

## Ag Water Quality Partnership Forum

### Meeting Notes

Meeting 3: Tue, Feb 23, 2016 – Springfield IDA FFA Room

1:30 – 3:30 pm

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| 1:30 – 1:45 pm | Introductions   |
| 1:45 – 2:00 pm | <p>Outreach and Education Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ag partner and CBMP's robust outreach programs continued in 2016.</li> <li>➤ Extension hired Dr. Laura Christianson.</li> <li>➤ Absentee Landholders remain an outreach gap.</li> </ul>   |
| 2:00 – 3:15 pm | <p>BMP Tracking Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Gregg Good, NMC chair, provided review and method of selecting most monitored watersheds. Amy Walkenbach presented a review of the IEPA's method for selecting priority watersheds. The goal was to identify and fix those that are fixable. They also looked at existing public participation in watersheds. The Forum did not come to a conclusion on which priority watersheds have the most BMPs.</li> <li>➤ Logic Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inputs and Human Measures Tables: To populate we are capturing activities while they are happening.</li> <li>○ Land Measures Table: Tech Subgroup found that their data sets didn't cover the entire table. So, a special 4 page survey will be sent out this year. It includes general levels of knowledge questions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ Marcia Willhite handed out a template for every watershed. She will think about a next step for the Forum.</li> </ul> |
| 3:15 – 3:20 pm | <p>Coordinate cost share and targeting Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ State Tech Committee had formed a NLRS subcommittee. They will hold their first meeting the afternoon of March 15.</li> </ul>  |
| 3:20 – 3:25 pm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Brian Miller reiterated the charge and reminded the Forum of the last charge: "other tools as needed". Mike Baise mentioned that AFT is writing a white paper regarding comprehensive management planning for cover crops.</li> </ul>  |
| 3:25 – 3:30 pm | <p>Next steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Forum to explore absentee landowner outreach gap.</li> <li>➤ Marcia Willhite to think about a next step for the template.</li> <li>➤ State Tech Subcommittee to address priority watershed selection.</li> <li>➤ AFT to present comprehensive management plan at next meeting.</li> </ul>  |

In attendance: Ivan Dozier, USDA-NRCS; Kelly Thompson, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Maria Lemke, The Nature Conservancy; Jennifer Tirey, Illinois Pork Producers; Amy Roady, Illinois Soybean Association; Jean Payne, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau; George Czapar, University of Illinois Extension; Laura Christianson, University of Illinois Extension; Marcia Willhite, Illinois EPA; Sherrie Giamanco, USDA-Farm Service Agency; Lisa Martin, Illinois Certified Crop Advisory Board of Directors; Mike Baise, American Farmland Trust; Rodney Weinzierl, Illinois Corn Growers Association; Kim Knowles, Prairie Rivers Network; Randy Fransen, Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers; Brian Miller, Illinois Water

Resources Center; Eliana Brown, Illinois Water Resources Center; Katie Hollenbeck, Illinois Water Resources Center; Amy Walkenbach, Illinois EPA; Shawn Wilcockson, Illinois EPA; Gregg Good, Illinois EPA; Jatará Wise, Wise Soil Fertility Services; Carol Hays, Prairie Rivers Network; Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA; Chuck Cawley, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Kim Martin, USDA-FSA; Eric Gerth, NRCS

On phone: Mark Schleusener, USDA-NASS

## Introductions

BRIAN MILLER: So I would like to start with a review of the committee charge and review the progress that we have made. We want to address education and outreach, track BMP implementation and coordinate cost sharing, and targeting and developing other tools as necessary. One of the things we would like to do is go around and get an update.

LAUREN LURKINS: For Farm Bureau farmer meetings, we have Lyndsey and we have done over 30 farmer meetings to county farm bureaus, but we also do presentations and talk about the nutrient strategy and agriculture. We have infiltrated the beef and wheat expos. In 2015, we had a robust communications plan and are hosting a webinar series with NREC. We have also infiltrated FFA and young collegiate leaders. We have funded \$100,000 and had several meetings and demonstration days and had 15 projects and reached 32 counties. Collectively, there are CBMP year-end reports and addendums in trying to record what was done in 2015. CBMP has a real focus on communication and building the website. The next update online comes out the first week of March. Alphabet Soup is trying to work together and helping with the conservation story map that is unveiled on Earth Day. Agriculture in the classroom is highlighted as a whole that is made up of and represented by different groups including corn, soy, etc. We always focus on environment and worked with teachers and students. Also, water and soil are presented in a document newspaper. A new feature is that you can hold phone over photo and the photo will start a video. That's all I have in Farm Bureau.

