



NRCS CONSERVATION ACTIVITY PLANS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR IPM

A Guide to Becoming Certified to Write IPM Conservation Activity Plans

For: Crop consultants, Extension staff and conservation professionals interested in becoming certified to write IPM CAPs.

Overview

In 2009, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) piloted Conservation Activity Plans (CAPs), a new cost-share program designed to address on-farm natural resource concerns. In 2010, there are 12 different CAP options available nationwide, including Integrated Pest Management (IPM), transition to organic, forestry and aquaculture. NRCS will pay the producer up to 75% of the cost for a private-sector Technical Service Provider (TSP) to prepare a CAP for a farm, and up to 90% of the cost for historically underserved producers, including beginning, limited resource or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers.

CAPs are designed to identify site-specific natural resource concerns for the farm and address those concerns with appropriate conservation practices. IPM CAP natural resource concerns might include pesticide run-off risks to a nearby water body, high drift potential due to sprayer type or nozzle configuration or inefficient water use contributing to excess pesticide runoff.

IPM CAPs present opportunities for:

- **Creating new business relationships:** Growers can receive financial assistance from NRCS to hire you to write an IPM CAP for their farm. While writing an IPM CAP is a one-time event, it can also foster a long-lasting working relationship between you and the grower.
- **Raising conservation awareness among growers:** As a certified TSP, you can help growers benefit from an on-site assessment and a written IPM conservation plan that identifies opportunities for protecting natural resources on or near their farm.

In 2010, growers will be able to apply to have one of any of the 12 CAPs written for their farm. We need qualified TSPs to meet that demand. Cooperative Extension agents, conservation districts (such as the Soil and Water Conservation District), crop consultants, ag-oriented public agency employees and others with conservation missions and agricultural expertise are ideal candidates to become certified to write IPM CAPs. Below are steps describing the certification process:

Step 1: Become an IPM CAP-certified TSP

Individuals interested in becoming certified to write IPM CAPs must receive training online through the NRCS's AgLearn website (<http://www.aglearn.usda.gov/index.html>) or through other training opportunities specific to CAPs, and pass a series of required exams.

An IPM CAP-writer training workshop will be held on January 19, 2010 in Orlando, Florida in conjunction with the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants Annual Meeting. For more information, visit the working group's Training page (www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/TSP_Training.htm).

Step 2: Register on TechReg

Once you complete the training and exams, you must register on TechReg, the NRCS online database of TSPs (<http://techreg.usda.gov/>). Registering allows growers in your area who are interested in having a CAP prepared to find you.

Step 3: Writing an IPM CAP, Collaboration

Each state NRCS office prioritizes their natural resource concerns. For example, California may focus more on air quality, Wisconsin more on nutrient management. CAP applications may be ranked and funded based on those priorities so not all applications may be accepted. A grower must apply and be accepted for NRCS funding **before** they hire you to write an IPM CAP.

You may choose to write IPM CAPs on your own or through collaboration with colleagues in Extension, Conservation Districts, agriculture-related agencies, non-profits or businesses or University IPM or crop specialists. Even if you collaborate with others, as the certified TSP, you must review and sign off on the final plan submitted to NRCS.

In 2009, NRCS funded eight IPM CAP applications in California, distributing \$13,500 in financial assistance. This success is largely attributed to the longstanding strong collaboration between California's NRCS, Extension and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

More on Training

Many agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc. have experience with coordinating and hosting training workshops. Because there is a demand for IPM CAP-certified TSPs nationwide, providing training opportunities in your area is very important.

The National IPM CAP Working Group developed an NRCS-approved training curriculum which covers the requirements for IPM CAP TSP certification. The training curriculum is posted online (www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/TSP_Training.htm) and is available for public use. Please note that each line item meets a minimum requirement for certifying TSPs and should be retained if you choose to adapt this curriculum to meet additional needs in your state.

Additional resources including training recommendations, workshop budgets and training opportunities will be posted to the Working Group's TSP Training site as they become available.

Visit the National IPM CAPs Working Group's website for more information:

www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs

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