

# Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum

## Meeting Notes

Meeting 1: May 22, 2015, Springfield, IL

### Summary:

Three of the 4 charges to the AWQPF were discussed. Summaries of conclusions in each of these 3 areas follow:

#### **1) Steer and coordinate outreach and education efforts to help farmers address nutrient loss and select the most appropriate BMPs:**

Agriculture partners have a coordinated and robust outreach and communication effort ongoing which includes: Newsletter articles, direct correspondence and meetings with members, 11 roadshows in 9 watersheds, a social media campaign, and a statewide photo contest (water is...) that will provide photos to communicate about the INLRS.

We discussed gaps in education efforts that should be addressed starting this summer. Gaps identified include:

- a. Youth audiences and programs
- b. Programs for female farmers/landowners (perhaps women's circles).

*Conclusion:* This effort will remain independent of the Forum, but updates will be provided at each AWQPF meeting where gaps and potential collaborations and partnerships to address these gaps will be discussed.

#### *Action items:*

- Agriculture communication partners will include FFA students in some of the planned summer events
- Future events or initiatives may be held at fairs when possible and will include 4-H members

#### **2) Track BMP implementation**

*Conclusion:* A technical **subgroup** of the AWQPF will be formed to:

- a. Determine the best way to share and aggregate bmp implementation data across agencies (*so we can track our progress in accomplishing the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy [INLRS]*),
- b. Determine what bmp implementation parameters will be tracked (e.g. cover crops, wetlands, buffer strips, etc.) and how it will be aggregated (e.g. per watershed, statewide, lump practices into categories like edge of field, etc.). This includes identifying future data parameters required from producer surveys or transect surveys to track progress in accomplishing the INLRS.
- c. assess existing bmp implementation data availability over time to advise the policy work group as they select a BMP implementation baseline year

*Action items:*

- The IWRC will query the agriculture and point source sectors of the Policy Work Group to determine if there are policy windows (eg. Years between 1986? and present when a policy or event may have stimulated BMP or practice implementation/adoption that should be considered when establishing a BMP baseline for the INLRS)
- Results of this query will be used by the AWQPF technical subgroup to determine if adequate BMP implementation data exists before and after policy windows and will report their findings at an upcoming PWG meeting.
- The Policy Working Group will make a final determination on a baseline BMP implementation year

**3) *Coordinate cost sharing and targeting***

The group briefly began discussing cost sharing timelines and decision points by agency.

*Conclusion:* The AWQPF felt that the NRCS technical committee is the appropriate venue to address targeting and coordination of cost share considerations.

*Action items:*

- IEPA will query the appropriate AWQPF agencies on cost share deadlines and decision thresholds that each agency must consider.
- The results of the IEPA query will be presented at the next AWQPF meeting and cost share coordination and targeting will be further discussed.

**4) *Next meeting***

*Conclusion:* The next meeting of the AWQPF will be in late August or September.

Recommendations were made on additional organizations that should be included on the AWQPF.

*Action Items:*

- The IWRC will send out a doodle poll to AWQPF members to set the next meeting for the forum and also establish subsequent meetings for the next year at 3-4 month intervals.
- Agenda items for the next meeting will include:
  - Update on outreach and education activities and a discussion of gaps and actions needed to address gaps.
  - Update on BMP technical subgroup progress and findings relative to data availability and policy windows for bmp baseline establishment
  - Update and conclusions from IEPA query of cost share programs and deadlines
  - Further discussion of coordination and targeting of cost share programs in state
  - Beginning discussion of AWQPF charge : ***“Develop other tools as needed”***

### **Official representatives**

Warren Goetsch, Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Jean Payne, Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association  
Kelly Thompson, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Ivan Dozier, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Lauren Lukins, Illinois Farm Bureau  
George Czapar, University of Illinois Extension  
Jennifer Tirey, Council on Best Management Practices  
Stacy James, Prairie Rivers Network  
Tom Kelley, Certified Crop Advisors  
Lisa Bonnett, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
Marcia Willhite, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
Ann Holtrop, Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Sherrie Giamanco, Farm Service Agency  
Maria Lemke, Nature Conservancy

