

Agriculture Water Quality Partnership Forum

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 16, 2022 10:00 a.m. – Noon



Meeting Summary

Welcome *Michael Woods, Illinois Department of Agriculture*

Michael Woods welcomed everyone to the meeting and Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension introduced Joan Cox. She will be taking Kate Gardiner's place on the Illinois Extension NLRs Facilitation and Coordination Team. Joan provided additional details about her work history in aquatic ecology and toxicology with Illinois Natural History Survey, soil and water conservation work with SWCD and NRCS, and education, outreach, and program development experience. She also shared some details about her family's farm.

Biennial Report Agriculture Chapter Overview *Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency*

The size of the biennial report has more than doubled since its inception, and the Agriculture Chapter is long. Trevor showed the Ag Chapter and provided examples of possible ways to reduce it while still providing pertinent information. Examples included data display options, use of an appendix for the partners update, as well as an option to present only one year of data at a time to allow more time for processing and analyses. Trevor welcomed suggestions for streamlining from the AWQPF members.

Stream Buffer Mapping Project *Ken Copenhaver, CropGrower LLC*

Ken partners with ICA and TNC on a project that establishes reliable methodology for using satellite imagery to identify in-field buffers. The output for this product concluded 77 square miles of in-field buffers in Illinois, which Ken noted was significant to NLRs metrics and to carbon sequestration metric discussions. He stated that since the methodology was now in place, it could be performed year after year.

Review of data sources and nutrient reduction by practice *Trevor Sample, IEPA*

In preparation for next year's biennial report adaptive management chapter, Trevor presented the graphics of practices scenarios to meet interim and full 45% reduction goals. He presented data sources for each of the nutrient reduction practices and highlighted data gaps. He requests AWQPF members provide feedback on potential data sources for gaps and to send feedback to Joan Cox at jesarey@illinois.edu.

Climate-Smart Initiatives *Michael Woods, IDOA*

Michael Woods provided background on IDOA's efforts in Climate-Smart Ag initiatives and the importance of food production and natural resources security challenges in a growing world with the added challenge of adapting to climate change and GHG emissions management. He stated the importance of locally-led, locally-adaptive approaches to Climate-Smart Agriculture. Michael introduced several speakers, each of whom have been working with him on these efforts.

RCPP update *Elliot Lagacy, IDOA*

Elliot Lagacy described how the RCPP award of \$1 million is waiting on the Program Partnership Agreement (PPA) approval between IDOA and NRCS. They have initiated groundwork with SWCD grant agreements and preparations for cost-share signups this spring. There are common NLRs-tracked conservation cropping practices that provide Climate-Smart Ag benefits and NLRs benefits, and this additional practice cost-share programming will provide benefits in many of the IEPA priority watersheds. This initiative will also expand training and education opportunities to learn about evidence-based climate-smart agricultural practices in Illinois.

Illinois Climate-Smart Ag Workgroup & Illinois Climate Smart Agricultural Partnership *Max Webster, American Farmland Trust*

Max Webster, Grant Hammer (AISWCD), and Michael Woods have initiated focus groups with committed partners of the Climate-Smart Ag Workgroup. These discussions are establishing a baseline understanding of Illinois' opportunities and challenges to integrate climate-smart ag issues and programming into existing programs for farmers, such as NLRs, IDOA (Partners for Conservation cost-share), and those of many agencies and organizations in the state. The group will draft guidance to IDOA on Climate-Smart working lands strategy in Illinois, which is a requirement of Illinois' membership in the U.S. Climate Alliance.

U.S. Climate Alliance Technical Assistance Grant *Michael Woods, IDOA*

Illinois has committed to the U.S. Climate Alliance, which will develop policy and aid actions to address eight priority areas. Illinois submitted a proposal for \$100K. The project seeks to understand local barriers to producer practice implementation, both for NLRs and Climate-Smart Ag recommended practices. The outcomes will be a ranked barriers list, a statewide county-based dataset which will serve as a framework for capturing local opportunities, policy, and funding for expanding practice adoption, and a toolkit of policy-maker materials to address Climate-Smart Ag goals in IL.

Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Partnership Program *Kris Reynolds, AFT*

In February USDA announced \$100 million for partnerships for Climate Smart Commodities This is a good opportunity to work together and bring funding to the Midwest. The list of climate-smart production practices includes many NLRs recommended practices, such as cover crops, no-till, and nutrient management. Any AWQPF members with interest in partnering on a proposal should contact Kris. Also, AFT has submitted the Midwest Cover Crop Initiative proposal which would leverage private and NRCS funding to provide \$10/acre payments for cover crops. The funds are stackable with other programming incentives, although not with other climate-specific or carbon market program incentives.

Fall Covers for Spring Savings *Brian Rennecker, IDOA*

Brian Rennecker stated that they have twice the amount of data from last year, and these data are currently undergoing RMA verification. The Acceptance/Non-Acceptance letters will go out this week to participants. The 10% data verification instructions will go out very soon to the SWCDs since planting season is only about two weeks away in the southern part of the state.

Partner Initiatives

Spring & Summer Field Days Announcement *Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau*

Lauren Lurkins stated that IFB's nutrient stewardship grant program is sponsoring Field Days in twelve counties across the state, starting this spring and taking place through Labor Day. Details can be found at <http://www.ilfb.org/FieldDays>. She requested that AWQPF members circulate the information and if planning to attend, to follow the RSVP instructions.

PACE crop insurance product *Megan Dwyer, Illinois Corn Growers Association*

Megan Dwyer shared that RMA approved a new insurance product, PACE (Post-Application Coverage Endorsement), to help producers manage risk of applying N in-season during V3-V10 growth stages. Signups ended March 15th and were available in select counties across 11 states. Producer interest looked promising, and they will be focusing on an education campaign to prepare for more enrollment in the 2023 season. This is an event type coverage that is on-top of your base insurance policy.

ISAP NLRS story map *Jean Brokish, Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership*

Jean Brokish featured ISAP's interactive story map designed to aid communication about NLRS on county, watershed, and state scales. It includes research, education and demonstration sites, as well as a service provider directory and farmer directory, all important tools for new adopters of NLRS recommended practices. She requested members contribute by adding records to the directories and/or making her aware of links to other existing directories.

Next Steps

A scheduling poll for the June Meeting will be forthcoming.

Member feedback is welcome for:

1. suggestions for the NLRS Biennial report Ag Chapter streamlining and for the NLRS recommended practice data sources gaps. An online survey will be sent to AWQPF members to gather suggestions to address the existing data source gaps. (Joan Cox, jesarey@illinois.edu)
2. the Stream Buffer Mapping project. (Ken Copenhagen, kencopenhaver@gmail.com)
3. questions or interest in partnering on Climate-Smart Ag or Forestry Partnership Program. (Michael Woods, michael.woods@illinois.gov or Kris Reynolds, kreynolds@farmland.org)
4. adding contacts to ISAP's service directory, its farmer directory, and integrating NLRS data. (Jean Brokish, jbrokish@farmland.org)
5. RSVPs for Illinois Farm Bureau Spring and Summer Field Days. (<http://www.ilfb.org/FieldDays>)

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Ryan Arch, Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association; Megan Baskerville, The Nature Conservancy; Miranda Belcher, U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency; Dennis Bowman, University of Illinois Extension; Jean Brokish, American Farmland Trust; Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension; Travis Burke, University of Illinois Extension - Agriculture/Agri-Business; Laura Christianson, University of Illinois Extension; Emily Conover, U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency; Ken Copenhaver, CropGrower LLC; Joan Cox, University of Illinois Extension; Rachel Curry, University of Illinois Extension; Jamie Diebal, U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency; Ivan Dozier, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service; Megan Dwyer, Illinois Corn Growers Association; Catie Gregg, Prairie Rivers Network; Julie Hewitt, Nutrient Research and Education Council; Liz Hobart, GROWMARK; Jennifer Jones, Illinois Soybean Association; Layne Knoche, University of Illinois Extension; Elliot Lagacy, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Maria Lemke, The Nature Conservancy; Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau; Wendy Mueller, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Farm Service Agency; Lisa Muirheid, Illinois Certified Crop Advisor Program; Raelynn Parmely, Illinois Farm Bureau; Justin Ramey, IDNR CREP; Brian Rennecker, Illinois Department of Agriculture; Kris Reynolds, American Farmland Trust; Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency; Dan Schaefer, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Jason Solberg, Illinois Fertilizer & Chemical Association; Guanglong Tian, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago; Max Webster, American Farmland Trust; Michael Woods, Illinois Department of Agriculture

Welcome *Michael Woods, Illinois Department of Agriculture*

Michael Woods welcomed everyone to the meeting and *Eliana Brown, University of Illinois Extension* introduced Joan Cox. She will be taking Kate Gardiner's place on the Illinois Extension NLRS Facilitation and Coordination Team. Joan provided additional details about her work history in aquatic ecology and toxicology with Illinois

Natural History Survey, soil and water conservation work with SWCD and NRCS, and education, outreach, and program development experience. She also shared some details about her family's farm.