GEORGE CZAPAR: For Extension, we hired Laura Christianson, so it is great to have a scientist on board.

AMY ROADY: For Illinois Soybean, the focus is on southern and western Illinois. We have seen issues to be focused on. The biggest thing is we completed a survey of soybean farmers; awareness of soybean farmers on NLRs has gone up significantly. BMPs are at 30% and there is strong support for reduced tillage, buffer crops, split applications, and targeted nutrient applications. For communication support, the try one thing brochure is starting to see broad outreach for those efforts. It is helping farmers to make good decisions. Alphabet Soup, is an informal structure, meets 4 times a year, and leverages resources across states to be more impactful. Purdue did a study at looking at best management practices. The model looked at what was successful and what makes some programs more successful in different watersheds. We featured some nutrient management summits and tried to address phosphorus as BMPs.

MICHAEL BAISE: American Farmland Trust participates with Alphabet Soup, and takes inventory in what everyone is doing. If information is not communicated to a central location, then we can miss something. AFT has two watersheds involved, Vermilion and Macoupin. We did a series of seminars,

particularly conservation cropping seminars. Finally, we have a grant where we are trying to do advanced soil health training and conservation tillage practices. We designed the grant for 20 people, but had almost 50 before we shut the application. There is a hunger for more advanced soil training. We are trying to get geographic diversity and are still in very beginning stages.

BRIAN MILLER: This raised two things we will talk about. Watersheds where sampling is occurring and measuring what we all do.

JENNIFER TIREY: We had the Pork Producers expo in Springfield. We plan to roll out the tree buffer grant program in 2016. For the in-state nitrogen inhibitor project, so far we have 8 pork producers and 2 beef producers participating. We are also sampling in soil for manure, etc.

RODNEY WEINZIERL: We appreciate everyone who helped to make the precision conservation management program. As a reminder, precision conservation management is being used by the farmer. We field the market and tie the economics together. We look at practices and look at value of practices within a year to see if it provides value to the farmer, increased farm value, increased land value, or more profit to farmer. We would like to get absentee owners involved. We had a program last year with Beck's Hybrids, had 85 applications on 62 farms. This year we will do it again. Beck's sells row crops and cover crop seed. It is a starting point for working with the seed companies while trying to take as much risk out of it as we can.

RANDY FRANSEN: We just had an annual meeting and would mention that meeting committee had 160 registered and had a panel on cover crops and strip tillage. The Illinois society is all about education and has to be profitable and we are bringing experts in on that and educating and disseminating to the landowner. March 17 is the land value and lease trends program seminar in Bloomington and it's a half day program. If there are materials you want to distribute to 150-200 people that are land owners, managers, or appraisers there is an electronic newsletter and we can push it out to the membership.

LISA MARTIN: We reach a lot of people to take certified crop advisor exam. There are 2 webinars that train people on 4Rs.

JEAN PAYNE: We have been focused on spring. Water quality and warm winter doesn't do well together. There is a spring nitrogen management meeting on what to tell people about spring nitrogen management.

MARCIA WILLHITE: I don't have a slide but I have a handout and this is the implementation and here's a flow chart. IEPA is noodling around on the implementation side of things. It is a big thing to get our arms around. There is framework that talks about IEPA envisioning the implementation process. The bold box on the handout contains the objective on a watershed level. Backing up to that is how we get to that step. The 1<sup>st</sup> step, is convening interested parties within a watershed, the first question is do we need a watershed based plan. Do we develop an EPA water based code or might there be one in place. We feel that there needs to be coordination of delivery of implementation of that plans to make sure the next few things are happening. Outreach and education, technical support, financial assistance, and that gets to the idea that the producer makes the choice to implement BMPs. This group and tech subgroup is

how to manage at watershed scale and understand impact uses on what we put water to in nutrient load. There are various parties that play a role in various pieces. It could be a watershed coordinator, could be a variety of people that take that role, services being provided, outreach and education, variety of parties delivering outreach and education, various parties delivering technical and financial assistance. Here are the steps and here is where we are plugged in and here's where we are coordinated in steps. We wanted to put out there as conceptual framework.