### **Attendees**

Kim Martin, Farm Service Agency  
Myron Kirby, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts  
Rodney Weinzierl, Illinois Corn Growers Association  
Lyndsey Ramsey, Illinois Farm Bureau  
Amy Walkenbach, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
Dennis McKenna, Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Mike Rahe, Illinois Department of Agriculture  
Mark Schleusener, United States Department of Agriculture  
Liz Hobart, Growmark

### **Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy review**

Brian Miller spoke about NLRS development and status. He went over group charges (see slides for more information).

PWG – high level steering

NMC – develop monitoring strategy

NSAC – advise on nutrient numeric criteria

Urban – bring statewide efforts together for stormwater

AWQPF – today's meeting (see below)

### **Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum Charge: Outreach and education**

Brian Miller went over past conclusions from Policy Working Group Agriculture subcommittee, covered existing agriculture partners communication group and ongoing efforts (see slides) which include photo contest/Science of the Strategy Videos (see slides).

### **What others Outreach and education efforts are happening?**

Jennifer Tirey talked about the roadshows: 11 all over the state. Working with county farm bureaus at the watershed level. Reps for Corn Growers will do water sampling/testing. The hope is to bring partners together to know who they are, share ideas, and work together. Surveys at each event to get a better IFB will calculate. Communication group meets every month. Telecalls set up re: NLRs. Farms with 100 acres or more. Doing a great job to reach farmers. Grass roots effort too. For roadshows can get credit for CCAs. Continuing Education for Farm managers. Illinois Ag Women sharing info. Will have food at meetings. Engaging farmer leaders. Encouraging people to show up. CBMP is building additional info on website. Call list: 45K.

Warren Goetsch wondered if there was a gap for **youth**. Could we be doing more with FFA, vocational Ag teachers. The change might happen if the younger generation asks questions.

Lauren Lurkins added that have done presentations with young leaders. Have a database of farming practices. Farm Week has nutrient profiles of what those farmers are doing. 30 farmers. Repurposing that info with "Ag in the Classroom" for teachers to share.

Amy Walkenbach talked about Lincoln Land College curriculum for ag teachers. Certificate.

George Czapar talked about special interest clubs. Could do this at fairs over summer.

Rodney Weinzierl has requested soil testing confidentiality pilot program with SWCD.

Tom Kelley, CCA, certification organization. 1300 CCA's in IL (13K in nation). Code of ethics. Can get specialization in 4R nutrient management. Have website, newsletters, bi monthly mag. Annual convention. This year in conjunction with Ag Masters. Been doing this for 23 years. Anytime can get CCA CEU's at meetings, would be great.

Jean Payne, IFCA is partnering with CCA to advise farmers. 4R cert. to assist farmers to use sampling.

#### **Outreach and education Gap recap:**

- a. Youth (4H)
- b. Science (what to tell people re: efficacy)

#### **SHORT TERM GAPS**

Youth Gap:

Lauren Lurkins: invite 4H to roadshows.

#### **Science Gap (demo plots, etc.):**

Jennifer Tirey: CBMP has field days for cover crops. But need to wait a little longer for others. At Farm Progress Show, have a great opportunity to educate about the INLRS.

Mike Rahe: 45 demo sites. 12 interstate sites (ISU farm and private farms) for cover crop. RCPP project: establishing 65 farms across states: no till, etc. (just got agreement signed). Seminars for nutrient management such as cover crops.

Jennifer Tirey: There are cover crop plots at 6 community colleges.

Stacy James: We did 4 Iowa women's workshops. Absentee landowners. Had MANY basic questions about their farm such as how much rent to charge. Conservation would be down the road for them.

Lauren Lurkins thought that was a good point.

Stacy James: Repeated contact would be good.