Biennial Report Agriculture Chapter Overview *Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency*

The size of the biennial report has more than doubled since its inception, and the Agriculture Chapter is long. Trevor showed the Chapter pages and provided examples of possible ways to reduce it while still providing pertinent information. Examples included data display options, use of an appendix for partners update, as well as an option to present only one year of data at a time to allow more time for processing and analyses. Trevor welcomed suggestions for streamlining from the AWQPF members.

Comment: Jean Brokish suggested averaging biennial report years' data or averaging 5-year sections of data. This may allow graphs to show continuity of change related to baseline while using less space.

Comment: Dennis Bowman suggested that we don't need the information from all the past years.

Comment: Catie Gregg mentioned that since individual maps of several initiatives are currently included in the report, perhaps consolidating the initiatives into one statewide map would suffice for the body of the report, and the detailed maps could move to the appendix.

Comment: The steering committee requested members to send Ag Chapter streamlining recommendations to Joan Cox, jesarey@illinois.edu. Also, if partners could consolidate their own information prior to submitting it to the steering committee, it would save processing time. It is important to reduce everyone's workloads and align with each partner organizations' internal reporting needs as well. The steering committee will follow up with soliciting feedback on this to make sure everyone has a chance for input.

Stream Buffer Mapping Project *Ken Copenhaver, CropGrower LLC*

Michael Woods introduced Ken, who has over 30 years of experience in GIS remote sensing.

Ken partners with ICA and TNC on a project that establishes reliable methodology for using satellite imagery to identify in-field buffers. He uses Google Earth engine and its associated satellites, which have 10- or 20-meter resolution depending on the data layer. He noted that this technology is a game changer for GIS remote sensing, but he was clear that the output should not be confused with census data, since it is not ground validated. They validated using NAAP imagery. He noted Google stores satellite imagery back to the 1970s and allows their servers to quickly run analyses. He repeated that he is not affiliated with Google or Google Earth, but he finds the free technology to be extremely useful in developing a reliable way to gather ag bmp metrics in addition to the traditional state and federal data sources.

While the engine can generate fresh maps every 5 days, acquisition of cloud-free imagery for the whole state takes a little over a month. Therefore, they are consolidating data into spring and fall composites that show notable differences using a vegetation index. Ken's group developed a binary mask for distinguishing winter vegetation, which has proven robust when validated. This binary mask, when applied to the USDA Cropland data layer, allows for categorization of pixels as crop, grass, or forest, and can also discern weed patches. He discussed the additional analyses involved to distinguish dendritic features connected to fields, which aids in delineating buffers from field vegetation. The methodology uses the Google Earth engine's developers' algorithms for detecting edges and uses neighborhood mean filters. Finally, sizing the vegetation parcels in the field by percentage allows for categorization of vegetation coverage (>30% active field cover crop or cereal crop, 15-29% is a weed category, and <15% indicates a potential buffer). Finally looking at the shape of the vegetation, for example, long and narrow and sinuous is a buffer, whereas square boxes are likely farmstead yards. This

process has allowed metric collection for ICA and TNC on active field vegetation versus buffers. An additional step of the analyses has been conducted for IEPA. This step overlays IEPA's stream layer on the USDA Cropland data layer to distinguish riparian versus forest buffers.

The output for this product concluded 77 square miles of in-field buffers in Illinois, which Ken noted was significant to NLRS metrics and to carbon sequestration metric discussions. He stated that since the methodology was now in place, it could be performed year after year.

Comment: Megan Dwyer mentioned they have been working with Ken for several years on identifying improved methodology to find cover crops across the state and compare with ground truthing efforts. This method may help fill gaps in the NLRS reporting for buffers.

