



# 2023 Highlights

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## Staffing

Through an amendment of an NRCS contribution agreement, CCSI had made it possible to hire two additional CCSI/Purdue-On-The-Farm staff members, a Digital Ag Specialist and future Machinery and Equipment Specialist. In total, CCSI expanded from 4 full-time staff members to 8 full-time staff members in 2023 and expect to hire the Machinery and Equipment Specialist in the coming months.

Thanks to the contribution of Purdue Extension to the Purdue-On-The-Farm positions, all match for the NRCS Agreement has been met.

In addition, Jessica Hoehn accepted a promotion to serve as Lead Program Manager.

- Lisa Holscher, Director [Lisa.Holscher@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Lisa.Holscher@in.nacdnet.net)
- Jessica Hoehn, Lead Program Manager / Southeast Program Manager [Jessica.Hoehn@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Jessica.Hoehn@in.nacdnet.net)
- Julie Loehr, Southwest Program Manager [Julia.Loehr@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Julia.Loehr@in.nacdnet.net)
- Lois Mann, Northeast Program Manager [Lois.Mann@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Lois.Mann@in.nacdnet.net)
- Sheila Schroeder, Northwest Program Manager [Sheila.Schroeder@in.nacdnet.net](mailto:Sheila.Schroeder@in.nacdnet.net)
- Hans Schmitz, Soil Health and Climate Smart Ag Specialist [HSchmitz@purdue.edu](mailto:HSchmitz@purdue.edu)
- Bryan Overstreet, Soil Health and Agronomic Specialist [BOverstr@purdue.edu](mailto:BOverstr@purdue.edu)
- Adam Shanks, Soil Health and Digital Ag Specialist [Shanks7@purdue.edu](mailto:Shanks7@purdue.edu)

## General Outreach and Education

CCSI materially participated in nearly 100 soil health events, reaching about 7000 individuals in 2023. Forty-five percent of the efforts occurred in the first quarter of the year, representing a temporal shift in timing.

## Ecdysis 1000 Farms Initiative

Ecdysis is a research foundation established by Dr. Jon Lundgren to explore regenerative ag impacts removed from corporate funding. One project is their 1000 Farms Initiative. The CCSI team:

- Helped coordinate 25 farm sites to sample from Vanderburgh to Tippecanoe Counties over a 1-week period Note that due to extreme heat, not all sites were sampled.
- Agronomists accompanied team on sampling runs
- Parameters included standard soil tests, “soil health tests”, bird counts, insect counts, % of ground cover, leaf and tissue analysis.
- Results will be provided to participating farmers. A group meeting with farmer participants is planned for 2024

## Pilot National Soil Health Education Event

Working with NRCS partners across the nation, a pilot education event was planned in 6 weeks and held in August at the Rick Clark farm. In addition to Rick, Jon Lundgren (Ecdysis), Christian Krupke and Laura Ingwell (Purdue Entomologists), Stephanie Frische (Xerces), Loran Steinlage (IA farmer), and Mitchell Hora (Continuum Ag) provided education talks and hands-on learning opportunities. Finian Makepeace (Kiss the Ground) was also present to document the event.

- 45 attendees. States represented included: Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas – and Indiana. The NRCS National Soil Health Division was also represented
- Based upon initial survey results, most attendees indicated a desire to host a similar event in their region. These results meet an event goal of ‘kick-starting’ on-farm soil health trainings for NRCS, Extension, SWCDs, and other conservation staff traveling in from multiple states.

### **2024 National No-Till Conference**

CCSI negotiated with organizers of the National No-till Conference to develop a package for 2024 National No-Till Conference. Typically, over 1000 farmers attend the conference when held in Indianapolis. Included in the package:

- A trade show booth to conduct soil health demonstrations. Amanda Kautz, NRCS State Soil Health Specialist is coordinating efforts with the various Soil Health Teams. This is a first, because trade show booths are reserved for banner sponsors with a far too expensive cost for CCSI.
- A sponsored break out session featuring Jamie Scott, Farmer and Kosciusko SWCD Supervisor
- Registration discounts for *all* Indiana Conservation Partnership staff and supervisors at a rate of \$299 vs the full rate of \$519!

### **AGree Farmer-Led Mentoring Program Development**

Led by Jim Moseley, former USDA Assistant Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment, a group of leading Indiana soil health farmers began designing a farmer-led mentoring program. Rollout for the pilot of this program is targeted for summer 2024.

### **Purdue Extension Impact Report**

The 2022 Purdue Extension Impact Report included a two-page spread on partnerships, featuring CCSI. In January 2023, this report was presented to Indiana State Representatives and Senators during Purdue Extension’s and Indiana Farm Bureau’s statehouse visit. County Extension Directors were also provided with 10 copies each to distribute to all County Council members and Commissioners in the state.

### **Indiana CCA Board**

Bryan Overstreet, Soil Health and Agronomic Specialist, was elected to the Indiana CCA Board of Directors. As such, he will participate in 2024 conference planning – continuing a presence of soil health related topics at the event.