

**State Technical Committee Meeting
May 14, 2019**

STC Comments – Jerry Raynor

- We have received our budget, so we are moving forward with conservation programs
- We are making some staff and structure changes to create planning team leaders.
- We have an amazing group here with us, thank you to all our partners for coming and sharing all your thoughts and concerns.

Farm Bills Programs – Jerry Roach

- Allocations have been received.
- EQIP Program has been funded but we are requesting additional dollars.
- ACEP Program has been funded but we are requesting additional dollars.
- Source Water Protection – Farm bill indicated that 10% of program funding dollars should be used in identified protection areas (excluding CRP). We will be working with our partners to set up the Indiana details soon.
- Conservation Innovation Grants – Indiana does not currently participate in the State CIG Program. This will be evaluated for 2020.
- The Grassland Conservation Initiative will be available as a part of the Conservation Stewardship Program. Processes for GCI are under review.

Beth Clarizia

- There were 75 easement applications in 2019 and they expect to fund 40 of those applications.

Adam Heichelbech

- EQIP is a typical year for Indiana, we are operating off the December 21, 2018 deadline.
- CSP signup was really delayed compared to past years due to the Farm Bill passing.
- For general CSP we still do not have full funding and we anticipate it in the near future.
- There will be State Technical Subcommittee meetings this summer to get input on Fiscal Year 2020 and future Indiana Program processes.

Agriculture Conservation Planning Framework Update – Shannon Zezula

- Agriculture Conservation Planning Framework (ACPF) is a modeling tool that identifies conservation practice opportunities within watershed developed by USDA's Agriculture Research Service in Ames, Iowa (Mark Tomer - <http://northcentralwater.org/acpf/> and see the attached presentation). Indiana has worked with ARS on two watersheds in the past – the Beargrass in Wabash County, and the Matson Ditch in DeKalb County. Recently, national NRCS and ARS entered into an agreement to have several watersheds within the Western Lake Erie Basin analyzed (2 in Indiana; 6 in Ohio). They are also working on providing training. Indiana has established a team of trained NRCS and partner employees to work through the detail of the WLEB analyzed watersheds and will then be more efficient when we analyze future watershed.

New LiDAR for Indiana Demonstration – Chris Morse

- Chris Morse, Indiana NRCS GIS Specialist, gave an update on Indiana's LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data acquisition. 70 of 92 counties were collected from 2016-2019 and have been delivered. Fourteen additional counties have completed initial data

collection in 2018 and 2019 and the data are undergoing post-processing and QA/QC. The remaining eight counties were delayed by flooding in 2018 and 2019 and are now pending data collection between December 2019 and March 2020. All new LiDAR data will be made available to the public once finalized. Indiana's data-collection and use for this round has been led by NRCS and is being conducted in partnership between with the USGS and state agencies.

HELCS State Off-Site Methods Demonstration – Chris Morse

- Chris then demonstrated one of several tools NRCS has developed to effectively use LiDAR data to make Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELCS) determinations for the Food Security Act of 1985, as amended. This tool uses digital versions of historical soil survey data and the LiDAR data to tool enable NRCS to consistently model slopes and slope lengths for offsite determination methods. With over 4,000 HELCS determinations completed each year in Indiana, the quality and time savings will help improve our response time to our customers.

Special Projects/ Initiative Updates – Jill Reinhart

Indiana Ag Nutrient Alliance (IANA):

- IANA has been in place about a year. The group is working hard to have consistent messages and agreed upon adoption goals. The group is now working on a statewide science assessment, a soil testing/interpretation campaign, a 4R field day opportunity, and a communication plan. They continue to work with the Agribusiness Council exploring a statewide 4R Certification program.

Indiana American Water:

- Jill Reinhart and Shannon Zezula met with Indiana American Water to share the soil health demonstrations and discuss conservation practices that can protect drinking water sources. NRCS will continue to work with Indiana American Water as they strive to work more closely with their tenant farmers on drinking water protection.

Women for the Land:

- This program is focused on women landowners. The program hosts women's conservation learning circles. The program is not about excluding men, but instead creating a comfortable environment for women to learn about conservation and how to talk to their tenant farmers. The afternoon field portions of the meeting include male conservation professionals. Indiana recently held a refresher training for all the conservation learning circle facilitators and is setting the schedule for meetings this summer.

