

Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum

1:30 – 3:30pm, April 30th, 2019

Illinois Dept. of Agriculture FFA Room



CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Report status and draft graphics – Trevor Sample and Eliana Brown

The Steering Committee plans to have a draft report available for review shortly after the May 22nd Policy Working Group meeting. Originally, the Steering Committee wanted to have the report out in August for the Farm Progress Show; however, ensuring a quality report is a higher priority than meeting this media release date. Trevor and Eliana ensured the group that they will release the Biennial Report prior to the December conference in Springfield. Trevor and Eliana displayed the data and draft graphs for feedback. Ivan Dozier verified that the USDA graphs shown are an accurate way to display the data.

2019 NASS Survey – Mark Schleusener

State Statistician Mark Schleusener provided an update on the NASS Survey. The government shutdown delayed the NASS Survey mailings and calls by one month. He will try to get the spreadsheets to Illinois EPA and NREC by May 15th.

IFCA 4R Metrics Survey – Jean Payne

Jean Payne described the 4R Metrics survey, which was sent to Illinois agriculture retailers, and explained its results. Jean will have graphics created and sent to Eliana. The Forum recommended coining a phrase for the University of Illinois “Go Date” for fall NH₃ application.

Biennial Report Outline – Eliana Brown

Eliana showed the draft Biennial Report outline. The Forum approved changing the title of Chapter 4 from “Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum: Agricultural Sector” to “Agricultural Sector.”

Next Steps and Future Meetings – Warren Goetsch and Eliana Brown

The Policy Working Group is meeting on May 22nd. The Steering Committee hopes to have a draft report out shortly thereafter. Trevor suggested an AWQPF meeting with the two Watershed Coordinators. Warren thanked everyone for coming and for providing their valuable input.

Illinois Department of Agriculture Director Sullivan stepped in to thank and congratulate the group on all their work.

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Warren Goetsch, Illinois Dept. of Agriculture; Trevor Sample, Illinois EPA; Kris Reynolds, American Farmland Trust; Steve Stierwalt, Association of Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Mike Chandler, Illinois DNR; Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau; Jean Payne, Illinois Fertilizer and Chemical Association; Ryan Arch, Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association; Julie Armstrong, Illinois Nutrient Research and Education Council; Jennifer Tirey, Illinois Pork Producers; Amy Roady, Illinois Soybean Association; Guaglong Tian, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago; Catie Gregg, Prairie Rivers Network; Laura Christianson, University of Illinois; Eliana Brown, Illinois Extension; Kate Gardiner, Illinois Extension; Reid Christianson, University of Illinois; Dick Lyons, Illinois Association of Drainage Districts; Liz Hobart, GROWMARK; Emily Bruner, American Farmland Trust; Chris Davis, Illinois EPA; Mark Schleusener, USDA-NASS; Eric Ifft, Illinois Certified Crop Advisors Board of Directors; Brian Rennecker, Illinois Dept. of Agriculture; and Elliot Clay, Illinois Environmental Council

Welcome and Introductions – Warren Goetsch

All attendees introduced themselves and Warren Goetsch reviewed the committee charge.

Report status and draft graphics – Trevor Sample and Eliana Brown

Report Status: The Steering Committee plans to have a draft report available for review shortly after the May 22nd Policy Working Group meeting. Originally, the Steering Committee wanted to have the report out in August for the Farm Progress Show; however, ensuring a quality report is a higher priority than meeting this media release date. Trevor and Eliana ensured the group that they will release the Biennial Report prior to the December conference in Springfield.

Spreadsheets and Logic Model: Eliana thanked partners who submitted the Resources and Outreach spreadsheets and project updates. The spreadsheets are vital to the report as they provide the data for both the Outreach and Land Measures portions. She also reviewed the logic model used in the last Biennial Report, which was adapted from Iowa's effort and will be used again in this upcoming Biennial Report. The logic model focuses on how Resources, Outreach, and Land & Facilities all affect water measures. For Resources, the data show that there is an increase in the number of people doing nutrient work compared to the last Biennial Report. For Outreach, while the overall number of events about nutrient work has declined, more people are showing up to these events. For Land & Facilities, the group discussed the best ways to display the data. The updated Science Assessment from Dr. Greg McIsaac will show the water measures, the last portion of the logic model.

