

Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum

Minutes

Tuesday, Sept 27, 2016 – Springfield IDA FFA Room

1:30 – 3:30 pm

Winter BMP Education Events

- There are numerous winter BMP Education Events. See list.

NREC Updates – Julie Armstrong

- NREC started as it exists today in 2012. Revised their vision statement to include “adopt and implement” best practices. They have \$2.8M invested in research. They are moving beyond awareness to implementation.
- Priorities are based on conversations with stakeholders. They are looking at neighboring states and connecting. Are cataloging the research. Pursuing coordinated efforts and BMP tracking. The intent is to convene initial conversations about clarifying roles and strengths of each group.

Biennial Report Proposed Outline Presentation

- The Biennial Report’s purpose is to update and make NLRS current. It is our opportunity to report on progress.
- There was interest in having the Biennial Report be a legislative initiative. Need a specific plan and an “ask” on how to move it forward.
- It’s important to boil the report down to Fact Sheet. Farm Progress show is a good place to make it available.
- Trevor Sample showed the FSA and IDNR spreadsheets. Significant work went in to compiling this data.
- New initiatives will be included in the Biennial Report (see Next steps).

Next steps

Send 1-2 paragraph summary of new initiatives to IWRC by **January 31, 2017**.

Future topics

How do we surpass obstacles to implementation?

Potential speaker: Anne Marshall, UIUC Sociologist

If Biennial Report is to be a legislative initiative, management would need to be at next meeting.

Attendees: Brian Miller (Illinois Water Resource Center), Eliana Brown (Illinois Water Resource Center), Ben Wegleitner (Illinois Water Resource Center) Amy Walkenbach (Illinois EPA), Woody Woodruff (Illinois Stewardship Alliance), Warren Goetsch (Illinois Department of Agriculture), Trevor Sample (Illinois EPA), Kelly Thompson (Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts), Amy Roady (Illinois Soybean Association), Jean Payne (Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association), Julie Armstrong (Nutrient Research Education Council), Ivan Dozier (USDA-NRCS), Tom Kelley (Illinois Certified Crop Advisor Board of Directors), Ryan Arch (LICA), Laura Christianson (University of Illinois Extension), Natalie Prince (FSA), Mike Baise (American Farmland Trust), Lyndsey Ramsey (Illinois Farm Bureau – on phone), Lauren Lurkins (Illinois Farm Bureau – on phone), Carol Hays (Prairie Rivers Network), Caroline Wade (Illinois Corn Growers Association), Randy Fransen (Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers & Rural Appraisers), Kevin Rogers (Illinois Department of Agriculture), Maria Lemke (The Nature Conservancy), Steve Stierwalt (AISWCD).

*PowerPoint presentation posted online

I. Introductions

II. Current/upcoming outreach programs

Brian Miller: Committee Charge slide – purpose of AWQPF is to coordinate outreach and education efforts, track BMP implementation, annual reporting, and coordinate cost-share and targeting. We've had some education events. It's been 1 year since we've talked about upcoming education events and if we have gaps. Eliana sent around a spreadsheet to everyone to fill in with upcoming meetings or events, but only got one or two of the surveys back.

Subheadings in the strategy, two major headings: 1) Practices to reduce NL from row crop areas (fertilizer application, cover crops, edge of field practices, tillage); 2) Practices to reduce NL from Livestock production (manure application, storm water runoff, pastures and grazing, feed). Numbers on slide correspond to Farm Bureau, Department of Agriculture. Only two programs to respond. Let's go around the room so everyone can mention upcoming events.

Woody Woodruff: Permanent Cover initiatives – edge of field, pasture land, etc. Would like to develop and schedule before next cropping season.

Maria Lemke: Nothing planned before winter. We're working on a demonstration event for next summer. Mostly focused on constructed wetland and edge of field practices. Also interested in looking at saturated buffers.

Amy Roady: Two soybean summits coming up: February 3 and February 16. Focused on row crop practices. Also will be a webinar series, but no dates or topics yet.

Kelly Thompson: New updated spreadsheet coming to Eliana.

Steve Stierwalt: In Champaign County, we're trying to localize nutrient loss reduction. We must get local buy-in from local groups and organizations. We support local groups to get things done. Want invested and engaged citizens locally. NRCS and other partners have been crucial. It's best to find a champion in each watershed to build coalition to get things done, offer them support. The process begins by identifying *local* resource concerns that we can address.

