

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

Participants

Amy Alca, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Randolph County (NE)
Heather Bacher, Women for the Land (all)
Andrea Baker, Kosciusko County SWCD (NE)
Andrew Brown, NRCS, Fountain County (NW)
Judith Bucolo, NRCS Albion Tech Team (NE)
Kelly Bushong, NRCS (NE)
Jon Charlesworth, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Benton County (NW)
Sara Day, NRCS (NE)
Don Donovan, NRCS (SW)
Curt Emmanuel, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Boone County (NW)
Kyla Estey, Pike County SWCD (SW)
Dana Gadakan, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Vigo County (SW)
Austin Green, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Clinton County (NW)
Kathleen Hagan, IDEM Watershed Specialist (SE)
Abby Heidenreich, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Orange County (SE)
Genny Helt, Acting RMS (SE)
Susannah Hinds, NRCS (NW)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (SE, SW, NW)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Dan Hovland, NRCS Area Conservationist (SW)
Frank Jones, Planning Team Leader, NRCS (NE)
Michelle Jones, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Morgan County (SW)
Amanda Kautz, NRCS (NE)
Jennifer Kipper, NRCS, Clark/Scott (SE)
Brad Kohlhagen, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Adams County (NE)
Dave Lefforge, ISDA (NE)
Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County SWCD (NE)
Lisa MacPhee, Morgan County SWCD (SW)
Randy Maggert, Randolph County NRCS (NE)
Troy Manges, NRCS, Marshall County (NE)
Allison McKain, Sullivan (SW)
Alisa Meyer, NRCS Tech Team (NE)
Darrell Nicholson, NRCS Area Conservationist (SE)
Arliz Ortiz, NRCS (NE)
Jeff Pell, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Hendricks County (NW)
Marc Roberts, IASWCD and Montgomery County SWCD (NW)
Joe Rorick, CCSI (all)
Kate Sanders, ISDA (NE)
Luis Santiago, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Daviess County (SW)
Lee Schnell, NRCS, Orange (SE)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension Asst. Program Leader for Soil Health (all)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI Northern Program Manager, (all)

Andrew Smith, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Vanderburgh County (SW)
Nathan Stoelting, ISDA (SW)
Amanda Studor-Bond, IDEM (NW)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Geneva Tyler, ISDA District Support Specialist (NW)
Robert Waller, Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Jennings County (SE)
Stacy White, Randolph County SWCD (NE)
Erica Wyss, Marshall County SWCD (NE)

Core Cover Crops / Core Soil Health Systems Trainings – Changes in Delivery

CCSI offers train-the-trainer training events to provide partners with a consistent soil health message that they can use when communicating to producers and retailers.

The Core Soil Health and Core Cover Crops trainings scheduled for April had to be postponed. Joe Rorick reported that the curriculum committee will meet again May 1 to finalize what the new, mostly virtual, training will look like. All the information will be distributed to partners as soon as it is available. It will likely include a series of webinars, and hopefully incorporate a hands-on component.

The 3-day Soil Health Training and the Advanced trainings will likely only be held this year IF they are able to be held in person.

Soil Health Demo Kits

CCSI's current agreement with NRCS ends soon. In order to spend remaining funds from that agreement in the most beneficial way, soil health kit materials have been ordered. Shannon Zezula and Stephanie McClain conducted a state-wide inventory to assess what those needs were. NRCS had already purchased soil health kits for each NRCS District Conservationist. However, some District Conservationists service more than one county. The purchase of these kits will insure that ICP staff and farmer-mentors in every county has access to a kit which will include:

- tabletop rainfall simulators,
- slake demo,
- tabletop rainfall infiltration demo,
- infield infiltration kit
- pit fall trap kits
- 5-gallon buckets with lids
- 40-gallon tote to store and transport items

In addition, each office group will be equipped with spades, thermometers, soil knives and more. All supplies are being shipped to Susan Brocksmith at Vincennes University from where they will be assembled and distributed.

CCSI and partners anticipate holding trainings on the kits to ensure familiarity and comfort in their use. The NE Soil Health Team is planning trainings on the NRCS soil health buckets and would be happy to include other groups who may need the training. The NRCS Soil Health Demo Team will share information about the best time and methods for collecting soil samples.

Purdue Extension Soil Health Signature Series

Walt Sell reported on Purdue's Signature Series which consist of program efforts at Purdue on high priority topics for extension educator to address with clientele. Currently a committee is working to develop a Signature Series on the topic of Soil Health. The series will include a proposal to ANR leadership for approval and include program development and training materials for rolling out the program to counties across the state.

The goal will be to work even more closely across the partnership to deliver a consistent soil health message, not to reinvent the wheel. With Soil Health as a Signature Series, resources available to the university can be utilized. It's also expected that this will provide a way to reach new audiences who may not be currently receiving soil health messaging.

Soil Health Zoom Q&A Rollout

CCSI is working on a slow roll-out for a top farmer/new farmer Q&A series using Zoom. Top farmers would be available for up to 30 minutes to answer questions from new farmers. No more than 10-20 new farmers and it would be by invitation only. CCSI is asking for partner assistance to identify potential "new farmer participants" and questions/topics of interest.

This platform allows farmer-experts to use phone/tablet cameras to show what they are talking about (Ex – Planter set-up, appropriate growth stage for crimping, etc. Sessions will be recorded and posted for later viewing.

The platform has been tested with individuals including Barry Fisher, Jamie Scott, and Cameron Mills—all excited about this idea and even continuing it beyond the current crisis. This type of program may also fit in well with NRCS Chief Matt Lohr's new staff-farmer mentoring program.

Women 4 the Land

Heather Bacher reported that all spring and summer Women's Learning Circles have been cancelled. There are some scheduled for the fall, and she is hopeful those can occur. Using Zoom or a similar platform to connect women who have already participated in a circle is a possibility. It isn't likely to be an effective method of gathering NEW participants, however. A facilitation training for new facilitators was scheduled for May. Heather hopes that training can take place later this year. This will be open to anyone who is interested in becoming a facilitator

Remote Partner Support

Jessica and Sheila reported that CCSI has a variety of platforms available for use by partners. Platforms include:

- A second teleconference line like the one used for these regional call
- WebEx – Good for sharing, collaborating on documents or powerpoints. Annotation features allow participants to mark-up documents – similar to a whiteboard.
- Zoom (licensed) – User-friendly, easy to use from phones, tablets, and laptops.

Anyone interested in scheduling a meeting using any of those CCSI platforms should contact Sheila or Jessica to check availability and reserve the platform.

CCSI-HAT Soil Health Podcast

CCSI is In the 3rd season of its soil health podcast. In the process of bumping up from 1/month to 2/month. One row crop and 2nd specialty crop.

Other discussion

- Darrell Nicholson commented that he is so proud how ICP has continued to provide Tech and financial assistance at this time. NRCS is moving ahead with conservation programs. Payments are prioritized.
- Rick Foster, Purdue Extension, has put together a committee to look at what a virtual field day might look like and will have guidance for that.
- Brad Kohlhagen stated that the Office of the State Chemist is looking at how folks can get credits (PARP) at virtual field days.
- Walt Sell mentioned the ICP partnership update virtual meeting on May 12 from 9-10:30 am EST. Anyone who hasn't received an email about that, let us know and we will share it with you.