

**Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
November/December Regional Teleconference Notes
November 29 (SE, SW) and December 1 (NE, NW) 2021**

Participants

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Brad Smith, Pike County SWCD & TNC (SW)
Melissa Ruschau, Dubois County SWCD (SW)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Joe Rorick, CCSI (all)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI Northern Program Manager (all)
Stacy White, Randolph County SWCD (NE)
Dave Lefforge, ISDA (NE)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Marc Roberts, Montgomery County SWCD & IASWCD (NW)
Jon Charlesworth, Benton & Warren County Purdue Extension (NW)
Bryan Overstreet, Jasper County Purdue Extension (NW)
Angie Garrison, Boone & Hamilton County NRCS (NW)
Jodie Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (NW)

• Partner Updates

- **IASWCD**
 - Annual SWCD Conference is January 23-25, 2022 at The Westin Indianapolis (across from the statehouse)
 - This year's conference features a unique presentation and discussion time for Indiana District Supervisors called "A Road to Success" on Sunday evening at 5 pm (Eastern) at The Westin.
 - The conference will close with the Indiana Conservation Awards Luncheon at 12 noon on Tuesday, January 25.
 - More information about the conference can be found on the Conference website: <https://web.cvent.com/event/9b72c2f2-d2c2-4203-881c-3fe8db78f0a7/summary>
 - CCSI will conduct a breakout session on tips and tricks for successful hybrid/virtual events
- **ISDA**
 - Districts will be holding their annual meetings January – March, many will be in person this year and will have speakers
 - DSS team is in discussion with IASWCD about trainings for 2022, looking at a survey to distribute at conference to supervisors to get a better grasp of training needs;

- earlier discussions indicated that supervisors prefer in-person trainings in their own county or the county next door, and videos they can watch on their own time
 - Anyone interested in the open DSS position can reach out to one of the current DSSs; the position covers the most northern counties of the state spanning from west to east
 - InField Advantage projects currently going consisting of working with some farmers on cover crop trials. This is just getting started. Letters have been sent to farmers. Going to do some soil sample and submitting them to Brookside labs. Will be sampling when covers are present – to collect biomass samples. 3 year project.
 - Transect – will be done the same as last year - in late winter/early spring just as cover crops come out.
- **NRCS**
 - All openings through the direct hire process have been filled
 - NRCS offices still operating at 25-50% capacity; every Monday email update for each county is sent to determine at what level the office can operate
 - EQIP and CSP sign-ups are underway
 - Angie Garrison, DC for Boone and Hamilton Counties, reported that a successful workshop was held December 1 in Boone County, attendees learned about cover crops at the Boone Co farm, some of which were drone seeded, and saw good soil comparisons at the event, Tom Bechman with Prairie Farmer was there and will do a write up on it, workshop included a Carbon Credit talk
 - Similar presentation will take place December 10th at Clinton County, more information can be found here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/soil-health-showcase-tickets-191814802237>
 - There are currently several cost share opportunities in Clinton, Boone, Hendricks, and Montgomery Counties
 - Curt Emmanuel, Boone County ANR Educator, retiring at the end of the month
- **Purdue**
 - ANR educator retreat took place November 30, new program leader will be coming on board – hopefully soon
 - Root project posters in color were printed at about 75% scale and used at the retreat
 - Hoping to hold virtual farm visits with the PAC superintendents this winter to highlight some of the research and activities going on at PACs
 - Jon Charlesworth, Benton & Warren ANR Educator, participated in Ag Literacy Day organized by Benton County FFA advisor, Jon did soil health demonstrations including the tabletop rainfall simulator from the NRCS soil health buckets
 - PARP meetings going on right now, Leslie Fisher, Benton County SWCD, will speak at the one in Benton Co about soil health
 - Jon is also working with Samantha Buchanan, a teacher at a local high school who contacted him for soil samples and an interest in his augmented reality sandbox
 - Bryan Overstreet, Jasper County ANR Educator, is working with the local SWCD to provide “Water Riches” to Kankakee Valley Intermediate School 4th graders, topics include water cycle journey, watersheds, infiltration, macroinvertebrates, they will visit the school 5 times between now and March