Jerry Raynor is reaching out to the commodity groups to set up one on one meetings to determine how NRCS can help each group and work more closely together.

Farm Service Agency Update – Jason Kishton

- Waiting for CRP farm bill guidance.
- September 30, 2019 is going to be FSA largest year for expiring contracts – over 23000 acres of CRP expiring.
- Hearing indications of a December for a general CRP signup.

Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) Partner Update – Josh Griffin

- DFW is working with our Legislative Liaison (David Bausman) to develop two Legislative Educational Tours (one north, one south) designed to inform legislators, their

staff, and other state dignitaries about the importance of conservation in Indiana (particularly on privately owned lands), the role and importance of the Farm Bill in conservation funding, the relevance of conservation to Indiana citizens etc. The north tour will be in Northeast Indiana (likely DeKalb and Steuben Counties). The south tour will be in Southeast Indiana (likely Ripley County). The North Tour date will be in late June/early July. The south tour date is not yet scheduled. It is expected that leadership from NRCS, FSA, ISDA, etc. will be invited to attend (along with DFW leaderships and staff). Tours will likely view CRP, WRE/WRP, EQIP (RCPP-GGS) practices along with gamebird agreement projects and APPLE (access) tracts managed by DFW.

- SAFE Analysis-nearly complete for Indiana. Approx. 60,000 acres enrolled. Focus on benefits for Bobwhite Quail, Ring-necked pheasants, Indiana Bats, Henslow's Sparrows, American Woodcock, and Sedge Wren/Grasshopper Sparrows. Monitoring designed to determine efficacy of different habitat types, presence/absence of target species, etc. Target date for completion is August 1, 2019.
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) testing preparation continues. CWD is close to Indiana borders (NW and NE). Targeted samples are being collected throughout the year with a more robust sampling approach linked to hunting seasons scheduled this fall. To date, CWD has NOT been found in Indiana.
- Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds - RCPP update-42 projects pending final approval in EQIP. This will expend the lion's share of EQIP FA monies. So, any future EQIP money available for this initiative would be beneficial and likely used very quickly. As of May 9, 2019, staff have another 27 projects awaiting another EQIP sign up period (in addition to the 42 pending final approval). Partner efforts through the RCPP initiative total 11 more projects to date (over 250+ acres of additional habitat). The total goal for the project throughout phase 1 of the initiative is 70 projects. It appears that 53 projects will be completed this year with another 27 pending; thus far exceeding programs goals for project year 1.

Jeff Kiefer— the Indiana monarch plan that has been in the works for about a year now was completed in March. Basically, it is a summary of Indiana's plan to deal with the declining monarchs and Indiana's plan to get to those goals. July 12, 2019 there is going to be another meeting.

Trevor Laureys – ISDA is working with NRCS to analyze the 2018 Fall/Winter transect results and is preparing the ICP employees for the 2019 Spring transect.

Toby Days- Events coming up: Operator expo where 50 vendors come and let people use their equipment.

Eileen Kladvko – Midwest cover crops council developed cover crop “recipes” that are available. These are great resources for beginner farmers that are interested in cover crops.

Liz Jackson – The “Find a Forester” directory provides private consulting foresters that farmers can contact.

Lou Renshaw – drinking water analysis around the state and the first samples are coming in today. We are conducting an analysis in the nine watersheds.

Zach Smith – IDNR Division of Forestry is working on their long-term plan and is inviting input from partners.

Sally Letsinger – Rebuilding her research program in the Indiana University Department of Geography. Everyone is invited to participate in the upcoming Indiana Water Resources

Association conference in Syracuse, Indiana. The conference will take place June 26-28, 2019 (early bird registration ends June 5), and more info can be found at <http://iwra.info>.

Phil Bastron – New state regional representative for Pheasants Forever - District meetings are being scheduled for August.

Jennifer Boyle-Warner – National Association of Consulting Foresters Conference is being held in Indiana in French Lick on June 23-25, 2019. ISDA website has a great synopsis of the importance of Indiana hardwoods to the economy.

Mike Beard – Indiana corn is sponsoring the Soil Health Partnership and encourages farmers to do field testing.

Justin Schneider – IANA recently became 501c3 – working on media plan to push out goals and practices.

Joe Schmees – CCSI events coming up in the summer and going into the fall.