

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
June Regional Teleconference Notes
June 24 (NE, NW) and June 29 (SE, SW) 2020

Participants

Heather Bacher – Women4TheLand
Tony Bailey, NRCS State Conservation Agronomist (NW)
Andrea Baker – Kosciusko Co. SWCD (NE)
Sara Day – NRCS, Huntington Co. (NE)
Don Donovan –NRCS Parke/Vermillion Co. NRCS
Kyla Estey – Pike Co. SWCD (SW)
Laura Fribley – ISDA District Support Specialist
Kathleen Hagan – IDEM Watershed Specialist (SE)
Abby Heidenreich – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Orange Co. (SE)
Genny Helt – NRCS SE RMS (SE)
Jessica Hoehn – CCSI Southern Program Manager(all)
Lisa Holscher – CCSI Director (all)
Heath Hurst – ISDA Resource Specialist (NE)
Michele Jones- Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Morgan Co. (SW)
Brad Kohlhagen – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Adams Co. (NE)
Kurt Lanzone – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Parke Co. (SW)
Lois Mann – Fulton Co. SWCD (NE)
Jodie Overmeyer – Marshall Co. SWCD (NE)
Carrie Parmenter – Posey Co. SWCD (SW)
Joe Rorick – CCSI Conservation Agronomist (NE, NW)
Melissa Ruschau – Dubois Co. SWCD (SW)
Luis Santiago – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Daviess Co. (SW)
Hans Schmitz – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Posey Co. (SW)
Sheila Schroeder – CCSI Northern Program Manager(NE, NW)
Walt Sell – Purdue Extension Asst. Program Leader for Soil Health (SE,SW)
Brad Smith – The Nature Conservancy, Pike Co. SWCD (SW)
Laurynn Thieme –Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Delaware Co. (NE)
Kristi Todd, IDEM Watershed Specialist (NE)
Geneva Tyler – ISDA District Support Specialist (NW)
Sheryl Vaughn – Boone Co. SWCD (NW)
Robert Waller – Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Jennings Co. (SE)
Robert Zupancic – NRCS SE Area Grazing Specialist (SE)

Re-opening Updates

Purdue Extension/Purdue Campus

Although Purdue Extension staff can host/participate in face-to-face meetings/events after June 30th, social distancing is still required. County offices are opening to the public based on county COVID stats. Educators have been and will remain available by phone and email. All Purdue events will be required

to develop a COVID Safety Plan for the remainder of the year and possibly beyond. The plan must be submitted at least 3 weeks prior to the event to Jason Henderson at Purdue. The plan outlines guidelines and procedures to keep attendees and staff safe while at the function.

Many counties are still working through the what their local county fairs will look like. The Indiana State Fair is cancelled, but State 4-H Fair will be held in some format. Purdue Ag Centers field days will be virtual. Campus is still working through safely opening labs and do research.

Purdue University campus is also working on how to safely get students back on campus this fall. Mandatory COVID-19 response trainings are occurring.

NRCS

Service Centers are slowly opening in 4 phases. Each office's movement from each phase is independent of the remaining offices and contingent on county COVID stats.

IDEM

For the Watershed Assessment Branch, staff have begun working in the office once again. Face-to-face meetings have not resumed. A TMDL public meeting will be held via Zoom in the coming future.

Notice of Intent for 319 grants were due earlier this month. 18 were received. Watershed specialist will be working with those submitting grant applications. Applications are due September 1.

Women4TheLand

CCSI staff have been working with Heather to provide virtual platforms (Zoom in particular) so that Women's Learning Circles can be hosted virtually. CCSI can provide the platform and tech support so Heather and Women4TheLand facilitators can focus on the programming. The virtual meetings will likely be held with past participants that are already familiar for the Women4TheLand meeting format. Decisions on whether to host in person meetings will be left up to local and USDA guidance. Women4TheLand is also working on guidelines and best practices for hosting in-person meetings during COVID.

ISDA

A new management system has/will soon be rolled out for Clean Water Indiana. Trainings will be held in July.

The Nature Conservancy

TNC staff are not able to attend, plan or host any gathering of 10 or more people until after September 1.

In-Person Events/Current Guidelines

The first in-person event since the stay-at-home orders have been lifted will be a Soil Health Breakfast in Posey County. A COVID Safety Plan has been submitted and approved. CCSI staff have developed a document to use along with the COVID Safety Plan to think through all the steps that need to be taken to ensure everyone is as safe as possible while attending CCSI sponsored soil health events. Hans Schmitz, Posey ANR Educator, has received a one-time waiver to fill out attendees' information for PARP

and Category 14 credits so that social distancing can be maintained and there is no passing of paper and pens. Attendees who want to sign up for CCA credits are encouraged to download the app so that the QR code can be scanned with their phone and remain touchless.

Trainings

3-day Training

The only training on the DTC calendar this year is the CCSI-SARE 3 Day Soil Health Training. All other trainings have either been cancelled or postponed. Currently, the 3-day training will be held with 2 of the days hosted virtually and the 1 day held in person. The planning committee moved as much of the content as possible to a virtual format, but an in-person component is necessary for this training to be effective. There will be attendance caps for this training. Visit ccsin.org to pre-register for the training.