BRIAN MILLER: Will there be wheels under this in some way?

MARCIA WILLHITE: Potentially to organize our work to some degree. Who is convening interested party? Who will make sure services are delivered?

BRIAN MILLER: By assigning tasks to the arrows?

MARCIA WILLHITE: Or the boxes.

BRIAN MILLER: Should this be added to the agenda?

MARCIA WILLHITE: We could. And there are other frameworks being discussed.

BRIAN MILLER: Any other initial comments?

LAUREN LURKINS: The map talks about watersheds. Would you see this concept applied in both of those cases?

MARCIA WILLHITE: It might vary depending on the water quality objective and what has been implemented in watersheds to some degree already.

AMY ROADY: BMPs are successful at watershed levels. We want to leverage people at local level. They have people they can trust and make sure things are executed.

BRIAN MILLER: At the last meeting, we talked about the idea of absentee land owner and role farm managers could play. For reaching out to absentee land owners and farm managers, Carol, would you brief us?

CAROL HAYS: Water conservation districts are essentially relying on NRCS to take basic information and tailor it down to the county level. Conservation projects are going on at a county level. There are absentee land owners that have questions and things to think about. For things absentees might be interested in, we could send out a post card for them to return to gauge an interest. Land owners are older and may not be interested in communicating that way.

MICHAEL BAISE: American Farmland Trust has been involved in learning circles, we invite women landowners, frequently older widows to talk about what services are available and we had a grant in Indiana to allow us to do a bunch of learning circles and worked with NRCS. In learning circles, no men are allowed, we go around and talk about what is important and that there are other people facing the same problems or frustrations. We try to get female staff people and service providers. They don't give

presentations but they listen to help do a conservation plan or pollinator incentive. We modelled it again in VA and MD and a lot of trust building amounts for women landowners. There are situations of economic rates where they are getting \$80 for the market rate of \$300.

BRIAN MILLER: Other thoughts? The group felt like this was something we wanted to work on a little more, as part of education and outreach?

MICHAEL BAISE: The trend of absentee landowner is going up as people are generationally more removed from farm itself. The whole opportunity to reach out to absentee landowners to get them educated about their asset, there's a need.

AMY ROADY: How would you target this audience? Where do they live? What about more business publications? Or you can compare against investments that they made in urban areas or other places.

MICHAEL BAISE: Problem is finding them. Tax records are best place to look. We could identify landowners in watersheds or counties and communicate with them.

BRIAN MILLER: For learning circles, would it be a challenge to start a fund to start a circle?

MICHAEL BAISE: They are not very expensive and overhead cost is not very much.

BRIAN MILLER: How do we get that model to multiply? In the old days, there could have been home economic clubs and that might be a vehicle to convene the groups and get them in on a regular basis.

MICHAEL BAISE: Some of the women say they wish they would've have brought their daughter or granddaughters. No follow up loses the initiative.

KIM KNOWLES: What feedback are we getting from the audience? How are we judging if that is being taken in? Are you getting some feedback? If it's not addressed, how do you get beyond outreach and education if people are unable to reach absentees?

LAUREN LURKINS: Ask about what practices they are doing. Is it something to think about asking?

JEAN PAYNE: Economic benefits. Right now they're worried about short term. How much money do we spend on the farm this year? What is my bottom line? Not help or hurt yield. Alternative is expensive, can't get there voluntarily by 2020. Tweak something and even if it's not everything, they understand that.

MICHAEL BAISE: Absentee land owners might not have access to that.

BRIAN MILLER: Is this a place where you would like to get together to talk more in in detail? Is there interest or a need for that?