Data and Graphs Discussion: During data submission for the previous Biennial Report, an issue with the database led to some double counting of CREP data, but the issue has since been fixed and the numbers will be amended in the upcoming report. Trevor Sample pointed out the new way of reporting cover crops and emphasized the importance of having both cost-share and farmer-reported data. NRCS sent in the full spreadsheet with their EQIP data and Trevor broke it down by NLR cost-share practice by year. Iowa's reporting of wetland acres inspired the Steering Committee to show cumulative acres for USDA-NRCS wetlands in addition to the yearly wetland acres. Ivan Dozier verified that the graphs shown were the best way to display the USDA-NRCS data. With the new Farm Bill, Ivan Dozier explained that the line between EQIP and CSP is going to be even more blurred and NRCS would need to track practices implemented on a yearly basis rather than the practices obligated. Trevor noted that the Steering Committee will amend the 319 data from previous years. The number of bioreactors in Illinois has nearly doubled since 2017.

Maps for the Soil Transect Survey are available by county, watershed, etc. so the Forum needs to decide the best way to display the data. Trevor thought it might be best to use the statewide graphs from Elliot Lagacy and to look at “T” in a HUC 8 watershed scale. Trevor showed additional maps showing locations of NRCS special initiatives, such as MRBI, NWQI, and RCPP that could be included in the report and Kris Reynolds wondered if it might be better to show these maps in the Partner Project Updates section for context. Trevor assured the group that there would be an opportunity for comments once the draft report is ready. Lauren Lurkins recommended that everything be included because everyone absorbs information differently and may not know the locations of each watershed. Eliana thanked all the partners for their project updates and asked that if there are any programs that she did not list, please feel free to reach out.

Science Assessment Update: Trevor noted that Dr. Greg McIsaac used the same approach as the original Science Assessment to make his update. Trevor informed the group that in addition to a summary of the updated Science Assessment in the Biennial Report, the full Science Assessment update would be a standalone document available on the Illinois EPA website. Trevor showed some figures that Dr. McIsaac put together and posed to the Forum the best way to use the results and if we should add additional HUC 8 Priority watersheds. One suggestion was to show the relationship between the efforts and the water measures in each watershed. Trevor explained the difficulty in linking the two since our knowledge is limited to voluntary farmer reporting and the cost-share numbers. Lauren Lurkins expressed a desire to keep the report structure as consistent as possible and to use the original methodology when determining additional priority watersheds. The group wondered if there would be any advantages to designate additional watersheds as priorities.

2019 NASS Survey – Mark Schleusener

State Statistician Mark Schleusener provided an update on the NASS Survey. The government shutdown delayed the NASS Survey mailings and calls by one month. USDA sends the survey to farmers with mid-sized farms and asks about farming practices. In his experience, Mark has noticed that farmers don’t always like to fill out the survey for fear that their answers could be used against them and noted that a possible weakness of the NLRS is how the practices are clearly defined because not every farmer easily fits into the definitions. He will try to get the spreadsheets to Illinois EPA and NREC by May 15th. Mark still needs to prepare the data and go through a disclosure process before presenting it to those who wanted follow-up information. He included some open-ended questions on the survey, which NREC can use as they develop RFPs for research projects.

IFCA 4R Metrics Survey – Jean Payne

Jean Payne described the 4R Metrics survey, which was sent to Illinois agriculture retailers, and explained its results. Prior to sending out the survey, Jean advised Trevor and Warren on wording for the questions. Jean will have graphics created and sent to Eliana. Forum recommendations included coining a phrase for the University of Illinois “Go Date” for fall NH₃ application and some warnings about how weather variability can affect the data.

Biennial Report Outline – Eliana Brown

Eliana showed the draft Biennial Report outline. At the April 2nd Performance Benchmark Committee meeting, members discussed the Biennial Report chapter names and noted the lack of a point source chapter. To amend this, the PBC suggested renaming a few chapters. AWQPF members approved changing

the title of Chapter 4 from “Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum: Agricultural Sector” to “Agricultural Sector.”

Next Steps and Future Meetings – Warren Goetsch and Eliana Brown

A draft report will be made available for review shortly after the May 22nd Policy Working Group meeting. An official release date for the Biennial Report is still to be determined. For future meetings, Trevor suggested a meeting with the two Watershed Coordinators. Warren thanked everyone for coming and for providing their valuable input.