Looked at split application nitrogen, found interested landowner(s), create plan, found partners for funding (in that order). If you have a good plan, the money follows. Created matrix to move things forward, rank farms, and find practices that fit.

Randy Fransen: Planning a mid-February meeting for ~200 farm managers in Bloomington. This may be an opportunity to distribute questionnaire/survey from this forum to attendees. Connect partnership forum with meeting committee to distribute materials.

Warren Goetsch: Could talk about results of FSA info, survey, with this group of farmers. Promote additional practices to attendees.

Randy Fransen: There is also an electronic newsletter/bulletin for the event that could be used to reach members

Jean Payne: Upcoming conference Jan 16th in Peoria. We also plan to reach farmers December – February through retailers, during customer meetings. There won't be a schedule for those meetings until the retailers get back with us. Data from rate trials will be available.

Julie Armstrong: We have a webinar coming up in December, but no date yet. Cameron Pittelkow to discuss programs with NREC. Outreach meeting planning call this Thursday.

Ivan Dozier: We usually don't host any events on our own, but wait for invites from other members of this Forum and guest speak or provide support. We have technical and financial assistance programs available throughout the year.

Tom Kelley: A few big ticket items coming up: 1) Annual conference November 30 in Springfield. This is an all-day session for certifications. It's usually approximately seven hours long. Soil and Water and Nutrient management are the two major categories. We plan to have an NLRs seminar at that event as well. The agenda can be tailored to whatever the producers want. 2) December 1 is the Ag Masters for the University of Illinois (has been taken over by this group). Ag Masters backs up to the Annual conference for a reason. The event is also in Springfield. December is a big month because certifications happen this month.

On the horizon – 4R certification training. There are also year-end opportunities like online trainings. Member surveys will dictate the agendas, but there is always a demand for soil and water and nutrient management because of needed credits.

Ryan Arch: Drainage workshop recently this past summer NLRs focused on end of pipe strategies. This was a larger workshop. We had two other summer projects for end of pipe constructed wetland (with pollinator and cover crop topics covered).

We also have the Annual convention in November in Peoria. NLRs will be major topic. There will also be more information on end of pipe practices, partner projects, current research etc. We are partnering to do radio promotion for end of pipe practices to reach a broader audience. More coming next summer.

Laura Christianson: Not sure of any extension events, but I will check. We're hoping to offer more water programming in the future. We have a new factsheet coming out with decision map (*fact sheet available at AWQPF meeting). Also working on a regional booklet focused on tile. Both of these resources can be used for upcoming events, if folks want to help distribute them. Get ahold of me for copies.

Caroline Wade: We are doing a mass media campaign this fall (including the reminder to not apply anhydrous until after freeze). There will be Farm Bill listening sessions in Late October/early November. Media will include a mailing, email, everything. The format will be town hall-style meetings for easy access.

There will also be a water quality demonstration in early November and Spring water testing program in 20 soil and water conservation offices around the state. Tests will be free and confidential. Intend to address more cover crop practices next summer.

Carol Hays: Implementation of watershed planning teams, and 319 implementation grants. Want to emphasize "living within a watershed" education for both rural and urbanized watersheds. We're also working with Soil and Water Conservation office in Champaign County to conduct Monarch butterfly outreach.

Natalie Prince: No programs planned for right now.

Amy Walkenbach: Here to provide financial and technical support/assistance for other agency's events, programs.

Mike Baise: Conservation cropping programs on January 24 in Rockford, January 25 in Jacksonville, January 26 in Carbondale. Agendas for each program will be based on local needs.

Woody Woodruff: Those events will be filmed and placed on YouTube to reach more people. Another group of individuals will be filming research on nutrient management, soil health, etc. and will also be uploading to YouTube. More details may be available at a later date.

Eliana Brown: If I resend the spreadsheet for upcoming events, can everyone please fill it out?

Brian Miller: We've heard lots about programs regarding row crop, edge of field, etc. practices, but not many or any for livestock practices.

Amy Roady: Livestock is part of Illinois Livestock Development Group. Maybe they have something?

Warren Goetsch: The certified livestock manager program is working on those initiatives. Application rates, manure placement, cover crops are a part of that.

Lyndsey Ramsey: We don't have anything on the livestock part. Other programs: the Governmental Affairs Leadership Program March 1 & 2. The agenda includes water quality topics. The Annual meeting is on the list.

Brian Miller: We have time for more discussion on early adopters, localized programs that Steve discussed. Is there a need for intervention from this group to help connect producers to programming? Can you seek people for online trainings?

