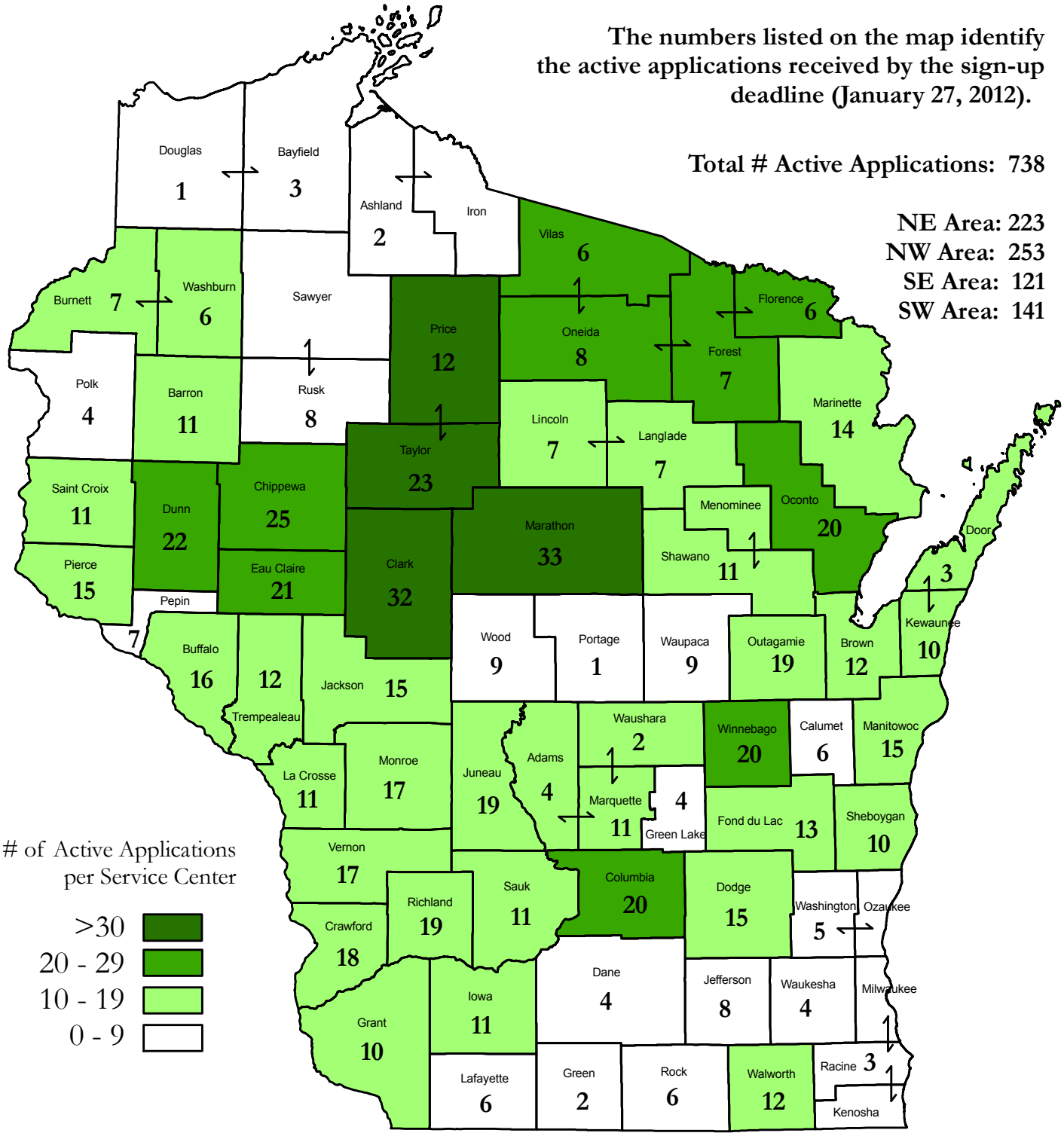
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Stewardship Program
2012-1 Sign-Up
Active Applications
1/31/2012

The numbers listed on the map identify the active applications received by the sign-up deadline (January 27, 2012).

Total # Active Applications: 738

NE Area: 223
NW Area: 253
SE Area: 121
SW Area: 141



# of Active Applications per Service Center

- >30
- 20 - 29
- 10 - 19
- 0 - 9

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Soil Health
through
Conservation Cropping Systems

