

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative (CCSI)
April Regional Teleconference Notes
April 26 (SE, SW) and 28 (NE, NW) 2021

Participants

Robert Zupancic, NRCS SE Area NRCS Grazing Specialist (SE)
Genny Helt, NRCS SE Resource Management Specialist (SE)
Casey Kennett, SE Urban Soil Health Specialist (SE)
Don Donovan NRCS Parke/Vermillion DC (SW)
Deb Barnett Parke Co SWCD (SW)
Hans Schmitz Purdue Extension ANR Educator, Posey County (SW)
Jessica Hoehn, CCSI Southern Program Manager (all)
Lisa Holscher, CCSI Director (all)
Joe Rorick, CCSI (all)
Walt Sell, Purdue Extension Asst. Program Leader for Soil Health (all)
Laura Fribley, ISDA District Support Specialist (SE)
Sheila Schroeder, CCSI Northern Program Manager (all)
Frank Jones, NRCS Planning Team Leader (NE)
Mary Lou Watson, Miami County SWCD (NE)
Stacy White, Randolph County SWCD (NE)
Kristi Todd, IDEM (NE)
Geneva Tyler, ISDA District Support Specialist (NW)
Brandy Daggett, NRCS Planning Team Leader (NW)
Angie Garrison, NRCS District Conservationist, Hamilton/Boone Counties (NW)
Andrea Baker, NRCS District Conservationist, Fulton County (NW)
Bri Ciara, Newton County SWCD (NW)
Dave Bradway, Hamilton County SWCD (NW)
Tony Bailey, NRCS (NW)

• Partner Updates

- IASWCD
 - Urban Soil Health Regional Meet & Greets:
 - April 28, 10am-12pm EDT
Northwest Region
<http://bit.ly/NW-4-28-21>
 - April 28, 1-3pm EDT
Northeast Region
<http://bit.ly/NE-4-28-21>
 - April 29, 10am-12pm EDT
Southeast Region
<http://bit.ly/SE-4-29-21>
 - SAVE the DATE Virtual SWCD Region Meetings in June:
 - Northwest - June 8
 - Southeast - June 10
 - Southwest - June 15

- Northeast - June 1
- Working with NRCS & ISDA to roll out application for NACD Technical Assistance grants in the coming month. Information will go out to districts soon.
- **IDEM**
 - 319 solicitation for applications deadline is June 1. Can file Notice of Intent to develop WMP or implementation for BMPs; something new this year – accepting proposals for innovation projects; projects that don't fit into WMP or implementation for up to \$50,000; fairly open as long as it addresses reducing NPS pollution; if interested in this, contact your watershed specialist first to see if your proposal fits.
- **ISDA**
 - Tillage transects performed recently. Can't receive county files over email anymore. Now receiving via one drive and working out the kinks.
- **NRCS**
 - Field offices are at 50% capacity; area and state offices at 25% capacity
 - Most trainings still remote; can be in person, but must wear mask, socially distance and preferably outdoors
 - In middle of CSP and EQIP quality assurance
- **Purdue**
 - Purdue Ag Centers are in the process of putting out research plots
 - Will be having some field days, most in August. Planning in person, possible hybrid
 - Some PACs have diagnostic trainings this summer
 - Rick Foster ANR Program Leader retired in December; nationwide search for replacement is underway; PhD faculty position – if you know of anyone, encourage them to apply
 - Purdue is also searching for organic crops specialist – similar to Michael O'Donnell's former position; master's level with 4 years experience preferred
 - For internal extension educators, having field crop conference calls every couple of weeks during growing season to updates states of planting. Give states perspective.
- **Soil Health Trainings**
 - Core Soil Health & Core Cover Crops series was held virtually last month and went well. At least some portion of that series will likely remain virtual. Cover Crop ID will be done better in person. Working with committee to figure out best way to move forward to balance the extensive reach we have with virtual offering vs. other benefits of being more in person.
 - Currently planning for Soil Health and Sustainability for Midwestern Field Staff to be held late fall; at least portions will be in person.
 - With new guidance for Certified Planners, training team is trying to get a handle on which employees have had which trainings and how often each

series should be held. Need to make sure Certified Planners meet their requirements while also training new hires and refresher courses for those who took them long ago.

- **Urban Soil Health**
 - The 4 urban soil health staff have been meeting weekly to gear up for meet and greet sessions
 - Meet & greets will be recorded to view afterwards
- **Other Partner Updates & Events**
 - Newton County SWCD recently moved offices. Address will be updated in Sharepoint. Newton County SWCD will also be holding “Woodlands Walks & Talks” - a partnership effort for forestry stewardship; first one is May 6, in person hike, talk about topics with expert leading it, 2 this spring and 4 this fall.
 - Miami County SWCD possibly planning a mini-retreat to review mission and goals of the organization and how best to spend some additional funding. Also hoping to resume educational activities including RC&D rafting trip.
 - Randolph County has been renting out their drill and seeder to area producers.
- **Upcoming/Recently Held In Person Events**
 - July 15- Cover Crop Cookout at Vanderburgh County Fairgrounds: panel with experience cover crop/soil health farmers and a speaker on carbon credits. Family friendly—will probably have bounce house and Kona ice truck.
 - Farmer RoundTable- farmer in SW IN will host in his shop in July. Small, invite only event to keep conversation intimate.
 - Perry/Spencer Soil Health Workshop – this event was cancelled/postponed in November 2020 due to COVID. Tentatively, this event will take place in November 2021.
 - Rush/Shelby and possibly other adjacent counties are planning a cover crop field day to be held in August 2021.
 - August 24 – Miami County SWCD Annual Cover Crop Workshop; will feature a fellow farmer rather than speaker from government agency or ag retailer
 - Vermillion/Parke County planning a large field day for sometime in August; possibly hybrid; very early planning stages
 - Boone County SWCD held a workshop last month; turnout was low
 - Last Thursday, Byron Seeds held a field day for 75-100 farmers. Many dealers and dealer staff there. Great to get soil health message to them as well as farmers. Soil health trailer was there. Next day, Carter Morgan held an impromptu field day/roundtable; talked more about moving farmers away from VNS rye and into varietal.
 - CCSI will likely host a webinar highlighting the tips and tricks we have learned over the past year for partners considering hybrid events - i.e. transition slides when moving from outdoor to indoor.
- **CCSI Strategies Moving Forward**
 - Hosting webinar Thursday at 2 PM EST focus on pivoting to new reality since Covid and update on NRCS contract expiration.

- \$25,000 for local partners to use in local level partnership support Outreach and Education. Go through application process looks like and what funds can and can't be done. Outreach and education for soil health on IN cropland. Demo plots, signage, etc. Elevate what our partners are doing. Not competitive; first come-first served.
 - Likely demand increase for hybrid events. Adding equipment to field day kits.
- **Other**
 - CCSI has a variety of photographs on their website for partners to use for flyers or other purposes; many of them are dated; if you see something that make a good side-by-side comparison during your travels and field visits, please snap a photo and share with us.