

NRCS and IPM Working Group – Conference Call Notes from February 6, 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 or Webex Training (see Section 1.ii.2. below): March 6, 9:00 Central/10:00 Eastern.

Participants (12): Joe Bagdon (MA NRCS), Tony Bailey (IN NRCS), Mike Brewer (MSU), Andrea Buchholz (MSU), Rick Foster (Purdue University, IN), Tom Green (IPM Institute, WI), Regina Hirsch (UW-Madison, WI), Jim Jasinski (OSU), Renee Hancock (NE NRCS), Erin Harpenau (ISU), Bill Kuenstler (NRCS), Brenna Wanous (IPM Institute, WI)

Mini-grant Project Updates

1. **Indiana** (Rick Foster, Tony Bailey reporting)
 - a. Held a workshop for growers and NRCS staff in early December to gather input from growers regarding their technical and financial needs and gauge their interest in EQIP. The meeting went well – there was a good turnout, good interest in EQIP and good feedback from the group.
 - b. Tony, Rick and John Obermeyer (Purdue) met after the meeting and reached an agreement on what incentive payment scenarios to propose to the NRCS for 2009's EQIP, which they presented to growers at the Indiana Horticultural Congress meeting in January.
 - c. Indiana NRCS is finalizing the status of EQIP and working with Purdue to put together the list of what growers need to do to meet the requirements in the 595 standard.
 - i. EQIP 595 rates in Michigan, Indiana and elsewhere may slightly increase in 2009 because NRCS now preemptively examines the costs for the grower and identifies a proper cost-share based on those costs; there is no longer an arbitrary amount of money offered as an “incentive payment.” However, the cost-share is generally capped at 50% so the percentage of the growers' costs that are covered by the EQIP payments may go down.
 - d. Using Michigan's 2008 payment rates as a model, the mini-grant group proposed the following scenarios (*these are proposed numbers, not finalized by NRCS*):
 - i. Vegetables - \$30/acre, maximum \$4500;
 - ii. Fruit - \$60/acre, maximum \$6000;
 - iii. Precision spray equipment (equipment which can sense the presence of a tree and will turn the sprayer on and off appropriately) - \$20/acre, maximum \$5000.
 - e. The group has not identified who will be doing the pest management plan writing (possibly TSP's? Purdue or a land-grant university?), but Purdue Extension is interested in this partnership, as well as offering training for District Conservationists for writing these plans.

- i. Mike Brewer suggested contacting someone in West Virginia's NRCS to get their ideas, as they have a successful partnership between the NRCS and their land-grant university in writing their pest management plans.
 - ii. In WI EQIP, there is an amount set aside in the 595 contracts for plan development. However, the bottleneck in many states is that there are very few people who know how and are certified to write the plans.
 - 1. In southern WI, the IPM Institute has been collaborating with John Aue (an independent IPM consultant) to create and provide the TSP's (Tom's) sign-off on the plans. Brenna will work on anonymizing the pest management plans the IPM Institute has helped write this year, and send it out as a template.
 - 2. Jim Jasinski presented the idea to use these anonymized pest management plans to hold a Webex online-training for NRCS personnel (especially District Conservationists), IPM consultants, TSP's and university/extension staff, which will lead them through the process of the plan writing, pointing out the most important aspects, etc.
 - a. The general consensus among group members is that this would be a very valuable training; Jim and Brenna will organize a Webex training to replace next month's conference call, and conduct outreach to the groups listed above.
2. **Iowa** (Erin Harpenau reporting)
- a. Held a meeting on January 6th between Iowa State University faculty and NRCS staff to increase awareness and visibility of IPM and understanding of how they can integrate IPM into their whole-farm planning.
 - b. The consensus among the attendees is that IPM doesn't rank high on the EQIP priorities due to the soil erosion problems related to last summers' floods, and livestock issues.
 - c. The group looked at the current 2008 rates, which are as follows:
 - i. Row crops - \$4-6/acre, maximum 200 acres;
 - ii. Invasive species - \$45/acre, maximum 10 acres;
 - iii. Specialty crops and orchards (all crops which are not row crops) - \$250/acre, maximum 20 acres.
 - d. The group asked grower representatives/leaders in the community to complete a questionnaire regarding whether they are using IPM on their farm, and if so, to what extent.
 - e. The 2009 EQIP 595 standard, which has been approved by program staff, includes a three-tier payment-rate schedule based on the number of conservation methods the grower employs (i.e., the first tier requires three conservation methods; tier two requires an additional two plus increasing your mitigation score, etc.). The *final* payment rates include the following:
 - i. Row crops (up to 320 acres):
 - 1. First tier - \$6/acre;
 - 2. Second tier - \$10/acre;
 - 3. Third tier - \$15/acre.

- ii. Specialty crops and orchards (up to 20 acres):
 - 1. First tier - \$250/acre;
 - 2. Second tier - \$300/acre;
 - 3. Third tier - \$400/acre.
- 3. **Ohio** (Jim Jasinski reporting)
 - a. Last fall, the group held a meeting between the NRCS staff and University specialists, from which the group generated four scenarios for payment rates. This winter the NRCS approved the amounts at 75% of their proposed value, and will be offered in 2009 to growers at the following *final* rates:
 - i. General vegetable (including cabbage, carrots, lettuce, peppers, pickles, potatoes, pumpkins, squash, radishes, snap beans and tomatoes) - \$121/acre;
 - ii. Sweet corn - \$42/acre;
 - iii. Tree fruit (including apples, cherries, pears, plums and peaches) - \$227/acre;
 - iv. Strawberries - \$157/acre.
 - b. The rates help share the costs for many aspects of IPM, such as nozzle selection, monitoring, education, scouting fees, etc. Not offered is reimbursement for someone to write the pest management plans (still working on ironing out this issue).
 - c. The NRCS is setting aside a Special Projects section that contains money for only specialty crop growers. Jim provided the NRCS with an estimate of how much this section should contain, and based on the percentage of specialty crop acres likely to be enrolled in the program (Jim sited 10%) the amount should be approximately \$650,000. This number is current being reviewed by the NRCS.
 - d. Jim and Joe Kovach (OSU) will develop the criteria for the growers' EQIP ranking and scoring sheets.
 - e. The group is also revising Ohio's IPM Elements and Guidelines with an eye for applying it for EQIP growers to be sure it offers concrete practices that growers can understand and employ.