Presented by Ms. Jane Hardisty, Indiana State Conservationist

NRCS Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Cropping Systems

WATER QUALITY

No System = sediment and nutrient loss

Lake Erie = sediment and algae plumes

October, 2011

SOLUTION = Conservation Cropping Systems

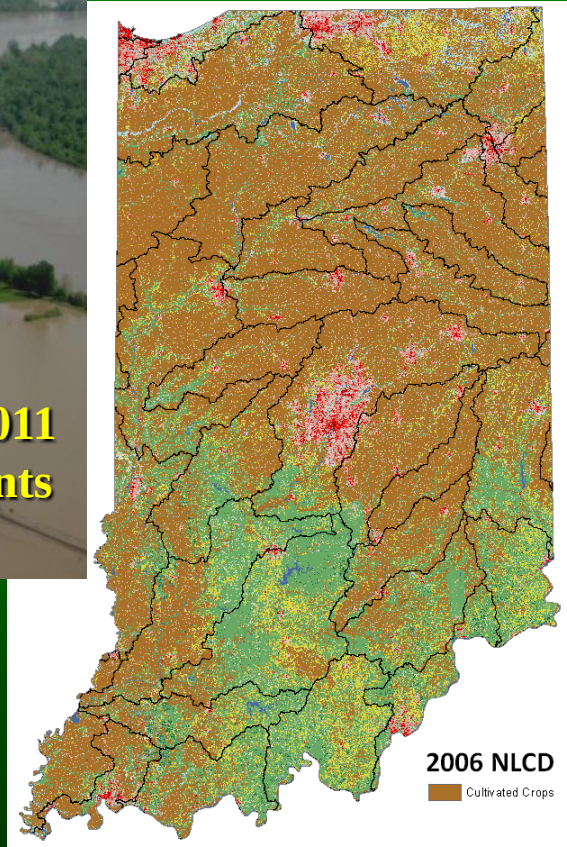
Conservation Cropping Systems

WATER QUANTITY

No System = more runoff & less water-holding capacity

Mississippi River Watershed Flood 2011 = flood damage, sediment and nutrients

SOLUTION = Conservation Cropping Systems on a watershed scale



Conservation Cropping Systems

AIR QUALITY

No System = particulate matters and emissions

Lubbock, Texas 2011 = particulate matter

SOLUTION = Conservation Cropping Systems

Conservation Cropping Systems

ENERGY

No System = multiple tillage passes = fuel

Worldwide Oil Demand

SOLUTION = Conservation Cropping Systems

Conservation Cropping Systems

WILDLIFE

No System =

no cover, minimal biology

Healthy Soil Biota

Solution = Conservation Cropping Systems

Conservation Cropping Systems

RISK REDUCTION

System No System
Virginia

Un-Managed Pasture

Pasture System
Missouri

Stable, Sustainable Food Supply

"Insurance" against drought, floods, markets

COVER CROPS in the System

Cover crop – no cover

Year-Round LIVING Cover:

- Improves Water Quality
  - Protects the Soil
  - Traps Nutrients
  - Reduces compaction
  - Increases infiltration
- Promotes Soil Biology
- Builds and Sequesters Carbon

Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative

Indiana NRCS Leadership will make soil health a priority in 2012

- Decision based on the positive resource benefits achieved from the promotion of soil health through conservation cropping systems over past several years

- Achieving soil health is accomplished through conservation cropping systems that implement:

  - A Functioning No-till System
  - Cover Crops
  - Nutrient Management
  - Pest Management
  - Crop Rotation
  - Buffers
  - Drainage Systems

With new agricultural tools, technology, and genetics available today, achieving functioning soil health is a reality

Since September 2011 Indiana NRCS leadership has supported several key actions:

- Secured sufficient funds to enter into a contribution agreement to expand the Conservation Cropping Systems Initiative

- Met with Chief White and other leadership to encourage a national commitment to manage for soil health to address priority resource concerns.

    - Office of Management and Budget members
    - White House Council on Environmental Quality members
    - Environmental Protection Agency members
    - Department of Agriculture members
    - White House staff
    - All State Conservationists

To ensure NRCS can assist Indiana's farmers in their successful pursuit of soil health the Leadership Team will implement the following Indiana Soil Health Strategy:

- Establish a State Soil Health Specialist position on the State Resource Conservation staff
- Establish Area Soil Health Teams to identify local training and technical need of employees, agricultural service providers and farmers.
    - Teams will meet regularly and work with the State Soil Health Specialist to provide training and organize field demonstrations
- Prioritizing contribution agreements, staffing decisions, development of tools, alternative work situations and mobile planning concepts
- Making soil health a priority in the Indiana NRCS communications plan.

NRCS Staff will be required to meet the Ability, Skill or Knowledge (ASK) level for conservation cropping systems and soil health concepts at the following levels:

- Soil Health Team members - level 5
- GS-11/12 District Conservationists - level 4
- GS-11/12 Soil Conservationists – level 4
- GS-7/9 Soil Conservationists – level 3
- Leadership Team Members – level 2
- State Office Technology – level 2
- Soils and Program Staff – level 2
- GS-12 Area Staff – level 2
- GS-5 Soil Conservationists – level 2
- CIT members not mentioned – level 2
- Other NRCS employees - level 1

NRCS Indiana Leadership will encourage and support soil health as a training priority for all employees in Indiana.

- All employees will have soil health included in their Individual Development Plan
- Having measurable soil health items included in their performance plan
- At a minimum, 50 percent of the NRCS Indiana approved training budget will be targeted toward soil health education activities

NRCS Indiana employees will ensure that local and state partners and leaders are aware of the positive effect of conservation cropping systems on soil health by:

- Each District Conservationist will coordinate the demonstration of the Aggregate Stability Test and Water Infiltration Tests to members of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

- The State Soil Health Specialist will coordinate the demonstration of the Aggregate Stability Test and Water Infiltration Test to local partners

- Each Indiana employee will promote soil health in every planning effort and producer and partner contact opportunity possible.