Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
December Regional Teleconference Notes
December 14 (SE, SW) and December 16 (NE, NW) 2020

Participants

Elysia Meyer, NRCS Albion Tech Team (NE)
Andrea Baker, Kosciusko SWCD (NE)
Stacy White, Randolph SWCD (NE)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Frank Jones, NRCS Planning Team Leader (NE)
Jennifer Thum, ISDA (NE)
Stephanie McLain, NRCS Soil Health Special (all)
Amy Work, IASWCD (SE, SW, NE)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI (all)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI (all)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI (all)
Joe Rorick, CCSI (SE)
Geneva Tyler, ISDA (NW)
Tony Bailey, NRCS (NW)
Laura Fribley, ISDA (SW)
Genny Helt, NRCS SE Resource Management Specialist (SE)
Paul Pendergast, Vigo Co SWCD (SW)
Melissa Ruschau, Dubois SWCD / VUJC LSI (SW)
Tim Schwipps, NRCS Jefferson/Riply (SW)
Mark Thomas, ISDA (SE)
Ben Zuercher, NRCS Greensburg Planning Team Leader (SE)
Robert Zupancic, NRCS SE Grazing Specialist (SE)
Raquel Baker, Wayne Co SWCD (SE)
Joe Rorick, CCSI Agronomist (SE, SW)
Brad Smith, TNC and Pike Co SWCD Board (SW)
Laura Stearly, Clay Co SWCD (SW)

- o **Upcoming (12/17) webinar on virtual meetings for ICP staff (ISDA)**
    - Meeting via Zoom, 12/17 at 9:00 am EDT; let Sheila or your DSS know if you need the link
    - Will cover information about annual meeting requirements for districts and how to meet them in a virtual or hybrid format

- o **Support for districts wanting to host virtual board meetings/annual meetings**
    - IASWCD (Amy Work and Joe Schmees) are offering support to district who want to host annual and monthly board meeting via Zoom. Contact Amy (amy-work@iaswcd.org) for further details
    - ISDA DSS team is offering Microsoft Teams as a platform to host virtual meetings. Contact your DSS for more details.

- o **IASWCD Annual Conference**
    - Virtual Conference January 11-13

- Link to conference: bit.ly/2021SWCDConf
- $75/person registration fee; with lower cost, some districts are registering entire staff
- 12 breakout sessions; 7 roundtables
- Meet and Greet with David Montgomery and Anne Bikle
- Virtual award ceremony will close out conference.
- Recordings will be available for 6 months after conference; can watch sessions you weren't able to attend

o **Upcoming CCSI Webinars**
  - Jan 5 – Ken Rulon, Rulon Enterprises, will discuss the economic returns of the operation's soil health systems and how to effectively communicate practices, like cover crops, with lenders.
  - Jan 19 – Paul Jasa, University of Nebraska - Lincoln, for a virtual shop visit, where he will review set-up for high residue conditions on a variety of different row units.
  - Feb 2 – AJ Adkins, owner of NTM Ag Equipment, as he shows us a variety of planter modifications. AJ will talk about the process of setting up a planter for a client based on their farming system and field conditions.
  - Feb 16 – Rodney Rulon, Rulon Enterprises, who will discuss the financial and operational questions a farmer answers before deciding to adopt a conservation practice.
  Registration for these webinars: https://www.ccsin.org/registration-other-events

o **Upcoming Soil Health Podcasts ccsin.org/podcasts**
  - Joe and "Sweet Corn Charlie" Chuck Mohler - recorded
  - Jerry Raynor and Rodney Rulon – financial and operational questions a farmer must answer before adopting a conservation practice.
  - Planter set-up and modification – TBD
  - Can also subscribe to podcasts on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Play and Stitcher.

o **2021 CCSI-SARE Soil Health Trainings**
  - Core Cover Crops and Soil Health – will be virtual
  - 3-Day (Soil Health and Sustainability for Midwestern Field Staff) – last week in August, right before Labor Day
  - Planning team is working out details to keep virtual events from being too long and other considerations for effective training, including potential for partners' limited travel due to either covid or budget cuts.
  - Stephanie and Joe have been recording videos in the field pertaining to soil health assessments, demos and more; they are working to process them and then make them available to partners

o **Brainstorming**
  - Virtual events have become the norm, the positives include no travel time and no travel costs allowing more participants; networking opportunities are lost though, particularly hard for newer employees. The opportunity to utilize breakout rooms in virtual sessions helps with this a bit.

- Trainings that are exclusive to newer employees – what resources and programs are available - and trainings that are exclusive to more veteran employees that dive-in deeper and help reignite conservation passion
- Manure workshops – the use of manure is growing
- Highlight the results of our conservation efforts
- Establishment of any type of vegetation in riparian/stream corridors.
- 60 inch corn rows – Relay cropping and/or grazing cover crops
- Advancements for new technology in seeding cover crops.
- Other (non-soil health) subjects:
  - Septic maintenance, especially for rural areas
  - How to talk to landowners about permits needed (IDEM, IDNR, etc.) when working in/near streams

- **Other News**
  - Barry Fisher retiring effective 12/31/2020
  - VUJC Land Stewardship Initiative/Dubois Co SWCD will host a Soil Diagnostic Lunch N Learn Series with 4 sessions on Wednesdays in February.
  - IASWCD is planning another series of lunch and learns, likely in February or March, 2021
  - Andrea Baker reported that the NNE IDEA area would like to produce educational videos that can help producers, new employees, etc. – the goal is to address common questions with these videos, meeting in January to compile a more detailed list of what to address
  - Kristi Todd stated she will be seeking speakers for an Upper Mississinewa project
  - Indiana Silver Jackets, this is a group that focuses on IN stream health and flooding education – will be developed and tailored for different parts of Indiana – NE, NW, SE, SW
  - Because of paywall issues, CCSI is replacing SurveyMonkey with QuestionPro for surveys. The free version of QuestionPro has more options and is more user friendly than SurveyMonkey.