LAUREN LURKINS: There is a spectrum of absentee land owners. One thing we work on is getting into media markets. We cover one end of the spectrum and don't even know if they are in Illinois.

JENNIFER TIREY: Who's getting the survey? Are absentee land owners getting the NASS survey?

BRIAN MILLER: Is anyone interested in getting together and thinking about this?

AMY ROADY: All of us can come together and bring forth our resources.

JENNIFER TIREY: Don't owners have to sign the survey? The landowner or representative signs the paper, if you got contact information.

CAROL HAYS: Starting there with the hope that they will be interested and one thing is that I went to Chicago landowners meeting. Older people versus some that were 38. There was a different audience with little connection to land and need to make decisions they know nothing about. But they are hungry for information. They can have a local place where they can be facilitated and build relationships. The other thing is that there are a lot of institutional land owners and how do we communicate with those people? They may need different kind of information. We have mediators that can provide advice to the extent where a land manager gives them an idea.

BRIAN MILLER: We will have to think about this more, so let's follow Amy Roady's suggestion and at the next meeting if you have an idea that has traction, we will have to add that to agenda. The next thing is BMP implantation and targeted watersheds. Some BMP implementation and monitoring happen in the same places. We have two presentations coming up. In NLRs, there are 7 groups, Nutrient Monitoring Council was one. Gregg will talk about the NMC. They are primarily composed of agencies and data that collect data in streams and then shift gears. Amy Walkenbach will talk about priority watersheds.

GREGG GOOD: After 6 months, I got to be chairman of the Nutrient Monitoring Council. This is our group, just like you have charges. Charges are 1a.) Is what's leaving the state, 1b.) is what is leaving priority watersheds. Also, we are looking at trends. If you reduce this nutrient, is it helping algal blooms, fish, macros, etc. Charge 2.) is local water quality outcomes and 3.) is prioritized list of nutrient monitoring activities and funding needed. There are 8 Superstations in agreement with USGS. Those 8 stations monitor 75% of land area in the state. pH, DO, nitrate, phosphate, conductivity with concentration, and flow information. It is people intensive, with 15 minute readings, lots of work, and lots of people. A logical thing is to develop monitoring plans. To meet the estimated load, where do we start? Let's start where we know monitoring is happening. NMC chose 6 monitoring locations where they thing monitoring is happening. What is the monitoring design? Who is developing plans? Is there money? How do we assess things? So we put it all together on all these maps. Some is lake monitoring; some is USGS, some IEPA, Sierra Club, etc. So summary thoughts is where we need to monitor. Don't think NMC picked these watersheds and that's where we want to go first, we just picked 6 where we thought the most monitoring was going on.

BRIAN MILLER: Any questions?

AMY WALKENBACH: I will leave discussion to you and Gregg. We identified the watershed process, some of you were involved. We did one of these charts for each priority watershed and we identified how we chose each source. We looked at non-point source, load, water quality, designated use, etc. Watersheds meeting 90-100 (units?) received low points. Let's fix those that are fixable. Crappy ones are going to take a long time and pristine is not worth our effort right now. Watershed planning activities are in the

basins. We gave one point for the watershed based plan. That's how these watersheds were selected. Last time, we had a discussion as a committee where we are targeting our efforts that we would recommend to Gregg's group that they look at for monitoring priorities. The KIC watersheds were selected before the strategy started being formed. Public water supplies, TMDLs, nutrient impairment, and percentage reduction to get to the standard set the stage for talking about these watersheds. In the blue, watershed planning in the basin and in the dots, we know there are BMPs in place. The Embarras is covered under a watershed plan. We like the Embarras because we can implement projects right now. Little Wabash has a smattering of BMPs. Lower Illinois has some BMPs. Vermilion has one lonesome BMP.

KIM KNOWLES: What are the green dots?

AMY WALKENBACH: The green dots are 319 since 1996. In the mapping tool, we can pull up the BMP and when it was put in place.

JENNIFER TIREY: Is it lining up on screen?

AMY WALKENBACH: It's not. Lake Decatur, KIC watersheds, some BMPs, Springfield and Mauviese Terre. I offer this up to committee if we want to further focus our targeting. What about recommending to the monitoring group?

