



NRCS CONSERVATION ACTIVITY PLANS: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR IPM

Developing an IPM Conservation Activity Plan Program: A Guide for Natural Resources Conservation Service Staff

For: NRCS including State Conservationists, State Resource Conservationists, EQIP Program Managers and TSP Coordinators, and members of the State Technical Committee."

IPM and Natural Resources:

Integrated Pest Management Conservation Activity Plans (IPM CAPs) present a valuable opportunity for farmers to identify site-specific conservation practices that can reduce risks from pest management activities including pesticide applications on their farms.

For example, a 2006 study by the US Geological Survey found that 94% of fish samples, 94% of surface water samples and 33% of ground water samples were contaminated with pesticides, including 10% of stream and 1% of well samples that exceeded thresholds for human health.

Starting in 2010, growers can apply for NRCS financial assistance for hiring a Technical Service Provider (TSP) to develop for their farm any one of the 12 CAPs that are available. An IPM CAP can help the grower understand pest prevention and avoidance methods, pest damage thresholds, appropriate pesticide selection and application techniques, and more, which all help reduce pesticide risks to nearby natural resources.

Past Successes of NRCS IPM Programs:

- IPM plans were implemented by nearly 9,000 growers, enrolling over 1,600,000 acres in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) through application of the 595 Pest Management Standard in 2009.

EQIP helped implement IPM practices that protected vital natural resources, reduced pesticide exposure risk to humans, and fostered improved working relationships between growers, crop consultants and TSPs.

- In 2009, the NRCS received and funded applications for eight IPM CAPs in a California pilot program that provided \$13,500 in financial assistance.

Steps to Developing an IPM CAP Program in Your State:

This Guide for Developing an IPM CAP Program in Your State provides recommended steps to take in order to develop a viable IPM CAP program. This is a template that can be modified to fit your state's needs.

Step 1: Seek approval for program development.

Starting this year, growers in any state can have an IPM CAP written for their farm. To ensure your state is prepared to process IPM CAP financial assistance applications, request approval from your State Conservationist or State Resource Conservationist to develop an IPM CAP program. Present the ways which IPM can reduce risks to natural resources and the potential for IPM CAPs to augment these opportunities. The National IPM CAPs Working Group can provide you with guidance and resources such as outreach materials, a NRCS-approved training curriculum, and suggested cost-share rate information. For more information, visit www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs.

Step 2: Recruit your IPM CAPs “Development Team” and identify responsibilities.

Collaboration among key players will be most effective. Ideally, your team will consist of the NRCS EQIP program manager for your state, Extension specialists, your State IPM Coordinator, crop advisors, growers and/or representatives from grower groups. You may want to develop a cooperative agreement to hire Extension or others to conduct outreach, hold training workshops, etc. A sample cooperative agreement is available at www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/NRCS_Opportunity.htm.

Step 3: Establish adequate cost-share rates.

Because NRCS offers a 75% cost-share to growers for hiring a TSP to write an IPM CAP for their farm, it is important for these rates to reflect what TSPs actually charge for their services. Use the “IPM ONE 2009” spreadsheet and California’s 2009 IPM CAPs payment schedule spreadsheet to identify line-item costs for a TSP’s services and set an adequate cost-share rate for your state. Both spreadsheets are available at www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/NRCS_Opportunity.htm.

Consider prioritizing funds in other NRCS programs such as EQIP to favor growers who request cost share to apply to 595 Pest Management Standard when they already have an IPM CAP. This will provide additional financial incentive for growers to invest in an IPM CAP since they will be more likely to receive financial assistance for implementing the plan after it is developed.

Step 4 and Ongoing: Conduct outreach to growers, TSPs and others.

Outreach to growers and TSPs is critical to a successful IPM CAP program. Growers and TSPs need to know the environmental benefits of IPM CAPs as well as the economic benefits that come with IPM adoption. This outreach should describe the program, its benefits, how growers can apply for funding and find a TSP, and how TSPs can become certified to write IPM CAPs. To develop outreach that targets crop consultants, please refer to the “Guide to Becoming an IPM CAPs-Certified TSP” available at <http://www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/Resources2.htm#Working%20Group%20resources>.

Conduct outreach through presentations, newsletters, signage, website postings and other avenues you have available. For examples of outreach materials, visit the National IPM CAPs Working Group’s Resources webpage at <http://www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/Resources2.htm#Working%20Group%20resources>.

Step 5: Evaluation and information sharing.

The National IPM CAPs Working Group offers support and resources to all states developing an IPM CAP program. As you undergo the program development process, please provide the working group with feedback on your experience, suggestions for improvement and requests for additional resources. We will make this information available on the working group's website to help other states beginning the process.

Additional Consideration:

Plan a TSP training workshop and provide trainers. A shortage of IPM CAP-certified TSPs can limit the success of your state's IPM CAP program. Use commodity groups and other grower organizations to help generate the demand for IPM CAP-certified TSPs to encourage their participation.

The TSP IPM CAP training curriculum developed by the National IPM CAP Working Group is available at http://www.ipminstitute.org/IPMCAPs/TSP_Training.htm. 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. NRCS specialists are most appropriate for the NRCS-specific portions of the curriculum; IPM specialists, Extension agents and qualified TSPs are good candidates for the remaining portions.

Work with your development team to conduct outreach to crop consultants, TSPs and conservation professionals to encourage their participation in the training. Outreach needs to explain the benefits and requirements of becoming an IPM CAP-certified TSP.

Additional resources such as training recommendations, example workshop budgets and nationwide 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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