

AWQPF Technical Subgroup

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

10 – 11:30 AM



Meeting Summary

Joan Cox, University of Illinois Extension, led the following presentations and discussions.

Showcase and Discussion: BMP dashboard example and Illinois NLRS ag BMPs by county, HUC 8, HUC 12 (2011-22)

Joan showcased two interactive map data dashboards: Great Lakes to Gulf agricultural BMPs and Minnesota nutrient strategy agricultural BMPs. Participants shared observations after interacting with the maps for a few moments on their own. Joan explained plans for the Illinois NLRS interactive map showcasing Illinois partner land and facilities data 2011-2024 by county, HUC12 and HUC8.

Discussion: Data displays for conservation practices

Joan Cox showcased enhancing data accessibility by displaying conservation practice data by practice type across multiple programs and years. Members discussed nuances of tracking RCPP programs. Joan displayed the program codes that are used for tracking each NLRS conservation practice and asked whether any additional program codes or program sources should be considered. None were offered.

2023-2024 Land Measures Reporting

Joan reviewed 2023 report narratives and asked whether partners had any new narratives to include for 2025. She reviewed the traditional statewide data requests, indicating these would continue. She noted that narrative updates for 2025 reporting will be abridged and mostly evergreen compared with previous reports. However, data points and data displays will be updated annually.

2023-24 Government Program Update Narratives

The proposed abridged narratives will be sent to partners for review in January and February, seeking edits and final versions by March 1. Joan reviewed past agricultural adaptive management content, asking members whether they had ideas for the 2025 report.

2023-2024 Resources and Outreach spreadsheets and data display examples

Joan solicited member feedback on various 2017-22 resource and outreach data displays for 2025 reporting. Members shared preferences and made suggestions. She noted that currently NRCS, FSA, and IEPA do not submit resource and outreach data.

Illinois NLRS Portal Progress Update and Ag partner timeline

Joan shared a timeline for the development of the NLRS Portal, anticipating launch in December of 2025. She encouraged member engagement in the development process through surveys and focus groups that will be made available throughout 2025.

Partner Updates

Joan offered a time for partner updates. None were mentioned.

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Ryan Arch, Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association; Amelia Cheek, Illinois Farm Bureau; Amanda Christenson, University of Illinois Extension; Joan Cox, University of Illinois Extension; Chris Davis, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Jamie Diebal, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency; Phil Eck, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency; Eric Gerth, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service; Ashley Haddon, Illinois Soybean Association; Liz Hobart, GROWMARK; KJ Johnson, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Steve Jurgens, Kaskaskia Watershed Assn; Elliot Lagacy, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Branden McCallum, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency; Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Dan Schaefer, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Mark Schleusener, U.S. Department of Agriculture - National Agricultural Statistics Service; Helen VanBeck, American Farmland Trust; Kirby Wagner, GROWMARK

Showcase and Discussion: BMP dashboard example and Illinois NLRs ag BMPs by county, HUC 8, HUC 12 (2011-22)

Joan Cox opened the Ag Water Quality Partnership Forum technical subgroup meeting, welcoming participants and outlining the agenda. The meeting is typically held before an NLRs reporting year to ensure alignment on data sources to be presented to state and federal agencies.

The discussion began with showcasing example data dashboards, specifically focusing on the Great Lakes to Gulf and Minnesota Nutrient Strategies websites. Joan highlighted the Great Lakes to Gulf platform, which currently allows users to view agricultural BMP data by year, location, and government program details. The NLRs Team plans to include similar information 2011-2024 by county, HUC8, and HUC12. Additional data is needed to build this dashboard on the Great Lakes to Gulf Illinois NLRs Portal. Moving on to the Minnesota Nutrient Strategy, Joan shared the statewide BMP dashboard that visualizes summaries of individual practice data from 2005 to the present by HUC. Joan shared links to the Minnesota Dashboard and the Great Lakes to Gulf sites and gave the group time to experience the functionality of each on their own. She asked the group to share observations, concerns, suggestions, or questions after looking at the resources.

- <https://greatlakestogulf.org/bmp>
- <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/air-water-land-climate/reducing-nutrients-in-waters>

The group asked Joan if she had website usage data from the Minnesota Dashboard, which has not yet been sought. Participants asked if we are modeling our site after Minnesota and Trevor let folks know that we are taking inspiration from the site, but we will make it our own with the technology we have available through the Great Lakes to Gulf site. The group also wondered how data would flow into the dashboard and Joan explained that we hope to gather the same statewide data requests as we always have. Then we request additional temporal and spatial information, which Extension will curate, if needed, and send to the Great Lakes to Gulf developer. Mark Schleusener made the group aware that [NASS published practice data by HUC6 from 2017 and 2022](#).

Since Joan has already initiated the additional temporal-spatial data request with several partners, she provided an overview of potential data sources available to date. She emphasized that discussions to acquire spatial data are ongoing and per Mark's comment, she will add NASS to our list of spatial land and facilities data to explore for the dashboard. Additionally, Joan noted she has not yet spoken to NRCS

representatives about RCPP, MRBI, and NWQI special watersheds or ACEP to inquire about the availability of shapefiles. Eric Gerth asked Joan to work with Jamie Alderks to coordinate a discussion around RCPP, MRBI, and NWQI special watersheds and Paula Hingson about ACEP. Joan expressed that she plans to reach out to the remaining agency representatives soon to further explore available data.

