

**Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
June Regional Teleconference Notes
July 27 (SE, SW) and July 29 (NE, NW 2020**

Participants

Tony Bailey, NRCS State Conservation Agronomist (NW)
Andrea Baker, Kosciusko SWCD (NE)
Judi Brown, Dubois SWCD (SW)
Kelly Bushong, NRCS Planning Team Lead (NE)
Julie Clark, Warren Co SWCD (NW)
Ginger Davis, Hamilton Co SWCD (NW)
Don Donovan, NRCS Parke and Vermillion (SW)
Ken Eck, Dubois Co Extension (SW)
Laura Fribley, ISDA (SW)
Angie Garrison, NRCS Boone/Hamilton (NW)
Jenny Helt, NRCS SE Resource Management Specialist (SE)
Lisa Holscher – CCSI (all)
Frank Jones, NRCS Planning Team Lead (NE)
Lori Jordan, Fountain SWCD (NW)
Brad Kohlhagen, Adams Co Extension (NE)
Dave Lefforge, ISDA (NE)
Jerrod Obrien, Porter Co SWCD (NW)
Kim Peterson, Lake Co SWCD / IASWCD (NW)
Rachel Rawls, St Joseph Co Extension (NW)
Heather Rogers, Pulaski Co SWCD (NW)
Joe Rorick, CCSI (NE, SE, SW)
Melissa Ruschau, Dubois SWCD / VUJC LSI (SW)
Hans Schmitz, Posey Co Extension (SW)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI (all)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension (SE, SW)
Adam Shanks, Clinton Co Extension (NW)
Brad Smith, TNC/Pike Co (SW)
Andrea Surma, Starke SWCD (NW)
Mark Thomas, ISDA (SE)
Robert Waller, Jennings Extension (SE)
Darci Zolman, Kosciusko SWCD (NE)

Re-opening Updates

Purdue

Extension is able to do some in person programming following guidelines and submitting safety plan;
Most events – fairs and field days – are virtual.

NRCS

Phase 2 is likely for quite some time. Every county is different; Currently on a deadline crunch with an overwhelming number of applications and limited amount of funding.

NRCS has postponed trainings for now; May conducts some virtually. Economics of conservation planning is normally in person; NEDS courses – was scheduled but now postponed

Stress high/morale low

SWCD

Generally following county and federal guidelines; Many co-located service centers are helping customers outside of via phone when possible. Some Districts are beginning to meet in person. Some districts are already facing budget cut requests.

2021 IASWCD Conference = virtual

2020 IDEA Conference is cancelled.

Events

- Note – for live events, a good COVID Safety Plan helps document due diligence for insurance as well as protection of attendees. CCSI planning/think-through document is readily available.
- For live events, consider repeating sessions with participants rotating throughout the event to maintain distancing
- 07/09 – Posey County Soil Health Breakfast
Staff and attendees followed COVID safety plan with good results. 35 attendees; Local sheriff helped ingress, handed out safety masks and stayed for full meeting.
- 8/27 Soil Health Expo POSTPONED
- “3-Day Soil Health Training”- NRCS National Soil Health Division approved format for 23 virtual days + 1 in-person.
 - 08/24 – Virtual Intro
 - 08/29 – In-person
 - 08/30 – Virtual
 - 08/31 – Virtual
 - Have list of attendees from NRCS; Course is pretty full to maintain social distancing.
NOTE – have 3 years for Conservation Planning Certification requirements
- Dubois County SWCD is considering a Fall 2020 event

Virtual Capabilities

- CCSI has purchased Virtual Field Day Kits – Tripods, Bluetooth Headsets and Mics, etc that can be shipped across the US; Available for use by partners working on soil health outreach.
- CCSI Webinar + Farmer Roundtable with Phil Needham (07/23-24) – Virtual capabilities worked REALLY well. Phil was in a field in W KY, showing field conditions as well as equipment set-up and modifications combined with videos that were played remotely by CCSI. Based upon

attendance from across the US, this platform can provide a broader reach. This technology also provided a *different* way to hold event and provide education

- CCSI is providing support for Women4theLand Oversight Committee and a practice virtual event. This support will be available for future Learning Circles.
- Raft trip – Arrowhead Country RC&D education committee puts on a rafting trip for area high schools every year; 2020 will be the 26th year for the event – held virtually with support from CCSI using Virtual Field Day Kits. There is a forestry section, a watershed demonstration, macro lesson, water chemistry, mussels and otters, as well as a scenic float on the Tippecanoe
- Advanced Soil Health Systems training targeting retailers. CCSI is working w/ TNC on this commencing with an August 10 virtual networking meeting.
- NOTE - CCAs can get some continuing ed credits from virtual meetings. Keep in mind continue extending invitations, apply for CEUs

Soil Health Demo Kit Distribution

- Components have been purchased to expand soil health demo kits so that every county will have a full kit. To be made available for ICP staff, farmers and other partners.
- Everything is at the Vincennes University Ag Center and will be assembled on 07/31 with distribution soon to follow. ISDA staff will help distribute kits once they are delivered to NRCS Tech Team Offices.
- Trainings will be held on how to use the kits – on hold for now; Still plan to have some kind of instruction whether in person or virtual.
- Suggestion: Consider demonstrations / using demo kits as part of PAC field days as topics

Soil Sampling

- Four Soil sampling and Interpreting Results trainings held Fall 2019. Attendees requested more advanced information.
- 2020 planned to be in person with a virtual option – October 13, 14, 15 in-person (north, central and south); October 21 virtual. Note – virtual training could provide good reference videos to be utilized throughout year.

Other

- People receiving seeds from China that they did not order; Jenny – one of her field offices got some; Shannon contacting state chemist and trying to get a procedure set up for Indiana for when this happens, may include APHIS as a lead.
- Every Indiana SWCD that applied for an NACD grant received funding. CCSI was funded as well. Success rate of funding speaks to Indiana's conservation efforts.
- Parke/Vermillion – Received NACD grant to fund a staff person for 16 months and help supplement Carter Morgan's efforts. Also received funding through TNC to promote STAR

program and equipment.

- NRCS staff and interns from Puerto Rico are going to video soil health demos in
- NRCS is purchasing two more soil health trailers – one to be located at the State Office and one in the northern half of the state.