

NRCS and IPM Working Group - Conference call notes, Friday, Oct. 5, 2007

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

Workgroup listserv: eqip@list.msu.edu

Send corrections/additions to Tom Green, ipmworks@ipminstitute.org

NEXT CALL: Friday, Nov 2, 9:00 AM Central, 10:00 AM Eastern; agenda will include planning the next 12 months priority activities.

Participating: Mike Brewer, Sharon Dobesh, David Epstein, Kevin Erb, Rick Foster, Mike Gray, Tom Green, Regina Hirsch, Jim Jasinski, Bryan Jensen, Michelle Miller, Joy Landis, Carol Pilcher, Barb Stewart, Odie Swanegan, Ingrid West, Bob Wright.

Followup:

Tom Green and Mike Brewer to develop proposal for working group activities over next year for discussion on our next call.

All: Get your thoughts to Tom and/or Mike re what you would like the group to accomplish this next year, feel free to post at eqip@list.msu.edu. See description of our group and priorities we identified at last November's meeting below. Suggestions discussed on the call included development of priority IPM Elements/Guidelines, recruiting additional participants, secure additional resources, templates for steps to access EQIP and other programs for IPM adoption.

Joy: Post notes to website.

Conference call notes:

Item 1) Kevin Erb and Ingrid West briefed the group on their Integrated Conservation Training Program (see <http://conservationtraining.uwex.edu>) developed and piloted in Wisconsin and now available for collaboration with other states. The project was started several years ago to address the need for training of new conservation professionals given anticipated high retirement rates this decade.

IPM is one of many subject areas including invasives, wetlands, prescribed burning, nutrient mgt., Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning and intensive grazing. IPM training has focused on IPM basics and the NRCS 595 Pest Management Standard.

As part of the effort, Chris Boerboom and Richard Proost of UW Extension created a set of quick reference tables (see table for cherries at <http://ipcm.wisc.edu/Portals/0/Blog/Files/20/324/595-WIN-PST-Pesticide07->

[cherries.pdf](#)) to help farmers and advisors assess ground and surface water hazards of pesticide options for their crops. These tables are based off many runs of NRCSs Win-PST software, and cut the time needed to perform this analysis to minutes rather than hours. Win-PST (<http://www.wsi.nrcs.usda.gov/products/W2Q/pest/winpst.html>) analyzes pesticide products, active ingredients and site-specifics including climate and soil type, and returns a low, intermediate or high rating for surface and ground water hazards.

The IPM training is targeted to crop advisors and conservation professionals. The complete package, linked with Bryan Jensen's one-week crop scouting school, gives training needed to become a Technical Service Provider for NRCS, qualified for writing 595 plans which are required for EQIP incentives for IPM. In addition to Bryan's course, there is a two-day IPM basic training (one day classroom, one day in field) and then finally a one-day training focused on the 595 standard. Certified Crop Advisors need only this one-day training to be able to write plans for producers.

Ingrid was hired a year ago to work on expansion to additional states in the region. She has been assembling a group of professionals from the region including those with expertise in the various program areas. A next step includes a needs assessment survey this fall, to be followed by a roundtable to improve networking, review results and brainstorm priorities for training. A third step will be to develop a strategic plan.

Participation in training events in Wisconsin has ranged from 20-30 the first time subjects were offered to less than 20 for repeat events. Overall, 60-80 have participated in pest management training.

Training and support tools are available for adaptation and use in other states. The needs assessment survey is going out to all Certified Crop Advisors in the region, contact Ingrid to discuss opportunities to participate in the survey or in the roundtable.

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Item 2) In 2006, Michelle Miller, Regina Hirsch and others assembled resources from SARE, EPA Region V and others and put together a two-day training for NRCS district conservationists, Extension, growers and crop consultants to learn about IPM and EQIP for apple and cherry from each other. Regina and Michelle

are working on an article for the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* on their project to bring EQIP resources to Wisconsin fruit growers.

IPM Elements/Guidelines/Checklists are generally concise lists of IPM practices for specific crops and regions, although the Northeast Vegetable Working Group has recently developed a more generic version. Practices include specific scouting or monitoring techniques for key insect/disease/weed/vertebrate pests, use of thresholds, recordkeeping, participation in training, nutrient management and cultural practices. Each practice is assigned a point value. More difficult or priority practices earn more points. Typically they are developed by a broad group of stakeholders who review and comment on iterative drafts. A compilation of Extension-produced checklists is located at:
http://www.ipminstitute.org/Fed_Agency_Resources/IPM_elements_guidelines.htm.

These lists were initially developed for cotton in Alabama, and for a variety of fruit and vegetable crops in NY and MA by Cornell and UMass Extension. In MA, they were originally used to help qualify growers for the old Soil and Water Conservation Service SP51 incentive program. They continue to be used by NRCS to assess growers for EQIP and CSP.

Producers growing for SYSCO can use these as evidence of meeting criteria in the SYSCO Sustainable Ag/IPM program which include identifying your key pests and scouting/monitoring techniques for those pests, use of thresholds, use of cultural and mechanical controls and least-toxic pesticide product selection. The SYSCO program uses these general criteria, the Elements/Guidelines demonstrate that the producer is applying science-based practices meeting those general criteria for their specific crops.

