

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
April Regional Teleconference Notes
April 25 (SE, SW) and April 27 (NE, NW) 2022

Participants

Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI Northern Program Manager (all)
Robert Zupancic, SE NRCS Area Grazing Specialist (SE)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Mark Thomas, ISDA (SE)
Jon Charlesworth, Purdue Extension—Warren and Benton County (SE)
Tim Schwipps, Ripley/Jefferson NRCS (SE)
Jenny Rowland, ISDA (SE)
Stephanie McLain, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist (SE, SW)
Tom Springston, Purdue Extension-Scott County (SE)
Genny Helt, NRCS SE RMS (SE)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension (SE, SW, NE)
Hans Schmitz, CCSI Agronomist (SE, SW, NW)
Brandi Frazier, Madison County SWCD (SW)
Ken Eck, Purdue Extension-Dubois Co SWCD (SW)
Laura Fribley, ISDA (SW)
Sarah Brackney, Purdue Extension-Daviess County (SW)
Frank Jones, NRCS Planning Team Lead (NE)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Sandra Hoffarth, ISDA (NE)
Jodie Overmyer, Marshall County SWCD (NE)
Brad Kohlhagen, Purdue Extension-Adams County (NE)
Sandy Voglewede, Adams County SWCD (NE)

- **Stephanie McLain – position change**

- Offered job in Minnesota as their state soil health specialist. She will start her new position there the end of May.

- **Partner Updates**

- Purdue**

- May 12th 9AM-12PM NRCS Diversity Training in the morning. Virtual. Purdue will host on their Zoom platform. All ICP invited to participate.

- Zoom Meeting Details:**

- Join Zoom Meeting

- <https://purdue-edu.zoom.us/j/97678825318>

Meeting ID: 976 7882 5318

One tap mobile

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- North Central Region Soil Health Nexus – have hosted monthly Digital Cafés. Next one is on May 18th @ 3PM and will feature Linda Prokopy on Adoption of Change. Format is presentation, Q&A, and if time can have discussions about the topic. Registration - <https://ccsin.info/DigitalCafe>
- Soil Health Nexus also has a tool. It's not meant to be in depth but is designed to be a tool to open conversations with farmers and landowners. Matrix – available online and they would like people to try it out and leave comments, because they are looking at what people feel need to be tweaked. To find info about Digital Café and Soil Matrix decision tool: <https://soilhealthnexus.org/>
- Weather Ready Farms-just launching pilot. Pilots beginning in select counties in Indiana.
- Shalamar Armstrong is working w/ SARE on precision cover crops (bio-tilling). Walt Sell and Joe Rorick are serving on his advisory committee. If you are interested, CCSI hosted a virtual field visit on the topic with John Pike. Visit the YouTube channel to view the recording. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMTbePY9wc-7z84GsiQYo1A/>
- Purdue Ag Center field days will be held in late August/Early September. Visit <https://ag.purdue.edu/arge/pac/Pages/Field-Days.aspx> for dates and more details of those events.
- Looking to expand on work with farmers in the field – on farm research effort; if you know of farmers, contact your local extension educator

NRCS

- Indiana service centers back open at 75%. Still on maximum telework. May 4th—rest of NRCS staff will be phasing out of maximum telework.
- EQIP contracts have been selected for funding and going through QA. Many apps that didn't get funded. This is true for Indiana as well as nationwide.
- Training – have A LOT of new employees on board. Want to increase number of entry-level direct hires. Many will move out of Indiana to positions elsewhere.
- Ripley Co ICP partners had cover crop field day and breakfast in March.
- A couple of groups from the southeast have requested the soil health trailer for summer events.
- Climate Smart Commodities grants. NRCS is taking proposals for commodities and forestry products grown in climate smart systems. First funding pool will be closing in the next week. 5-10 million. Next deadline is coming up in May for innovative pilot

projects. Emphasis is on enrollment of small and underserved. More info <https://ccsin.info/ClimateSmartCommodities>

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ISDA

- ISDA has a few vacancies statewide
- INFA program still wants to add participants. Simple and more complex trials can be done with the program. Designed to meet farmers where they are in their soil health journey. <https://infieldadvantage.org/>
- Trying to get all counties cover crop transects done by May 4. A lot of status reviews this year. Saw a lot of fall-applied herbicide. Going out on cover crop transects, it feels like cover crop acres are down.
- CWI Networking and Info session on May 24 from 11:30-1.
- District Meetings (for supervisor and staff) will be held in August at 4 locations across the state. Same topics will be covered at all 4 locations. Will be getting save the date info in email next couple weeks.
 - August 23 - White County
 - August 25 - Decatur County
 - August 29 - Daviess County
 - August 31 - Huntington County
5:00 - 8:30 pm (EST)

