pdf>. Dr. Johnson would also like to know what cover crops farmers are planting—beyond cereal rye and oat/radish mixes. Joe will work with Genny Helt to possibly put out a survey to NRCS/partnership staff to gather this info. Dave Lefforge will reach out other resource specialist. This will help keep Dr. Johnson's research relevant

○ **Podcast/Virtual Farm Visit/Shop Visit Topics/Speaker Ideas**

- Cover Crop grazing topics—Robert does a great job with this.
- Some beans looked terrible late June/July because they got too much rain. Could tell soil type by color of beans. Could also see tile line.
- Variety Rye vs VNS Rye. The ability of it to mature earlier to plant green. Develop train specific research. Develop cover crop species that can be terminated with roller crimper without herbicide.
- Chopping and then planting triticale. Cutting for hay/baleage.
- Manure application on fields/manure spills
- Agriculture Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF)-figure out which BMPs will work in producers' fields/who they can contact.
- Practices through CRP-EQIP—especially geared for wildlife that nontraditional clients can be steered towards.

- Winter/After Harvest Equipment Update. Drills and planters but possibly combines too. Phil Needham. Ideas for getting seed on earlier because have seen aerially applied cover crops down drastically.
- 60" corn. There are web sources from Iowa and Illinois but nothing in Indiana. Pair up with reason of doing...grazing.
- Carbon Credits.
- Compaction—any new data out there?
- Drainage-benefits of tile drainage as a management practice.
- Cover Crops and drought
- Cover crops and flooding
- Drone and cover crops
- Slugs
- How do we keep people encouraged to move forward? Using multiple platforms to reach multiple groups.
- Herbicide persistence
- INFA fields that were flew in early August. Field had received enough rain to not drown soybean, but not enough to lose nodulation. Soybeans reverted back to being nitrogen users. The area of field that was with out cereal rye didn't have those patches of stress. Side without cereal had visual patches of stress.
- Varieties like buckwheat after wheat.
- Podcast to pick the right campus specialist with the right experienced farmer. Pick topic where a challenge was seen and discuss how the challenge was overcome.
- Many organic farmers use their leftover cover crop seed to create a random 10-12 way mix. They later see problem with termination and equipment challenges later.