BRIAN MILLER: It showed 7-8 watersheds, if you were to prioritize 2-3, that doesn't have monitoring that should, what are they?

AMY WALKENBACH: Embarras. It has watershed planning and a fair amount of work being done.

LAUREN LURKINS: Is there an elevator speech of how you chose these?

MARCIA WILLHITE: We looked at loading, degree of impairment, and public participation and that's how we chose them.

AMY WALKENBACH: Let me work on an elevator speech.

LAUREN LURKINS: It's hard to tell farmers why or why not their watershed was chosen as priority.

BRIAN MILLER: AWQPF is doing that and focusing on BMPs and limiting our work on strategy watersheds and doing a lot of work in certain watersheds. Gregg feels like these have a lot of action here. If he suddenly had money to monitor and more watersheds, where would he go?

MICHAEL BAISE: Macoupin.

BRIAN MILLER: So for a non-strategy watershed, Amy threw out plea for Embarras, are there more?

ERIC GERTH: We can talk about it.

BRIAN MILLER: To help Gregg's group, do we have a lot of action going on in particular watersheds. Any other thoughts of priority watersheds? Think on it a little more. With that, we wanted to get to the logic

models. We borrowed a logic model from Iowa that measure for success. Things they were going to do with inputs. Where organizations were operating, developed a strategy, and worked with various different groups. Different organizations have been focused on measuring different things.

LAUREN LURKINS: How did Iowa report their activity and have an addendum that can report in template format, environmental groups, agriculture groups, etc? Marcia/Warren asked what we have done in 2015. A start to think about tracking. CBMP volunteered to collect it. Warren would like to have concentrated and is still important to capture before.

BRIAN MILLER: Any questions on how it is measured and reported? Anjanette has been putting together a request for the Policy Working Group. Next are land measures table.

MARK SCHLEUSENER: We want a survey of producers, what are they actually doing. We went to couple pages of the NLRS to learn what questions to ask of producers. There were a number of meetings on fleshing out wording of meetings. Lauren and Warren met a few weeks ago, after formatting; we have a 4 page questionnaire and finished formatting. Questions are narrowly focused for 2011 and 2015. That is an overview.

BRIAN MILLER: Do you all want to hear about the NASS survey background? It started with a broad concept and then we looked at all practices and asked how we are going to measure this stuff in the state. DNR or FSA had hard data in some cases. In other cases, there is no way to get at it with government data.

MARK SCHLEUSENER: So let's pick one for more detail. Split applications, for example. In the fall and spring, how many acres did you use this technique? There are questions about nitrification inhibitors, lots of questions on cover crops on tilled and non-tilled acres. What is being done to preserve nutrients? Then there are harder questions asking about drainage water. Questions about constructed wetlands, bioreactors, etc. Some questions are about levels of knowledge. We also address phosphorus on reduced tillage strategies.

LAURA CHRISTIANSON: Are you asking about type of cover crop?

MARK SCHLEUSENER: Which commodity.

LAURA CHRISTIANSON: I think the strategy specifies grass cover crop.

MARK SCHLEUSENER: I want to clarify precisely what needs to be measured, so let's talk.

BRIAN MILLER: FSA and cost shared stuff?

AMY ROADY: Is winter wheat included?

MARK SCHLEUSENER: The question is how to measure, not what to measure— things that function as cover crop are included. We intend to mail it out in summer with results in fall.



BRIAN MILLER: Ask for the 2015 crop year, then ask every 2 years, and be able to go back and see progress.

GREGG GOOD: Is this a voluntary survey?

MARK SCHLEUSENER: Yes, with the right group of people asking for responses, we will get good results. I can't go forward until a contract is in place.

GREGG GOOD: What is a good return – 40%-50%?

MARK SCHLEUSENER: At least 20% with one mailing. I think we can get 50%. With all those groups, we can do better than that, I'm certain.

BRIAN MILLER: The last part of this is water measures table.

GREGG GOOD: The vast majority of the state is covered with the red dots (meaning monitoring). Rock River is priority watershed. A lot of the priority watersheds are getting monitored and covered with statewide effort with the ability to calculate loads. Nitrate monitoring going on continuously.