IDEM

- IDEM Solicitation for 319/205J grants is open. Notice of Intent is due June 1. Actual grant app due September 1. If you want to apply, you must submit an NOI. Grants are for developing and implementing watershed management plans. May be getting additional 205j funds. But uncertain if and how much funds will be available. Grant application are being updated to be easier to work with. Environmental justice is now incorporated into application scoring.
- Watershed group finder has been updated on website. Tool use to find active watershed groups in area. <https://www.in.gov/idem/nps/watershed-groups-finder/>
- Funding matrix will be updated later. This is a list of grants that people could potentially use for watershed/water quality projects.
- New 319 projects – Upper Elkhart WMP is being updated by Elkhart River Restorations Association
Two Implementation – Upper Wabash (Hunting Co) and the other is Treaty Creek w/ Wabash River Defenders
- Indiana Lake Management Society just had annual conference April 7-8 at Swan Lake Resort in Plymouth, IN. This would be a good group to get in contact with when doing any lake projects.

• Availability of recent Herbicide Training

- Training done in early March still available on CCSI YouTube channel. Broken up in segments.
- Resources - <https://ccsin.info/Herb-Resources>
- Recordings - <https://ccsin.info/Herb-Rec>

- **Soil Health & Sustainability for Midwestern Field Staff (3 Day) Training information.**
 - June 21-23 in person at Beck Center DTC in West Lafayette. Training committee made decision to focus on people who have had soil science classes or core cover crop and soil health training. Asking that people will have been with agency for a year before training. Allocating seat based on agency.
 - Registration will be available soon.
 - Other partners will have to cover own travel and hotel. Rest of cost associated with training paid for by current agreement with NRCS. If someone needs subsidies, we can reach out to Lais McCartney, SARE, to inquire about potential options. Focused on row crop production.
 - June 2-3 training led by Lori Hoagland will be held in West Lafayette and may be better if you work more with urban soil health.

- **Summer Schedule/avoiding diluting partners' efforts**
 - Summer is very stacked up—especially August. Large events going on across the state. Concern of efforts being diluted by volume. IF we know about event, we can get Save the Date on calendar.
 - Encourage to use all partners to communicate dates for avoid overlapping.
 - Genny Helt did send out email to NRCS employees in the SE and included CCSI calendar. Central point that everyone has access to. Suggest to diversify topics. <https://www.ccsin.org/events>
 - Try to avoid hosting events on days that Purdue Ag Centers have field days.
 - Make sure don't have big events close to each other. Some indicated that farmers may be getting burned out by the sheer volume of events, including dealer/co-op events. Would be good to reach out to retailers to note any planned events, see if can work together.
 - Don't forget virtual is still an option. Surprised at the number of people still participating in these online events.
 - Utilize all partners to get word out/surrounding counties

- **Other Updates**
 - Fields are still wet. A few planters were rolling last week in Orange and Washington County, but most haven't been able to plant anything do to wet and cool weather. Some fertilizer and chemical put down, but that's it. Weekly crop and weather updates.
 - Smithsonian traveling exhibit coming later this year to Otterbein. Moving to Angola, Centerville and Vevay. Indiana Humanities grant money to given to filmmakers to produce movies with conservation topics.
 - Dubois/Spencer counties will host Greener Pasture Field Day in August
 - Marshall County SWCD in the process of working on 319 project. Finished LARE stream bank stabilization project.
 - Adams County will host a field day on August 22. Barry Fisher will be the featured speaker. There will also be a produce growers meeting in September with Dan Perkins.
 - Mark Thomas-high school daughter did soil health demos at Ripley Co no-till breakfast. Tom Bechman, Indiana Prairie Farmer wrote article. <https://ccsin.info/FFA-SoilHealthA>
 - CCSI strategic planning survey will be sent out soon. Be watching for it.

- Byron Seeds – Amish owned seed company in Parke County – hosted a soil health 101 for dealer staff; first day in classroom – Stephanie McLain, Barry Fisher, Ray McCormick – did demos – so they can teach their clients about soil health; 2nd day – plot visits, soil health trailer, rainfall simulator 75-80 people