

NRCS and IPM Working Group for Growers' Incentives for IPM
Discussion on the Proposed EQIP 596 Standard

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Portland, Oregon

Participants: Joe Bagdon, Tom Green, Regina Hirsch, Rufus Isaacs, Jim Jasinski, Bill Kuenstler, Eric Mader, Michelle Miller, Mace Vaughan, Brenna Wanous

Agenda:

1. Update on where 596 stands (Joe Bagdon, Bill Kuenstler):
 - a. The NRCS conducted extensive internal discussion regarding the proposed 596 *Pesticide Risk Mitigation* standard which was released in November 2008. Feedback from NRCS personnel and additional individuals from other sectors revealed a sentiment that the proposed standard would not take enough of a preventative approach to reducing pesticide use and protecting natural resources.
 - b. In March 2009 the proposal was rejected in favor of enhancing the current 595 *Pest Management* standard to retain many of the IPM techniques and include a number of the larger goals 596 identified.
 - c. The enhanced 595 *Integrated Pest Management* (note the name change) standard is in draft status. Working Group members are welcome to review the draft (attached) and provide feedback to your NRCS state resource conservationist, water specialist, agronomist, etc.
2. Key differences between current 595 standard and enhanced (both are attached):
 - a. Current 595 requires NRCS field staff and growers to manage for pest damage prevention, minimize pest resistance and prevent risks to natural resources and humans (techniques include scouting and monitoring, use of thresholds, use of least toxic materials, etc.).
 - b. In addition to this procedure, the updated standard mandates that if the pest management plan is not enough to address specific resource concerns (e.g., pesticide transport to nearby surface water, nearby pollinator habitat), the grower

is required to undergo a secondary, more intensive IPM planning that will mitigate those specific concerns.

- c. The enhanced standard provides a more inclusive and explicit list of plan requirements, including record keeping and plan updates. The enhanced standard also provides a reference to a list of IPM Elements and Guidelines, as well as the *Guide to IPM Elements and Guidelines* document for conservation planners (<http://www.ipmcenters.org/ipmelements/index.cfm>).
3. Addressing the shortage of pest management plan writers - Conservation Activity Plans:
- a. Neither the current nor enhanced 595 standard specifies which party/sector is responsible for writing the pest management plans; the NRCS requires that they should be written by those who have the expertise (whether that be the District Conservationist, an NGO, IPM consultant, etc.) and the Technical Service Provider certification. Funding is not allocated to support the costs of plan writing in all states (with a few exceptions, such as Wisconsin).
 - b. However, the NRCS created a new pilot program for “Conservation Activity Plans” (CAPs), available during the 2009 growing season. The pilot allows each state to choose one or more (up to a certain number) of 15 types of plans that they will help fund on a local level, including IPM, forestry, organics, energy and others (see <http://techreg.usda.gov/RptActivityPlans.aspx> for the full list).
 - c. If the state NRCS chooses IPM as one of the CAPs they will fund, any grower is able to pay to have a pest management plan written for them; all growers applying for EQIP 595 will need to have a pest management plan written for them.
 - d. Pending the results of the pilot, the program may be expanded for 2010, with potentially many more states opting for the pest management Activity Plan.
 - e. **Please check with your states to encourage them to select pest management if they haven't selected their plan options yet. If they have selected IPM as one of their CAPs, please work with the NRCS and participating growers to foster a good experience during the pilot year.**

- f. If your state has chosen their CAPs, please send that information to Brenna Wanous (bwanous@ipminstitute.org) so she can update a table indicating which CAPs each North Central state has selected.
 - g. While the Activity Plans will increase grower interest in pest management plans in general, the lack of individuals qualified to write the plans is still an issue. The NRCS cannot hold trainings for individuals interested in learning to write plans, so Universities, NGO's or the private sector will need to provide these trainings.
 - i. Our working group will work on updating the current 595 pest management plan template to reflect the enhanced version, and develop a curriculum for a training session.
4. Questions raised regarding applying for a pest management Activity Plan (if applicable in that state) and applying for EQIP:
- a. If the grower must first have an IPM Activity Plan completed before applying for EQIP 595, would it deter growers from applying?
 - b. What if a grower's state does not offer the IPM Activity Plans – how would that affect the EQIP 595 application and execution process?
5. Where to go from here:
- a. Have representatives from the National NRCS on the April conference call to talk about the Conservation Activity Plans;
 - b. Work with Wisconsin on the Organics Activity Plans (one of three Conservation Activity Plans chosen, none of which are IPM) to create effective and meaningful plans;
 - c. Encourage states to chose pest management activity plans, and identify which plans the working group states select (send that information to Brenna);
 - d. Be ready to help states that do adopt the IPM Activity Plan to maximize the benefits of doing so;
 - e. Update the current 595 pest management plan template to reflect the enhanced standard requirements, and develop a curriculum for a training session.