Tom Kelley: For us, it's a two-way street. People come to us on their own, but we also advertise and reach out. There is a desire/need for more cover crop programs. We're searching for latest info and research on cover crops to pass along.

Woody Woodruff: Steve, are you documenting all of your work with individuals and groups?

Steve Stierwalt: Yes. A woman from Iowa State may be coming to St. Louis to present info on farmers. Farmers feel like they're already doing the best they can. I think we need to find ways to get them to the next step and implement new practices. But the practices must be economically sensible. NREC has helped a lot with that. We concentrate on easy practices that make a big difference (for example, the ease of using cereal rye as cover crops).

Caroline Wade: Another program of note is the Illinois Central College field day in early November. There will be lots of great topics and visuals at that meeting.

Amy Roady: Simplify and relate to the farmers and how they can reach their customer audience. Localized concentration is very important.

Caroline Wade: The field water testing calculator is a great resource to determine improvements in water quality, greenhouse gas capturing, monarch improvements, etc. 100+ members – manufacturers, producers, consumers, etc. I will share info on those projects when available.

Warren Goetsch: Everyone in this group is doing something and it's having a positive effect! Farmers are starting to ask question and understand the NLRS and connection to local practices.

*Eliana will resend the spreadsheet for each member to insert their upcoming programs.

III. NREC Updates – Julie Armstrong

NREC started as it exists today in 2012. Revised their vision statement to include “adopt and implement” best practices

Have \$2.6M invested in research. Focusing on ensuring funds are being used efficiently and not duplicating efforts. NREC is connecting researchers when possible. There has been \$10M in research since 2012 and we're starting to see data that can be boiled down. There are 26 on-going projects.

RFP went out in August and are due Friday, September 30.

- 4R type
- Capturing nutrients in field (cover crops)
- Edge of field practices
- Overall nutrient management

Priorities based on conversations with stakeholders Must make NLRS adoptable on different farms. Make the data interpretable, not just graphs and figures. Where do I start, what resources are available to connect the dots, etc.

Desire to look at neighboring states and connecting with them to learn practices

Currently cataloging the research and moving beyond awareness to implementation

Pursuing coordinated efforts and BMP tracking

Intent is to convene initial conversations about clarifying roles and strengths of each group

Visit www.illinoisnrec.org for lawn info

Strategic Plan – adopted new plan at August board meeting

Handouts: NREC overview, Annual Report.

Mike Baise: Is there a mechanism to capture fertilizer sales on smaller scale? (Lowes, Home Depot, etc.). Bulk distributors pay before repackaging within the state. Opportunity to increase price? Contributions by agriculture vs contributions by non-agriculture.

Julie Armstrong: There is an annual assessment for that fee.

Warren Goetsch: The focus right now is on agriculture, less on residential applications.

Mike Baise: Opportunity to placard/advertise “Did you know?” at retailers for non-bulk purchases.

Brian Miller: How do priorities for research get generated and trickle up through NREC?

Julie Armstrong: When the proposals come in, they get a peer review against the research priorities. Then the research committee reviews the proposals and recommends projects to the NREC council. Stakeholder surveys guide the research priorities.

IV. Biennial Report Discussion

Brian Miller: Must do a report every two years. Strategy was done 2 years ago.

Measured progress in 2015 year – report to be written this spring. Iowa has annual report example (***Eliana will send out link to the Iowa report for reference**). Big elements of the report: Executive summary, intro, science assessment update, committee reports (AWQPF, Point Source Working Group, Urban Stormwater Working Group, Nutrient Monitoring Council, Nutrient Science Advisory Committee), overall summary, appendices.

- A. Summary of inputs, human, and land measures, water measures (logic model)
- B. Update on existing initiatives and new initiatives started after the Strategy was published

Inputs survey will come out in January (dollars invested, conducted outreach), update of existing initiatives. Need financial and staff resource numbers.

*IWRC will request January submittal from each organization.

Human Measures – Narrative descriptions (people reached, meetings held, newsletters sent, topics covered).

Land Measures Table – Trevor will discuss. To be finalized in December 6th meeting.

Caroline Wade: Reports should include a relative number (farmers reached to total number of farmers in the state). This might make it more meaningful. USDA farmer numbers could be used for total comparison.

Question on reporting (double counting attendees during partnering events). May be best to list the partners so things don't get double counted. Examples on how to fill out the spreadsheet. Dates of the events, and list partners will help tease out doubles.