- Bryan is also working on manure workshops – one was held in November with 89 participants, the next one is being planned for February 4
- **IDEM**
- Various 319 projects starting soon
 - Elkhart River = WMP for half of the watershed
 - 2 implementation projects - One w/ Wabash River Defenders and another w/ Huntington Co SWCD in upper Wabash
 - IDEM has been working with Silverjackets & Army Corp of Engineers. First is floodplain project – developing story map on DNR website. Second is a wetland education project involving about 4 workshops around state + story map
- **Indiana SARE**
- Working on a farm viability video series; these will be edited and sent out to ag professionals, geared toward urban and diversified farmer needs
- Working on the food councils in Indiana, developing a map and resources they can use to help each other
- Professional Development Plan of Work will be developed in 2022, beginning in the spring, and submitted by the end of 2022
- Curriculum Meeting - CCSI will meet on December 3 with several ICP partners to discuss how to make trainings more accessible and efficient for partners. Much of training curriculum is funded through Indiana SARE program.
- **IDEA**
- Scott Sanders reported that the NSE region will host the IDEA Fall Conference October 25-27, 2022 at Brown County State Park, plans are already underway and speakers are being scheduled
- **Other Partner Updates & Events**
 - Randolph County SWCD: Upper White River, Matt Williams and Nature Conservancy sent out letters to 115 landowners in the area, hoping to get some work done through CREP program
 - Montgomery County SWCD Supervisor and IASWCD Secretary Marc Roberts reported that the NACD delegate is Roger Wenning and Stan Moore is the new alternate delegate
 - Marshall County SWCD has hired a new watershed coordinator, Tim Koeker, who begins soon
 - Marshall County is also using a LARE grant for a streambank stabilization project to include a canoe launch, this spring
 - Sullivan County has hired a replacement for Alli McKain, with a start date of 12/6
 - TNC has been working with Sullivan County on a Soil Health transition project
 - TNC wrapped up Advanced Soil Health Training in November with a 2-day in-person event that worked similar to original program
 - TNC has been funded for new WREP (Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Partnerships) proposal for the Lower Wabash, currently working with NRCS to iron out details. There will be a stronger outreach component and workshops at Lyles Station. Working w/ Agribility to target underserved

communities. Previous WREP was for 400 acres, but ended up enrolling 2600 acres. This WREP is for 1000 acres.

- TNC hopes to bring funding to a new small grants program similar to the 2021 grants conducted by CCSI. They will target SWCDs and focus on soil health outreach.

- **CCSI Newsletter**

- Feature Partner Events
 - Newsletters are sent on the 1st and 15th of each month
 - There has been an increase in the number of subscribers and number of recipients who open the newsletter
 - Goal is to feature partner events/projects from around the state so partners are encouraged to submit photos with descriptions; best submitted through our website, ccsin.org
- Pictures, Pictures, Pictures
 - Would love to receive some photos from the field to update our current supply, especially side-by-sides of soil health practices vs. other soils
 - Keep in mind CCSI website has tons of photos partners can use in flyers or presentations

- **Winter Webinars/Shop Visits**

- Starting with Solar Farms and Conservation – week of January 10. In conversations now with folks from NCAT to tie down date/time and focus. NCAT has made some great resources available to support co-location of agriculture and/or conservation projects w/ solar farms.
- Trying to set up virtual visits to PACs to show off demo plots – may also be a series of podcasts

- **Donation Campaign**

- Although CCSI has good funding through NRCS and NACD, some things, like communications are unfunded. We're working on printing up a series of banners from The Root Project for use at conferences and workshops. Joe printed and used a draft version for the ANR retreat this week. You'll have a chance to see the finished project at IASWCD Annual Conference. BUT that was done using "unallocated funds" – those funds that are sourced from donations or undirected grants, like the Perdue Foundation. So... you may be seeing some emails about a donation campaign to make more projects like this possible.
- Donations of Grain have been greenlighted by the CCSI Oversight Committee. Joe Schmees is working with other organizations to ensure everything is in place before the formal launch.
 - There will be a link on donations page to a form to note who is donating, what type of grain, elevator contact, and estimated delivery