

NRCS and IPM Working Group – Conference Call Notes from September 5, 2008

Workgroup url - <http://www.ipm.msu.edu/work-group/home.htm>

Workgroup listserv: EQIP@LIST.MSU.EDU

Corrections/additions to Brenna Wanous at bwanous@ipminstitute.org

Next Call: October 3, 9:00 Central/10:00 Eastern.

Participating: Tony Bailey (IN NRCS), Mike Brewer (MSU), Tom Green (IPM Institute, WI), Regina Hirsch (UW-Madison CIAS), Lynnae Jess (NC IPM Center, MSU), Bill Kuenstler (NRCS), Joy Landis (MSU), Kathy Murray (Maine Dept. of Ag.), Brenna Wanous (IPM Institute, WI)

1. Report on Interagency IPM Working Group meeting (July 24, 2008):

- a. **Background Information:** This working group (WG) works to encourage, improve and increase partnerships between NRCS and CSREES, Land-Grants and EPA-Office of Pesticide Programs to deliver IPM techniques and activities to producers for conservation purposes at the state and local level.
- b. **WG members:** Ben Smallwood (NRCS), Bob Norwierski (CSREES), Marty Draper (CSREES), Mike Brewer (Land Grant University IPM), Pat Cimino (EPA-OPP).
- c. **Objective of meeting:** Bring Mike Hubbs (new director of NRCS Environmental Sciences Division) up to speed on current activities (e.g. Mike reported successful partnering efforts in MI and WI, among other states in the northeast and west) and plan next steps for interagency national level efforts to get IPM /conservation to producers through Farm Bill programs.
- d. **Agenda items:**
 - i. Review of updated NRCS National Pest Management Policy: the WG read new policy draft, provided feedback for NRCS;
 1. **Bill K. added that the policy's comment period ends Sept. 12, so individuals in our WG with good relationships with state agronomists that can access the policy can make suggestions as well;
 - ii. Briefing paper for NRCS leadership on value of NRCS/CSREES/EPA interaction on state and local level;
 - iii. Exploration of training commitments for NRCS personnel and CSREES: development of a web-based IPM training program with a national scope could provide a good mechanism for staff trainings. No set service provider; our WG could potentially contribute in creating a module that helps NRCS side;
 - iv. Exploration of continuing dialog through an advisory committee;
 - v. Crafting a letter from the WG agencies to state conservationists to encourage growth in pest management, and to view it as a strength and resource in their Farm Bill programs.
- e. Mike to send out EQIP funding allocation map.

2. **Data-tracking discussion:** How can we measure the impact of our working group?
- a. We want to report our group's progress; it'd be great to have specific measures to track our impact (i.e. number of contracts, growers, acres, crops, etc.).
 - b. Regina Hirsch's experience with tracking Wisconsin apple growers' data through Eco-Apple Project (UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural System's program that helps apple growers implement IPM - <http://www.thinkipm.org/>):
 - i. Was able to monitor the number of growers by keeping in touch with five different regional network leads. These network leads also provided information on number of acres, crops and even pesticide use. This system is quite time consuming and not suggested for WG's like ours.
 - ii. The Eco-Apple Project's first two years coincided with WI NRCS's pilot for apple pest management, and it was therefore possible to request and use NRCS county-level data for recording the # of contracts and # of acres per contract. After the completion of the NRCS apple pilot, the contracts were incorporated into the other pest management programs and no longer can be singled out for data tracking.
 - c. NRCS reporting does not track the information that would be useful to our group; it is very difficult to make changes to their reporting system to acquire that information. NRCS won't be an easy solution for data-tracking.
 - d. **Option:** work with our three pilot states (IA, IN and OH –recipients of 2008's \$5,000 mini-grants) to have their IPM consultants and growers stay in touch with our working group to offer additional information not available through NRCS reporting;
 - e. **Option:** continue using success stories in the pilot states to relay progress made as a result of receiving the mini-grant funds;
 - f. **Option:** in addition to number of contracts, acres, etc., we could collaborate with agencies like USGS to acquire data showing specific impacts on environmental resources.
 - g. Brenna will write notes to pilot state contacts to request that they report number of growers, acres, contracts and dollars as best they can; use the options d & e to do this.

3. **Updates from working group members:**

- a. Tony Bailey: Indiana NRCS's EQIP is working on increasing promotion of organic production, especially in specialty crops. Will hopefully start attending specialty crop conferences to better understand and promote EQIP in these camps.
- b. Kathy Murray: Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group held IPM trainings at farms in Maine and Delaware; evaluations indicated the trainings were very successful. Kathy will write up a summary and send to group. Also, the Northeast's IPM checklist for vegetable growers is proving to be useful: district conservationists will use the tool to write conservation plans for their growers. Kathy's group will post the most recent versions of the Maine-specific and Generic tools to our working group's Website.