Mike Baise: Must know audience of the biennial report. EPA, state EPA, etc.

Warren Goetsch: The report is an opportunity to update the Strategy and the progress made toward meeting the goals of the Strategy. Use that material to update the general assembly, EPA Region 5, etc.

Brian: The report is the overall summary document that can then be used by partners to pick and choose pieces to present to owners and operators for selecting practices.

*Warren: Will want to boil down the biennial report into a 4-page pamphlet or fact sheet. This makes it more relatable. Farm Progress Show may be a good venue to distribute.

V. Trevor Sample showed the FSA and IDNR spreadsheets.

Significant work went in to compiling these data. Kim and Natalie did much of the leg work.

Land practices for perennial/energy/pasture, CRP wetlands, CRP buffers.

Spreadsheet: broken up by categories. 2011 is baseline year, 2015 is update year. Database has changed (reporting is different now). Some data cannot be compared. 2011 data broken down by county only. Each county has acres used.

Lisa from CREP DNR – 2011 data by county, 2015 data by county and/or by watershed. Plan is to cook down into a summary table and short narrative about databases, comparisons, etc. Supplemental data from the survey will also be available.

Can we include yields? This may help to prove the point that less nitrogen is needed per pound produced.

VI. Review of new programs

Brian Miller: (showing slides of existing initiatives and. new/upcoming programs. [State, Federal, Industry, non-profit])

What new initiatives have come up since the strategy? – look carefully at the table and begin to gather info.

- Conservation Technology Information Commission – Indian Creek program
- SARE Soil Health Training
- Corn – RCPP grant, Cover crop incentive program (Walton Family Foundation), water testing program (Farm Bureau, Land conservation districts),
- Illinois Extension – list will be provided later

- Illinois SARE program (Water quality and Soil Health) coming in 2017
- National Corn Growers Association – soil health partnership (TNC, Monsanto)
- Soil and Water Conservation – providing technical assistance, locally. Nutrient loss activities. – Kelly Thompson will assist in narrative description.
- MRBI – 2 new initiatives
- Alphabet Soup – CBMP – conservation story map
- Farm Bureau – nutrient stewardship grant program

*Should include a web link to each programs in biennial report for easy access

*These programs will be included in biennial report. Please include with materials submission.

IV. Timeline

(Can be found in slideshow)

End of January 2017 – numbers reported to Warren, Trevor, Eliana, Ben

End of February 2017 – draft report written and sent to PWG

End of March 2017 - comments due to IWRC

End of April 2017 – revised report and fact sheet complete

End of May 2017 – final report and fact sheet formatting complete

End of June 2017 – release report and fact sheet

Policy Working Group suggested there be stronger legislative awareness of this effort.

HOMEWORK: be thinking about how this should go.

VII. Future AWQPF Meetings

Tech subgroup meeting December 6 2016 to look at final data for report

2017 AWQPF – 1 spring meeting and 1 fall meeting

Spring meeting proposed topics?

- Biennial report legislative outreach?
- Any speakers?
 - o Researcher to discuss obstacles
 - o Legislative guidelines for the factsheet, inputs, etc.

Final thoughts and comments

Jean Payne: What are the obstacles to implementation? Financial, thought process, reaching farmers, etc. – Must reach retailers. Obstacles must be well defined.

Brian Miller: Would a university researcher that identifies obstacles be good guest speakers?

Steve Stierwalt: Look at conservation lease to overcome obstacles with owners and operators. Help them enforce conservation on their land. Must get to landowner, not the operator.

Anne Marshall: I'm a Sociologist at U of I and willing this to explore research in this specific question in the State of Illinois (haven't done it yet).

*may be willing to be guest speaker at next meeting to talk obstacles

Mike Baise: I was wrong about the obstacles in Champaign County when first trying to identify them. The true obstacle was access to equipment. We could create anecdote as an example for other scenarios for future use.

Steve Stierwalt: We have to keep in mind that conservation is local.

Brian Miller: (back to the logic model) In Iowa, the "inputs" are money and partnerships. Public policy is who benefits, who pays? Downstream conservation is a more difficult thing to prove benefits.

Steve Stierwalt: concern – when we go to the legislators, we must have a specific plan of how to move things forward. We must think about a legislative report and figure out the fact sheet, opportunities, etc. before conducting outreach to legislators.

Eliana: Looking at April 4th for next AWQPF meeting.

Potential for a May meeting, but April is preferred. Please send dates that don't work to Eliana.

End of Meeting