Comment: Megan Baskerville reiterated that working with this type of data will extend metrics past those available through NRCS and IDOA in order to account for privately funded buffers within the state. She also noted the output figures could be converted from square miles of buffer to miles of streams buffered or % of streams adequately buffered. She wondered if NLRS has a goal for miles of stream buffered metric. She requested AWQPF members provide feedback to the project group for ways that may make the data even more robust.

Comment: Trevor Sample mentioned that in addition to % streams buffered metrics, a conversion to acres of buffer statewide would be useful figure.

Review of data sources and nutrient reduction by practice *Trevor Sample, IEPA*

In preparation for next year's biennial report adaptive management chapter, Trevor presented the graphics of practices scenarios to meet interim and full 45% reduction goals. He wondered if there were better data sources that could more comprehensively capture progress on these scenarios statewide. He highlighted data source gaps for saturated buffers and terraces, noting that these practices are not currently included in the NLRS developed practice scenarios. Dr. Guan, University of Illinois, has also been investigating potential methodologies for identifying these practices statewide using satellite imagery. While Iowa has used satellite imagery for looking at WASCOS, terraces, and grassed waterways, the methodology is labor intensive.

Trevor showed a spreadsheet of the current data sources used for NLRS recommend ag BMPs, noting that most rely on federal and state data sources.

Trevor highlighted how some NASS survey questions on nitrogen management and cover crops differs from the original survey questions. He also noted that NASS survey data only reports bioreactors and wetlands if a response threshold is met. He would like member feedback on using the NASS data versus the FSA farmer-reported data for cover crops. He requests member feedback on which source to use for reporting in the adaptive management chapter.

While wetlands will continue to use the federal data sources, Trevor wonders if there are additional wording that could be used in the NASS survey that could bypass reporting thresholds to allow us to identify wetlands statewide.

Bioreactor data currently comes straight from researchers or is self-reported by organizations. U of I provides bioreactor data going back to early 2000s. He also mentioned that since bioreactors have a practice lifespan of ten years, after which wood chip recharging is necessary, should there be a process for setting bioreactor 'baseline and retired dates' so that biennial metrics reflect only those that are active. Furthermore, only the

bioreactors recorded in federal and state cost-share are currently reported. NLRs reporting could benefit from additional tracking sources for bioreactors.

For buffers, the traditional federal and state data sources have not been included because we know it is not representative of the whole state. Now that we have the information Ken/ICA/TNC presented, we can include this for buffers metrics, but Trevor would like member feedback first.

Trevor mentioned that the pandemic had impacted the traditional schedule of IDOA T-transect data collection. The most recent data reported for NLRs was from 2018. He anticipates using 2021 T-transect data to be available for integration into the 2023 biennial report.

He requests AWQPF members provide feedback on potential data sources for all data gaps. Please send feedback to Joan Cox at jesarey@illinois.edu and please consider presenting the source(s) at future AWQPF meetings, so members can arrive at consensus of whether to use the data source or not.

Climate-Smart Initiatives *Michael Woods, IDOA*

Michael Woods provided background on IDOA's efforts in Climate Smart-Ag initiatives, citing the role of agriculture (38% percent of land area globally, and 75% of land area in Illinois) as an important contributor to Green House Gas (GHG) emissions (23% globally when agriculture and forestry production are combined). He referenced growing anticipation of food production and natural resources security challenges in a growing world and the added challenge of adapting to climate change and GHG emissions management. He summarized the economic, social, and environmental sustainability goals which include 1) increasing ag production and income, 2) adapting and building resilience to climate change, and 3) reducing/removing GHG emissions through locally-led, locally-adaptive approaches to Climate-Smart Agriculture. Michael introduced several speakers, each of whom have been working with him on these efforts.

RCCP update *Elliott Lagacy, IDOA*

Elliott Lagacy described how the RCCP award is an Alternative Funding Arrangement where the funds can pass directly to the applicant (IDOA). This AFA arrangement was born out of the 2018 farm bill, where as previously, the federal money passed through awards through NRCS. The new arrangement allows state matching funds. Also, a Program Partnership Agreement (PPA) between IDOA and NRCS has been used previously. By using this template is has allowed this AFA to happen more smoothly.

