

## NRCS and IPM Working Group – Conference Call Notes from January 16, 2008

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

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Corrections/additions to Brenna Wanous at [bwanous@ipminstitute.org](mailto:bwanous@ipminstitute.org)

**Next Call:** February 6, 9:00 Central/10:00 Eastern.

**Participating:** Joe Bagdon (MA NRCS), Anastasia Becker (MO Dept. of Ag), Dave Bittinger (Penn State), Mike Brewer (MSU), Corey Brubaker (NE NRCS), Andrea Buchholz (MSU), Pat Cimino (US EPA), Paul Duffner (MO NRCS), Rick Foster (Purdue, IN), Tom Green (IPM Institute, WI), Renee Hancock (NE NRCS), Erin Harpenau (ISU), Regina Hirsch (UW-Madison), Doug Holy (Wash. DC NRCS), Joy Landis (MSU), Lynnae Jess (MSU), Michelle Miller (UW-Madison), Kathy Murray (Maine Dept. of Ag.), Bob Nowierski (CSREES), Ed Rajotte (Penn State), Ruth Shaffer (MI NRCS), Benjamin Smallwood (Wash. DC NRCS), Barb Stewart (IA NRCS), Brenna Wanous (IPM Institute, WI). Apologies to anyone we missed on the roll call.

### Review the proposed EQIP 596 standard

1. Proposed standard would replace the 595 standard; it is currently in internal review, and NRSC staff can provide feedback on the document until the end of January. This input would potentially be addressed, and the revised standard would be open for public comment this spring.
2. The new proposal was created in part because the 595 standard doesn't exactly comply with the conservation practice standard. Standards ask the grower to apply a specific technology or tactic on their farms, whereas IPM takes a larger, systems approach. The 595 standard can be difficult for state office to interpret, especially where collaboration with IPM professionals in the state is not well developed and/or where IPM Elements and Guidelines, or other concise lists of IPM practices, are not available to translate the IPM system into concrete practices.
3. The proposed standard would consider IPM a general aspect of the conservation planning process, rather than its own standard. IPM would enter the process when the conservation planner evaluates the impacts on resource concerns related to pest suppression (usually involving pesticides) using WIN-PST. If there is a gap in mitigating risks, the 596 standard would be applied to document specific pesticide mitigation practices.

### Issues with proposed standard:

4. The current 595 standard focuses on IPM as a means for *preventing* pesticide exposure, whereas mitigating the risk after it is identified (596 standard) *reacts* to the problem once it has occurred.
  - a. There is a need for improved and more detailed quantifying of IPM benefits, but becoming pesticide-centric rather than IPM-centric would sacrifice the prevention side of the program.
  - b. One of the major benefits of Universities and Extension agencies to collaborate with the NRCS is that programs like EQIP provide another tool for growers' adoption of IPM: financial assistance. Incentives drive the implementation of IPM, and we must be sure that we don't lose the financial benefit of the opportunity. Eliminating the 595 standard take away a significant incentive for growers for adopting IPM.
  - c. If the standard is pesticide-oriented, there must be multiple drivers beyond water, which is what WIN-PST is limited to. There should be flexibility in also assessing risk to air, wildlife, pollinators, etc.

- d. An IPM or pesticide program must not be so generic that it does not provide the level of detailed required to guide county level NRCS conservationists in making pest management plans. However, it must be broad enough to remain adaptable based on location, crop and grower needs. Mike Brewer advocates for looking at the table in the Agronomist Notes document (attached) for a good understanding of pesticide mitigation practices; nearly all of the items listed are attached to an EQIP practice.

**Larger issues:**

5. There is a significant shortage of trained IPM professionals, both in NRCS and consultants, who can work with growers to effectively set up pest management plans, evaluate progress and document changes.
  - a. The major issue lies in the lack of training and knowledge of IPM at the county level of NRCS. If these personnel are not familiar with the process, benefits and different levels of IPM, it is difficult for them to feel comfortable talking IPM with interested growers.
  - b. Forming and fostering partnerships between the NRCS and University Extension would be an ideal way to address this lack of training. NRCS can rely on Extension for training; Extension can rely on NRCS for providing programs to implement IPM.
  - c. IPM Consortium could potentially develop distance training programs for the NRCS personnel.
  - d. Significant efforts are being made in the Northeast led by the Northeast Vegetable IPM Working Group (Ruth Hazzard and Kathy Murray co-lead) and the North Central Grower Incentives for IPM Working Group (Mike Brewer and Tom Green co-lead) to improve collaboration between IPM and NRCS professionals and develop training and tools to expand implementation of IPM.
6. What is a sufficient quantity of pest management techniques to meet a resource concern?
  - a. One option is to push for the two prevention/two avoidance/two monitoring technique equations, but pest management involves combining multiple techniques that all fit together.
  - b. Another option is to use IPM Elements and Guidelines as a way to measure adoption, but how does one determine how many of those elements should be required to achieve the desired effects and also fulfill the standard? How much specificity is needed to ensure the program runs properly?
  - c. How do we document the benefits of IPM in such a way that it does take a high priority among the numerous other conservation practices, and warrant incentive payment in NRCS?

**Opportunities:**

7. *Immediate:* IPM professionals can work with NRCS state offices to provide feedback on the proposed standard to national NRCS; this must be done by January 30, 2009.
  - a. Refining 596 to benefit the IPM field is mutually beneficial for Extension, IPM professionals and growers as well as for the NRCS.

- b. When providing feedback, it will be important to raise the larger issue concerns we discussed, regarding training and partnerships.
- 8. *Longer-term:* Address training issues, develop partnerships and interaction, create Elements and Guidelines, improve incentives mechanics, involve industry stakeholders in IPM, and educate ourselves and NRCS nationally on what the benefits of IPM are to ensure it is a priority in future Farm Bills.
- 9. Ben Smallwood will organize a meeting in March between IPM people, deputy chief and director of ecological sciences division to make progress towards an MOU re IPM. It will be extremely important for them to hear from the individuals who are working with the program users to understand what issues must be prioritized.
  - a. Is it possible to get a technical committee formed for specialty crops? There is quite a bit of language in the current Farm Bill, as well as pressure on federal agencies, that favors specialty crop production, so we could leverage this to form the committee.
  - b. Can we get one person who understands IPM and also the NRCS, whose sole job is to serve as a liaison between offices to work out the details of a new IPM program? NRDC is also working on identifying someone to serve in this sort of position; collaborating with them may be beneficial.