

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
October Regional Teleconference Notes
October 31, 2022

Participants

Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI Northern Program Manager (all)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension (all)
Tom Springston, Purdue Extension- Scott County (S)
Robert Zupancic, SE NRCS Area Grazing Specialist (S)
Don Donovan, NRCS, Parke-Vermillion (S)
Jenny Rowland, ISDA (S)
Judi Brown, Dubois County SWCD (S)
Mark Thomas, Ripley Co ISDA (S)
Tim Schwipps, Ripley/Jefferson NRCS (S)
Carrie Parmenter, TNC (S)
Laura Fribley, ISDA (S)
Bryan Overstreet, Purdue Extension Jasper County (N)
Jodie Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (N)
Michael O'Donnell, Diverse Corn Market (N)
Brad Kohlhagen, Purdue Extension Adams County (N)
Jason Conner, NRCS PTL (N)

- **CCSI Updates**

- **New CCSI Positions (Program Managers, Agronomist)**
 - CCSI is expanding; a new agreement is in place through September 2027, adding 3 new positions, 2 new program managers – NE and SW, and Agronomist
 - Interview team is in place reviewing job description; hope to begin taking applications next week; collect for 1-2 weeks then review them and interview; Lisa would like to have offers out in the next 4-6 weeks with someone ready to go by the first of the year
 - Agronomist is officially an extension position; Lisa meets with Henry Quesada and Jason Henderson later in November and will get that process started; part of Purdue **On the Farm** expansion; Joe Rorick, John Scott, Hans Schmitz and the new CCSI agronomist will be part of that team; they may be looking for a different set of expertise than what the others have; possibly living in northern half of state, but will cover whole state when it comes to their specialty
- **Event Support**
 - Continued funding for event support. Jessica and Sheila will have double duty of 'mentoring' new Program Managers as needed to ensure partner support continues smoothly as it ramps up with the new positions
 - As a reminder, CCSI provides "blank label" support to help insure partners are the face/focus of events. Support includes vetting speakers, etc. For ALL partners, not just SWCDs

- **Trainings**
 - 2/28 Intro to Soil Health – Likely virtual. Reviewing content as part of process to update all of the trainings
 - 4/4, 11, 18, 25 – Fundamentals of Soil Health (formerly Core Soil Health & Core Cover Crops). 4, 18, 25 virtual. 11 in-person, hands-on at Beck Center in West Lafayette
 - 6/27-29 – Soil Health and Sustainability for Midwestern Field Staff (3-Day). As with prior years, we will set up “seats” for our partner organizations – NRCS, Extension, SWCDs / ISDA / IDEM, and a few open seats. This ensures that *all* partner organizations have the opportunity to enroll and attend.
 - Grow-More Training – pilot was held through National Wildlife Federation recently; hoping to expand and offer in all 4 quadrants of the state in 2023; helps address a need identified in ISDA training surveys about how to talk to producers/how to sell conservation. The training focuses upon the social science of messaging as well as designing outreach events that target a specific audience and ways to help ensure events are impactful.
- **Strategic Planning**
 - Around 200 individuals responded to the e-Survey. Those responses will be used in conjunction with phone survey results to inform an in-person meeting on November 29th
 - The in-person meeting will be attended by 25-30 people and facilitated by Steve Yoder and Tanya Hall, Purdue Extension (who are great!)
 - Aim of meeting is to leave with updated goals and groups of tactics to attain those goals. Fully updated strategic plan will take some time to publish and will roll out in 2023.
- **Root Project Slides & Banners**
 - Working w/ graphics artist to “cut down” banners to 24”x60” AND add a ripper shank graphic to the set. Byron Seeds shared with us a firm out of PA who have provided great pricing and will be producing ASAP. CCSI is ordering multiple sets so they can be made available to partners to borrow. Will put on web for free download
 - Slides of roots are complete and a web page is being updated. Hope to have those available for download by tomorrow, November 1

● **Partner Updates**

- **Purdue**
 - Steve Hawkins, Purdue Ag Centers Director, retired this summer. Interviewing for his replacement. Walt will let us know when the position has been announced. Relationship and communication with PACS and other ICP partners has really grown the last two years, largely as a result of Steve’s and CCSI’s efforts
 - Kankakee RCPP – had a partner meeting w/ 40+ different partners – kicking off in spring, 2023.
 - Pre-proposal for additional on cover crops on the farm w/ economic kick. Also have a SARE multi-state cover crop study w/ economic portion.
 - North Central Region Water Network, a 12-state extension-led collaboration, – Leadership will meet on Wednesday – CCSI will give updates