BRIAN MILLER: Any questions for Gregg? Okay, coordinate cost share and targeting. Eric?

ERIC GERTH: I will talk about state technical committee. We meet 3 times a year. It's an advisory committee for USDA programs. One thing that we are able to do is establish subcommittees. At the November meeting, EPA asked to establish an NLRS subcommittee. Lots of people are meeting at a lot of different times. We take advice very seriously, although when we have flexibility, we like to get input for opportunities to understand what practices are going in on the ground. Bioreactors going in out there. So help us understand how practices are being adopted. RCCP, 5.3 million dollars, is a program where we rely on partners to bring leveraging to programs so conservation dollars go further. The proposal is to target watersheds. Looking at a backlog of forestry and an example of what can happen. Implement forced management in 4 areas. Have to have an organic initiative to target the entire state. Look at priority areas for ranking purposes to further the case. More of an idea of how that process can fit in here.

KIM KNOWLES: The subcommittee has been formed? Does it have submembers?

ERIC GERTH: We have not had any meetings yet. We were fine tuning things; our next state technical committee meeting is in March.

MARCIA WILLHITE: What's the date?

ERIC GERTH: I don't know.

MARCIA WILLHITE: Can a subcommittee meeting be at the same time?

ERIC GERTH: March 15, in Champaign at our state office. Whoever wants to stay for a subcommittee meeting can meet after lunch. Is that something you would like to do?

MARCIA WILLHITE: Yes.

ERIC GERTH: I'll make a note and send an email out to those who expressed interest. Plan on meeting at 1:00PM. Our meetings are usually over by noon. 9:00-12:00.

BRIAN MILLER: So now we are down to next steps. Oops going back, developing other tools as needed. There were 4 charges. This is one that is in the strategy. As we are making progress, we should consider other tools. The whole idea of a systems approach, an agricultural water quality certification program, they are trying it over in the Maumee basin in Ohio. There are various programs throughout the country. Keep it on everyone's radar and if there is interest, should we look at it in next meeting or is it down the road?

MICHAEL BAISE: We are working on a white paper educational advocacy to promote systems approach. Utilize cover crops and talk about that as a system gets us to better nutrient absorption and better water quality. Next meeting I should have that finished and pass it out. I live in Indiana and work in Illinois. There is river friendly farmer recognition. What is it that qualifies someone for a river friendly farmer? Recognition at state fair. It gets people to think about their interaction in a watershed. That is a tool I guess.

BRIAN MILLER: Okay, so presentation of white paper.

JEAN PAYNE: We went through this.

RODNEY WEINZIERL: Check the Illinois statute.

MICHAEL BAISE: It wouldn't be that expensive to produce signs and review applications.

AMY ROADY: The conservation story map is being developed. We acknowledge farmers that are doing a good job to use as an example.

LAUREN LURKINS: I'm overwhelmed with meetings and sub groups, etc. Everything is valid but talking to the same group of people over and over – there has to be a way to come together in a better fashion.

KIM KNOWLES: We are covering the same materials in other meetings. Some stuff we have already heard.

MARCIA WILLHITE: Part of the idea to have a written update and not rehash everything.

LAUREN LURKINS: I think that was where agriculture was supposed to work.

MARCIA WILLHITE: It is achieved by who is doing outreach, but the logic model and reporting and NASS survey gets to the issue on implementation.

BRIAN MILLER: The first meeting was talking about progress for the first hour. If you're comfortable and that will save time, we can do that.

AMY ROADY: We document progress that was made. Maybe during introductions, we highlight progress made.

MARCIA WILLHITE: This group put their heads together, what are areas of work that are useful and satisfying?

BRIAN MILLER: I think we are progressing nicely, tracking practices, putting in effort on education, and making progress. Growth areas are where absentee landowners are. What are those other things out there? We are bringing together the systems approach in a holistic way. Put it in the agenda. Any other parting thoughts on agenda items to be covered at the next meeting? If not, here are tech subgroup meetings, and once they get a hand on the data, the tech subgroup will disband. AWQPF meetings are every 4 months. Okay. This ends our meeting for today. Thank you all.