Myron Kirby: Some SWCDs have had women's meetings. Also, state government is a GAP. Farm Service Agents are visited once a year. T by 2000 changed the way farming is done (no till, etc.) FSA, NRCS, SWCD good information avenues for farmers.

Rodney Weinzierl: U of I has a "land value" center run by Prof. Bouchard. If a way to show land practices increase land value. Link land practices to long term value. Changes cash rent. 5-10 year process.

Jennifer Tirey: legislative awareness (short and long term)

Ann Holtrop thought perhaps there could be a way to use these practices on IDNR properties.

Brian Miller: LONG TERM GAPS – it's ongoing. Something has to happen between meetings. How does this group want to manage this? Use existing Ag Comm group? How do you want to continue this dialog?

Lauren Lurkins: We all represent individual memberships, and so the most creative thoughts would come from our individual worlds. Coming together in this forum or CBMP is good. But, hate to have to wait for consensus approval to move forward.

Brian Miller: How do you keep that momentum going? Maria Lemke: Commitment to report at the next meeting?

Myron Kirby: SWCD will send out call to female farmers. Can go out today.

Jennifer Tirey: Bring in someone from American Farm Management, American Farmland Trust, and Illinois Soybean Alliance. They are missing from the conversation. If they are doing something, we should know about it. Should share resources.

Brian Miller: Forum is place to connect and report on progress. Sounds like you are comfortable with the way things are but to identify short term gaps and address them.

Lauren Lurkins: Public stakeholders, show progress to them through meetings. This could serve as accountability. What documentation do we need for reporting?

Warren Goetsch: This group not here to stifle progress. It is here to identify success and collaborating. We want to hear all the wonderful things that are going on and how can we all help each other.

### **Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum Charge: Track BMP Implementation**

Brian Miller: Iowa Example

We were at Hypoxia Meeting. Iowa presented a model of practices and how to guide to goal. The ultimate result in water but it can be hard to show that right away. Can show INDICATORS (land, human).

Warren Goetsch: The states are trying to come up with measures of progress. Ultimately, you want to get to better water quality but need to look at it from a number of problems and perspectives. In Illinois, SWCD have done transect surveys on the land. We are wondering whether a direct producer survey can augment the transect survey. Iowa is going about it comprehensively. Do several talks over several years to see if there is change with farmers' thinking. Change in attitude = change in management.

### **Producer survey – Mark Schleusener**

What we do: counters and measurers for USDA. Info on database – identify and commodity they produce, farm size, location. 5 year census done too. To begin a survey like this (develop questionnaire, have trained interviewers)

What are the data gaps? Can that be filled by talking to the producer?

Fed funding survey CEAP (conservation effects assessment project). Will connect 3 years of application

Lisa Bonnett: We need to be sure to take credit for changes happening. Critical thing. What is the starting point? What are effective practices and how does that show improved water quality. Where does that data go? IEPA will help as can.

Cost? MS: Ballpark 10's of 1000's. Depends on scale and number. John Lawrence doing 2- 6 digit HUCs.

Warren Goetsch: The challenge: It important to know what you want to the results to say beforehand.

Marcia Willhite: What are our priority watersheds? We agreed on where we want to focus our efforts (referred to PP slide).

Rodney Weinzierl: It's linked in with Field to Market. What did the footprint look like in the 1980 -90s. Hard to find. June 1 goal 100,000 acres in F2M system.

Marcia Willhite: Decide what our baseline year for implementation. Should we use a range of years? 2011? We should decide so we can say how far?

Lauren Lurkins: Lean on EPA. EPA and DOA have to answer to feds. They should answer what we need on the baseline question. We need something passive, credible, and easy and trustworthy. We need something that requires little from farmers. A process they are already familiar with and they trust.

Lisa Bonnett: Looking for opportunities about data sharing?

Stacy James: Some of these questions are more appro. For statistician.

Lisa Bonnett: This is germane for a workgroup.

### **Track BMP implementation – Coordination with NMC**

Brian Miller: Is there interest for Agencies to appoint members in subgroup?