- Extension is planning a Beginning Farmers program. Virtual starting in January. Also have Organic Grains event at Beck Center February 22
- **NRCS**
 - Contract for 2 additional SH trailers extended to January. 1 will go north, 1 stay in south and the current one will go to the NRCS State Office in Indianapolis
 - SW region has had a lot of interest in training to ID species in field growing. Byron Seeds have 40 plots of single species and mixes to look at, identify and talk about uses. Informal training will be held there November 9 at 9 AM Eastern
 - Training for new employees – Betsy Bower, Ceres, will be doing an intensive nutrient management training – what sources are, how they are applied. Will also do a session on pest management – also very 101 and very needed. Will be held in January and February
 - NRCS employees working hard to learn new program rollouts.
 - Nov 1 planning meeting for Salem Regional SH workshop.
 - NRCS with Ivy Tech will offer Ag 101 training for new employees that don't have ag background. Invite only. Learning about harvest and ride in combine. Spring same thing with planters. Summer- what farmer does in summer-time
 - Tim Schwipps and 7 others went to SD to meet with their SD Soil Health Coalition. Also visited Blue Dasher Farms (Jon Lundgren's farm)
 - Big Pine RCPP re-extended; taking apps for next fiscal year; Kankakee RCPP and another one in southern Indiana were awarded
 - CSP payment season happening now
 - Finishing up CRP field checks for FSA – doing 2 years at once
 - A training on program basics will be held 11/9 in Lafayette – gives background on all the NRCS programs
- **ISDA**
 - SSCB made funding awards for CWI grants in 2023. Could run up to 3 years. Also – offering training dollars again to help SWCD staff and supervisors attend trainings
 - Will be hiring a person to help write / manage grants and help with statewide training
 - Checking cover crops and have been seeing more diversity in cover crops plantings
- **Urban Soil Health**
 - Holly McCutcheon has opted to retain a position with the Warrick SWCD. Casey Kennett will now be covering the SW Area. A new position is now open to cover the SE Area as Urban Soil Health Specialist
- **SARE**
 - Youth Educator grants are due November 10 and Farmer Rancher grants are due December 1. Contact [Lais McCartney](#) with any questions.
- **Other Partner Updates**
 - **Dubois SWCD** is hosting a pop-up event November 15th or 17th. Infiltration in tilled and no-tilled strip at LSI farm and effect of summer covers. 4-6PM Eastern
 - **German American Bank Lenders** series will be held Tuesdays in February. Barry Fisher- basics of soil health. Ken Rulon- ROI. Aaron Clark- capitalization changes with soil health practice adoption. Brenda Sermersheim will also talk about ways lenders

can help their clients participate in conservation programs – ex providing bridge loans for up front expenses of participating in programs like EQIP.

- **TNC** working on WREP for Lower Wabash. In addition, they have a grant with Agribility for trainings at Lyle station for historically underserved populations
- **Southern Indiana Sentinel Landscape Program** Partnership of USDA, Dept of Defense and Dept of Interior. IN Indiana also includes DNR. Landscape designed to promote conservation practices around military installations to provide climate resiliency. Ag field practices, edge of field forestry, etc. Covers Wabash River to Knox County to almost Cincinnati. Includes SWPAC and SEPAC. Hosting informational sessions. Building partnership to apply for RCPP grant. Right now have 2 sites with REPI funds—areas around military installations where grant available with 0 match. Crane naval site and the other around Glendora pit in Sullivan County.
- **Marshall County SWCD** is trying to drum up business for their 319 grant; getting participants proving to be difficult
- **Kosciusko SWCD** will be posting positions for a Soil Health Technician (new position) and an Education/Outreach Coordinator
- **Purdue Extension, Jasper County**, Bryan Overstreet just finished an online training pilot on watershed stewardship; participating in a field day in Newton County this Saturday; the 5th in a series of virtual Manure Management workshops will be held November 17, covering anaerobic digesters
- **Purdue Extension, Adams County**, Brad Kohlhagen got cover crop plots planted; soybeans harvested with yields in the 50-75 range; working with Lindsey Bluhm, ISDA, on a virtual soil fertility and water quality program to be held virtually in late November; ANR retreat is coming up
- **Diverse Corn Belt** – team is working through data from farmer focus groups in 3 states as well as assessing groups they may have missed to determine how to best use funds by supporting existing programs