

North Central NRCS & IPM Working Group and Minnesota Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Meeting Report

**Meeting Participants:** Tim Koehler (MN NRCS), Sid Cornelius (MN NRCS), Jeff St. Ores (MN NRCS), Taylor Myron (MN NRCS), Robin Martinek (MN NRCS), Bill Kuenstler (NRCS), Jeanne Ciborowski (MN Department of Agriculture.), Regina Hirsch (IPM Consultant), Peter Werts (IPM Institute), Mike Dekarski (MN apple grower), John Jacobson (MN Apple grower), Rick VanLin ( MN apple grower), Ralph Yates (MN Apple Growers Association/grower), Jim Birkholz (MN apple grower), Thaddeus Mc Camant (Northland Community and Technical College- specialty crops)

**Meeting Summary:** On February 17, 2010, North Central NRCS & IPM working group members, Regina Hirsch and Peter Werts met with representatives from Minnesota NRCS, MN Dept of Ag, MN Apple Growers Association, MN Fruit and Vegetable Association and apple growers to discuss the opportunity to expand EQIP 595 eligibility options for specialty crops, particularly apples. Presentations were made to meeting participants by NRCS, our Working Group and orchardists in Minnesota. These presentations provided an overview of the EQIP program in Minnesota, opportunities for EQIP to support specialty crops and what type of assistance growers need for IPM adoption. The group discussed in detail IPM adoption costs including: scouting, tracking, education needs and how the EQIP program can provide this support to growers.

MN NRCS responded positively to the group's proposal and is very interested in adopting eligibility requirements to offer EQIP 595 Integrated Pest Management options for apple growers in MN. The group looked closely at the EQIP options for orchards in Wisconsin, Iowa and Ohio and a proposed set of cost-share rates presented to MN NRCS by our working group. (These proposed cost-share rates estimated IPM adoption on one acre of orchard for a ten acre orchard).

The meeting concluded with a discussion on next-steps and the challenges NRCS would need to address to successfully offer the EQIP 595 Integrated Pest Management Practice Standard to orchardists in Minnesota. MN NRCS opined that the lack of trained Technical Service Providers (TSPs), required to write IPM plans and offer growers technical assistance through the growing season and is the largest barrier to the program. One opportunity to address this concern will be at the IPM coach training for apple, berry and grape growers offered by the University of Wisconsin, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems in 2011.

For more information about the project, please contact Peter Werts, IPM Institute, at [pwerts@ipminstitute.org](mailto:pwerts@ipminstitute.org) or 608-232-1410.