Other CCSI-SARE Trainings

Trainings under CCSI-SARE are currently being reviewed. Presentation and Media Skills may not be offered every year as many ICP staff have been through this training. A new training to develop staff skills to work one-on-one with farmers is being explored.

Core Soil Health Virtual Trainings: There were roughly 70 registered for the 3 sessions held in late May and early June. Roughly 55 attended live and the recordings received about 20 views. The feedback received has been positive and we are looking continue trainings with a consistent soil health message across the state.

Virtual Events/Meetings

CCSI has multiple Zoom licenses available to help partners host virtual events/meetings.

CCSI staff participated in a pair of webinars hosted by Practical Farmers of Iowa that were filled with tips and tricks to hosting virtual field days. CCSI has already implemented many of their recommendations, but did snag their equipment list and have ordered 4 sets of the following equipment:

- Hey Mic! Bluetooth Microphone for iPhone (Clip-on, Wireless Lavalier Mic for Audio & Video Recording)
- Plantronics Voyager Legend Wireless Bluetooth Headset - Compatible with iPhone, Android, and Other Leading Smartphones
- Phone Tripod, 55 Inch Lightweight Tripod for Phone with 2 in 1 Holder for Tablet and Cellphone Aluminum Alloy 3-Way Head Tripod for DLSR Camera with Carrying Bag and Bluetooth Remote Control
- Joby Gorilla Pod – Articulated Tripod

These items will be shipped out to farmers/field staff prior to hosting virtual fields days. CCSI staff will walk through equipment set-up and complete a tech test with all farmers/staff to work out as many glitches as possible and allow hosts to become comfortable with the technology prior to the virtual event.

CCSI Website and Facebook Update

The photos on the CCSI Flickr account are being moved to the CCSI website. These are available to use as needed for presentations, flyers, newsletters, etc. Please credit photo source as noted.

CCSI has a new Facebook page. The first Facebook page was not set up as a business page and this made many of the functions such as liking and sharing others posts difficult. Being able to elevate our partners soil health message is an integral part of social media and we weren't able to do that with the old page. The new CCSI Facebook can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/CCSI.IN/>.

The Farmer2Farmer Virtual Question and Answer Session has been edited into eight 2-4 minute videos that are now posted on the CCSI YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMTbePY9wc-7z84GsIQYo1A>. These sessions featured Jamie Scott who answered questions about poor termination in cover crops during cold weather. If you have farmers who would like to participate, reach out to CCSI staff and let us know. These are short and sweet, 30-minute sessions.

The #lovINsoil campaign continues with additional billboards being put up. A couple SWCDs have reach out to request using the graphics from the billboards for their own billboards and yard signs. Lisa will request that approval by the Oversight Committee, but does not see a problem making that available for partners to use.

A graphic depicting both above and below soil growth of multiple cover crop species has been created and will be available for partners to use. This is to be vector-based which will allow for the image to be scaled up for use. This is similar to the popular prairie grass and roots picture.

Other

Fulton County SWCD has a roller-crimper available for rent. The SWCD was able to purchase the implement with funds from RC&D. Matt Harsh, Fulton Co SWCD Supervisor, knew he was going to crimp a field of cereal rye and wanted footage. Sheila Schroeder and Joe Rorick worked together to contact Mark Carter, Purdue Extension UAV Coordinator. Mark got them in touch with Phil Woolery who is an Extension Educator nearby with a drone. They were then able to coordinate all so that the drone could capture some great in action footage of the roller crimping. Phil put the footage in a box account for Sheila to access. We encourage all our partners to do this and CCSI is here to facilitate.

Many events such as the Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Meeting and Strip-Till Conference have gone virtual. This is an opportunity for those who normally cannot travel or pay the higher registration/travel fees to attend and participate. While planning events/trainings in the future, it is important to be cognizant that many agencies are facing substantial budget cuts that will not allow for staff attendance to trainings.

NRCS has committed funds for 2 additional soil health trailers. One will be stored at the state office and the other at a location in northern Indiana TBD. Hopefully they will be available some time in 2021.

The NRCS Soil Health Division is hosting a series each month featuring Soil Health Conservations for staff to watch. They typically have 15 minute live presentations on various topics. Don Donovan was asked to do one on July 9th. His live presentation will feature the Park/Vermillion CWI grant and what they are doing with Carter Morgan, Soil Health Consultant. Don will explain the progress they have made and

what would like to accomplish in the future. Don will also discuss how this impacts the conservation work that can be done in the county.

The Beck's event is still on in August and the soil health trailer is scheduled to be there. All other events have been cancelled.

Stephanie McLain inventoried the soil health kits available across the state. A list was made of materials and equipment needed to be purchased in order to have a soil health kit in every county. Lisa ordered all the materials and equipment for remaining kits. It is all being delivered to Vincennes University and soil health kits will be assembled in the shop there and then distributed across the state—hopefully in July.