Discussion: Data displays for conservation practices

Joan shared examples of traditional biennial report data displays of agricultural conservation practices by program. The current Biennial report includes a dedicated section for each agency, detailing their respective practice implementation data. However, this format requires individuals interested in specific practices, such as filter strips, to sift through multiple charts and compile the information manually. One suggestion to improve data accessibility is to organize the information by practice. For instance, a filter strip data display can showcase implementation data reported program with side-by-side tallies for USDA-FSA CRP/CREP, USDA NRCS EQIP, CSP, RCPP, IDOA-PFC, IDNR-CREP, and IEPA-319 programs. Joan noted that data collected from FSA currently aggregates all buffer types for reporting and if we want to specifically analyze filter strip data, additional effort to isolate filter strip practices, specifically, would be required. A proposed approach is to include filter strips across across the various agency programs in one graph horizontal or vertical stacked bar graph by program and year.

With regards to shapefile attributes, the group discussed the RCPP Program nuances of in-state and multi-state Alternative Funding Agreements (AFAs), RCPP special watersheds, and RCPP classic. The variety of funding pools, rules associated with each, and ability for AFAs to be adjusted by lead partners from year to year makes organizing RCPP data difficult. NRCS and IEPA suggested, and the group concluded, that we should plan to simply list the RCPP project title, start and end years, eligible locations, and partners.

Joan reviewed the federal and state program practice codes that are tracked for each practice and asked whether additional practice data codes or data sources should be included in the NLR Portal.

2023-2024 Land Measures Reporting

Joan reviewed the traditional statewide data requests from each federal and state agricultural agency. She noted that there will be a move from traditional narrative updates to a more streamlined online dashboard format. This change aims to simplify the narratives, making them more concise and evergreen. A draft of proposed government program narratives will be distributed to partners for review in January and February. Joan reviewed past narrative headings from the 2023 Biennial Report and asked participants whether any new program or project narratives are needed for 2025. She said she would send individual emails to prompt partners to update ongoing program and project narratives or add new ones. The simplified narratives, updated or new, will be due March 1, 2025.

Chapter eight focuses on adaptive management, with efforts coordinated by the performance benchmark committee and steering. Particular to the agriculture sector, the discussions center on updating agriculture implementation scenarios and examining future needs and resources. Key highlights from previous discussions include the Gulf Hypoxia Funding Program, the Inflation Reduction Act, and various state funding through PFC, FCSS, and SWCDs. Participants were encouraged to share ideas for future needs or resources that may be relevant to highlight in 2025 for the agriculture sector. She suggested partners could help shape the adaptation section of the report and should email or discuss

ideas with the steering committee or through the performance benchmark committee.

2023-2024 Government Program Update Narratives

Joan said the new reporting portal would include static narratives with statewide data displays that would be much abridged from the traditional report. These would be mostly evergreen with a few data points and the data displays updated yearly. Partners can anticipate a draft of the proposed abridge text in Jan. And February for review. The due date will be March 1, 2025.

2023-2024 Resources and Outreach spreadsheets and data display examples

Joan shared 2023 Biennial Report agriculture resource and outreach data display examples. She reminded partners that the solicitation email had been sent already and spreadsheets are due Jan 31, 2025, along with normal statewide land and facilities data. She noted that the additional temporal-spatial data request (2011-2022 by county, HUC 12, and HUC8) will be due February 28th. Then they will be passed onto the developer to build the interactive map dashboard prototypes.

The financial data previously reported for the agriculture sector includes figures from non-government organizations, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Illinois Department Natural Resources, and Illinois Extension but excludes Farm Service Agency, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and Illinois EPA cost share and operational funds. Future financial data displays by year 2017- present could show trends over the years, although we need to acknowledge in the reporting ng that it is difficult to compare differences among the years can be attributed to improved reporting rather than increased investment in some cases in some cases. The data can be displayed in various ways, such as separating government and non-government figures or by grants received, grants given, and funded programs. There was a preference among participants for the simpler government versus non-government breakdown. One participant advocated for displaying financial data in a pie chart by agency.

For outreach data, attendees reviewed different presentation styles and sample graphs. The conversation included whether to continue using tables or shift to graphical representations for easier interpretation. Suggestions were made to visually depict the number of events and attendance over time. Participants favored the precise numbers in table format for outreach data display.

Illinois NLRS Portal Progress Update and Ag partner timeline

The Illinois NLRS Portal is planned to launch in December 2025 and will feature interactive maps and abridged static content that includes short mostly evergreen narrative with statewide data displays. The Extension NLRS Team will continue collecting NLRS data, as done in past years, while also encouraging member engagement in the development process through surveys and focus groups. Joan shared a NLRS Portal development timeline that includes goal dates for content mock-ups, with final prototype reviews in August. Steering agency reviews and marketing is planned for October through December 2025.

Upcoming data requests to partners will include reminders for the financial / staff resources and outreach spreadsheets due January 31, individual emails specifically for the annual land and facilities data due January 31, land and facilities data from 2011-2022 with location (county, HUC8, or HUC12) due February 28, and project and program abridged narratives due March 1.

Partner Updates

Joan offered a time for partner updates. None were mentioned.