Warren Goetsch: FSA and NRCS have incredible amount of data that can be helpful. How do we maintain confidentiality required by federal law?

Sherrie Giamanco: Can FOIA on all but personal information.

Dennis McKenna: Looking for 12 digit HUC level.

Warren Goetsch: There are some good opportunities. We do understand the limitations you have.

Ivan Dozier: We are about to do data mining on our system. Will remove identifying info. The data points aren't by HUC.

Warren Goetsch: We may have some overlays.

Marcia Willhite: Us too.

Brian Miller: We need to get techie folks together.

Jennifer Tirey: And money.

Lauren Lurkins: Can we do private/public partnership?

### **Baseline Year**

Marcia Willhite: Process question regarding baseline year: who makes that decision? Seems like a policy question.

Dennis McKenna: 1994 was first year transect survey done.

What's the first year of CREDIBLE data?

Marcia Willhite: Define year. Find out what data we have. NOMINATE 2011 – the last year of WQ data for science assessment. But, from process standpoint is it the Policy Working Group that makes this decision?

Rodney Weinzierl: There were huge conservation practices going on in the 1980's. Anhydrous prices in 05-07 changed effecting practice changes. To me, we need a data point ahead of that.

Brian Miller: In moving forward, does it make sense to have tech group to think about do we have enough data? They make report to PWG, who can draw the line.

Marcia Willhite: Will also have to be point source line.

Brian Miller: Could query both point source and nonpoint source for points for change. Query tech group. Then go back to Policy Working Group.

### **Transect Survey – Mike Rahe**

Since 1994, SWCD have been conducting transect survey which means “drive by” survey. Identified points along predetermined route. Observe fields. What crop? Previous crop? Done in Spring. Mostly on residue and cropping rotation. **Purpose: to monitor soil erosion.** Initially, done every yr. then every other year. Have done every 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Not much data changed. Plan is to continue every other year. T by 2000. Been looking to adapt for newer issues that are WQ related. (cover crop acres, nutrient management, conservation practices). At different times of year....safety issues in fall. Transferring this info to producer survey. Have had general discussions to see if possible. State wide summary might not be good enuf. Cost....The number of points goes up, costs go up.

Myron Kirby: Safety issue could be mitigated by changing points. Look for field entrance.

Mike Rahe: Survey is 53,000 points. Varies from co. to co. What does it take to create a transect survey that makes it better?

Brian Miller: Would it make sense to generate a questionnaire for group OR next meeting?

Mike Rahe: What do you want at the end so we can adapt the survey?

Jennifer Tirey: It would be helpful to see current form. We could make suggestions.

Maria Lemke: We have a lot of things going on. We need to think about scale of what we are looking for. How effective is outreach? Focus in smaller areas, so we can see some short term changes.

Brian Miller: Let's have tech group meet before next time.

### **Coordinate cost sharing and targeting**

Warren Goetsch: When does cost share need to happen?



Myron Kirby: I'm a volunteer that represents volunteers. Let's make sure that this is a voluntary system. Change in nitrogen application was money driven. That's how we did Tx2000. We don't want to see a mandatory system.

Ivan Dozier: Fiscal year starts Oct 1. Sign ups are continuous. Establish batching systems. Would typically make funding decisions in months between those. Funding decisions usually happen Mar/Apr/May. Beginning to evaluate ranking system for 2016. Tech committee meets 3x/year. They will meet before this group meets again.

Lisa Bonnett: We are looking for a resource document to gather information about your programs. We could use IEPA resources such as summer interns to gather this info.

Brian Miller: We could pick this charge back up next meeting.

Marcia Willhite: State technical committee is forum to weigh in on cost share. We'd like to get nutrients as priority.

Ivan Dozier: We have ability to emphasize resource prioritization and to target certain areas.

Brian Miller: Other charge is to develop tools as needed (will be first on agenda for next time)

Lauren Lurkins: Advisory committee talked about cert. process. Could end up in December.

Stacy James: We should look at other states.