The slides showed commonalities among NLRs tracked conservation cropping practices which also provide Climate-Smart Ag benefits. Many of the practices that reduce sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus loading into waterbodies, also capture or limit carbon emissions. It is anticipated that an Illinois Climate-Smart Agricultural partnership could measurably expand the use of conservation cropping systems in Illinois, which would provide benefits in many of the IEPA priority watersheds. This initiative would not only expand training and education opportunities to learn about evidence-based climate-smart agricultural practices in Illinois, but also could unite collective outreach and marketing efforts among farmer and ag industry professional groups within the state.

Michael noted that confirmed partners with various levels of investment include IDOA as lead, AFT, AISWCD, IFB, ISA, Izaak Walton League of America, and Pheasants Forever. Grant Hammer and Max Webster are working to convene them as an Illinois Climate Working Group. They will continue to invite partners.

Elliott noted that the state was planning to match \$1 million in cost-share and had already initiated their match, sending out grant agreements to the SWCDs to identify the match. The SWCDs are planning to hold signups this spring. Shannon Allen is the NRCS representative leading the RCCP PPA. They are currently waiting for federal

review and approval, after which a formal convening of partners will take place followed by a formal public launch of the initiative.

Comment: Lauren Lurkins expressed gratitude to the IDOA leadership for in bringing funds to Illinois and in matching resources within Illinois. The speaker cautioned use of terminology in public programming and in professional ag circles. The presentation slide does a great job of clarifying that the RCPP initiative is building on existing conservation cropping systems for which we have already added language about the nutrient reduction benefits. Now we are also adding language about the carbon reducing benefits of these same practices. We should collectively take care to avoid confusion with our language when we are talking with farmers and with ag professionals. We need to clarify that these are practices with which we are all familiar. New use of the titles and phrases “Climate-Smart Ag Partnership” and “Illinois Climate-Smart Workgroup” is confusing on our communications and calendar appointments. We should look for ways to simplify language for facilitate of farmer-adoption.

Michael noted these insights would be brought to the attention of the convened groups. He clarified that Illinois Climate-Smart Ag Working Group is part of the Illinois Climate-Smart Ag Partnership.

Illinois Climate-Smart Ag Workgroup & Illinois Climate-Smart Agricultural Partnership *Max Webster, American Farmland Trust*

Max Webster, Grant Hammer (AISWCD), and Michael Woods have initiated focus groups with committed partners of the Climate-Smart Ag Workgroup. These discussions are establishing a baseline understanding of Illinois’ opportunities and challenges to integrate climate-smart ag issues and programming into existing programs for farmers, such as NLRs, IDOA (Partners for Conservation cost-share), and those of many agencies and organizations in the state. Having already met five times, with a sixth meeting coming up in April, initial focus group conversations have drafted guidance to IDOA on Climate-Smart working lands strategy in Illinois, which is a requirement of U.S. Climate Alliance membership. These meetings have also produced initial recommendations. These include 1) integration of additional state and national climate-smart efforts from public and private sector partnerships, 2) amplification of SWCD, NRCS and Extension as dependable, trusted assistance providers with reliable funding streams, 3) general education on the climate-smart benefits of existing best management practices, and 4) expression of many voices across sectors and agricultural subgroups through a subcommittee structure. Max and Grant will be writing a report on the foundational aspects of moving Climate-Smart-Agricultural forward in Illinois based on content from these focus group meetings. He will be surveying to determine action steps.

Comment: Megan Baskerville asked if Illinois would be joining the U.S. Climate Alliance, which would be trying to meet the goals of the 2025 Paris Agreement (26-28% of our 2005-level GHG emissions by 2025). She asked if Illinois has the 2005 GHG emissions data. She asked if Illinois’ agricultural sectors will be establishing baseline emissions and subsequent targets. Like NLRs efforts, it would be helpful to have baselines and targets.

Max answered that while there are baseline emission estimates to some extent, the state has not yet adopted them for guiding future actions. While other states have created GHG inventories in agricultural sectors, we have not done this yet in Illinois.

Comment: Lauren Lurkins noted that Governor Pritzker’s January 2019 executive order entering Illinois into the U.S. Climate Alliance outlines tracking and provides a good summary of GHG emissions through the energy sector. It also outlines the Alliance commitments. However, it does not mention agriculture <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/climate/Pages/default.aspx>.