SYSCO is completing the third year of the program with more than 500,000 acres of processed fruit and vegetable crops. A summary of results including the audit is available on request to Tom Green, ipmworks@ipminstitute.org. The Institute has been working with SYSCO and its suppliers to develop and implement the program. On-site audits for each processing location are completed by third-party inspectors from AIB, Primus or Food Alliance, and include visits to grower locations as well as processor documentation re their implementation of the program with their grower base. SYSCO has reported to the IPM Centers and Interagency IPM Coordinating Group annually on progress with the program.

BACK GROUND INFO FOR YOUR REVIEW IN CONTEMPLATING OUR PRIORITIES FOR THIS NEXT YEAR

Work Group Goal: Encourage adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) through participation in conservation programs administered through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in the North Central region.

Specific objectives from our grant proposal:

(1) Facilitate communication through an initial two-day meeting (held Nov. 15-17, 2006) and follow-up conference calls, email and web pages dedicated to IPM and NRCS program linkages.

(2) Assemble collaborations and resources to develop information for growers to identify IPM tools for addressing conservation concerns prioritized by NRCS conservation programs. Develop simple verification/assessment tools for growers and local NRCS staff to authenticate the value of IPM.

(3) Compile support documentation to craft program recommendations to NRCS designed to increase use of IPM as a conservation tool.

(4) Support producer participation in market-based programs such as SYSCOs Sustainable Agriculture Initiative, Food Alliance and soil, air and water quality credit trading by increasing awareness of these programs and potential linkages to both IPM and NRCS programs.

(5) Explore opportunities for ongoing cooperative agreements and other collaborative arrangements between NRCS and IPM professionals.

Priorities identified by participants at November 2006 meeting

1. Education priorities (and votes received during ranking):

- Raise IPM on NRCS radar - continuing education modules for NRCS planners in IPM basics, how IPM meets resource conservation needs, and commodity-specific detail and; how TSPs can better meet NRCS needs re pest management plans; success stories (15)
- Extension education about NRCS mission, programs, opportunities for grower clientele, how to engage NRCS effectively including using terms NRCS relates to (common language, see Mike Brewers slides for translating IPM concerns in to terms understood by NRCS); success stories; distinguishing NRCS policy, program, standards and levers for improving each (13)
- Education for growers re NRCS program options, qualifications, requirements and proper scouting procedures to meet requirements (12)
- Develop and circulate more information on where current NRCS pest management dollars are directed, e.g., IN is in the top ten states for these dollars but uses are currently unknown (3)
- Develop best practices guide for including conservation approaches and practices in Extension publications, e.g., recommends, manuals (1)
- Fact sheet on strategies to optimize IPM and pest management-related impacts on resources within current NRCS programs.
- Develop fact sheet on vehicles for IPM/NRCS collaboration, e.g., Cooperative Ecosystem Study Units (CESUs), contracts, grant programs.
- Increase awareness of organic transition options.

- Figure out how to channel resources to Extension for education, e.g., channeling dollars through state lead agencies might reduce overhead.
- Secure funding for demonstration.

2. Research priorities:

- Measurement/evaluation of ecosystem health, functional ecology to move beyond soil/water resource emphasis; sustainability of practice adoption once incentives go away; practice adoption vs. permanent installation; soil and aquatic life as indicators and relationship to IPM (14)
- Toxicity modeling, look at WinPST and other models for potential to create comprehensive tool, resolve conflicts among existing approaches, create a standard for selecting least hazardous options (13)
- Identify high impact IPM issues/practices for field crops (10)
- Vegetable production systems that score well on Soil Conditioning Index so that growers can get CSP incentives (5)
- Endangered species-specific research, big upcoming issue for some cropping systems (3)
- What are already identified NRCS/ID gaps in IPM? Are they really gaps and how do we repackage info to meet NRCS needs? (1)
- How do management practices impact eco-system health (functional ecology)? (1)
- What is best mix of investment in livestock, field crops, specialty crops to max economic/enviro/health and resource improvement returns? (1)
- Comparative policy analysis state by state, whats different, what works best. (0)

3. Program/Policy priorities:

- More IPM Participation on state technical committees and sub-groups, e.g., EQIP subgroups, county workgroups (12)
- More IPM input into next farm bill re NRCS programs (12)
- Educate NRCS policy/program decision makers a national level about IPM (12)
- Evaluate NRCS performance on pest management issues. (5)
- Change farm bill to reflect resource needs, e.g., is 60% of EQIP to livestock justified by resource need? (2)
- Make pest management incentives available in every county nationwide. (1)
- Longer term, permanent annual green payments. (0)
- More IPM specialists in state/regional/national NRCS offices.
- Move incentive dollars now used for pest management to address higher priority IPM needs.
- Change name of Pest Management Standard to IPM Standard, IPM is the way we do pest management.

- More vehicles to move NRCS resources to IPM-based opportunities to improve resources.

4. Additional priority (Mike Brewer to communicate to National Task Force):

- Widen technical assistance funnel to producers, e.g., NRCS staff are stretched thin with additional responsibilities and budget since 2002 Farm Bill; Extension and other resources could be brought to bear to increase technical assistance available to producers.