U.S. Climate Alliance Technical Assistance Grant *Michael Woods, IDOA*

Illinois and governor Pritzker have committed IL to the U.S. Climate Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of governors. The Alliance announced eight priority policy areas. Many states committed to more than forty specific actions to decrease GHG emissions toward the U.S. target. USDA will continue to work with individual states to develop policy to address these eight areas. One such aid is their technical assistance grant program. Illinois submitted a proposal for \$100K in late 2021.

This is a project that seeks to understand local barriers to producer practice implementation, both for NLRs and Climate-Smart Ag recommended practices. The outcomes will be a ranked barriers list generated through an IDOA survey of SWCD staff and ranked by the workgroup. Rankings will be validated with post-workshop convening industry experts, workgroup members, and SWCDs. Another outcome will be a statewide, county-based dataset. This will serve as a framework for capturing local opportunities, policy, and funding for expanding practice adoption. An additional outcome will be a toolkit of policy-maker materials that address Climate-Smart Ag goals in IL. The proposal includes funding for SWCDs to assist with data collection and for collaboration with Illinois Extension's Research Scholarship Program to gather data and to develop tools. If awarded, this effort could clarify barriers to practice adoption through formal research as opposed to anecdotal evidence only.

Climate-Smart Ag and Forestry Partnership Program *Kris Reynolds, AFT*

In February USDA announced \$100 million for partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities and its deadlines for proposals (> \$5 million due May 6th, and \$250K - \$5million due June 10th). They are expecting to award 50 applicants to support climate-smart production in commodities, and to pilot technical assistance to producers who voluntarily participate in climate-smart production systems in which carbon sequestration and GHG emissions benefits can be measured, quantified, and verified. This will promote formation of markets in climate-smart commodities. It is a good opportunity to work together to bring money to the Midwest (<https://www.usda.gov/climate-solutions/climate-smart-commodities>, and <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=337878>). The list of climate-smart production practices is in common with NLRs recommended practices, such as cover crops, no-till, and nutrient management.

AFT has submitted a regional proposal which includes Illinois. The Midwest Cover Crop Initiative would leverage private and NRCS funding to provide \$10/acre payments for cover crops. These payments are subject to two-to four-year contract agreements which require monitoring and reporting. Fall Covers for Spring Savings program payments could stack on this and it could drive new participation in NRCS programs. Existing NRCS program participants would also be eligible for this additional incentive. However, it could not stack with other climate payments or carbon market payments.

Comment: Michael Woods request members to reach out to him or to Kris with questions or interest in partnering on these initiatives.

Fall Covers for Spring Savings *Brian Rennecker, IDOA*

Brian Rennecker stated that they have twice the amount of data compared to last year and these are currently undergoing RMA verification. The Acceptance/Non-Acceptance letters will go out this week to participants. The

10% data verification instructions will go out very soon to the SWCDs since planting season is only about two weeks away in the southern part of the state.

Partner Initiatives

Spring & Summer Field Days Announcement *Lauren Lurkins, Illinois Farm Bureau*

Lauren Lurkins stated that IFB's nutrient stewardship grant program offers funds to individual county FBs for outreach and education programming. This work has grown out of NLRS efforts and partnerships and is used in various ways in the awarded counties. This year twelve counties will be hosting field day events across the state, starting this spring and taking place through Labor Day. Details can be found at <http://www.ilfb.org/FieldDays>. Ag retailers will be joining the events, as many retailers have been involved with NLRS efforts and waiting many years for data that supports these field day outreach topics. Lauren requests AWQPF members circulate the information and those planning to attend should RSVP. IFB will produce various types of media communicating details around these events to 74K individual Illinois IFB members.

PACE crop insurance product *Megan Dwyer, Illinois Corn Growers Association*

Megan Dwyer shared that in Illinois PACE (Post-Application Coverage Endorsement) had started working in 2019 to find a way to encourage more in-season N application through crop insurance options. Data show risk is a large barrier to changing N management to in-season applications. Several partners have been working through the 508(h) process in RMA to create a product as a crop insurance add-on that would help producers manage risk of applying N in-season. Partners on this initiative include ICGA, National CGA, Meridian Institute, and AGrEE Coalition. Ag Analytics, farmer panels, and U of I research were also utilized to establish an actuarially sound dataset. Country Companies Financial and Crop Risk Services adopted this as product.

<https://pacecropinsurance.com/>

A pilot project was RMA-approved in September 2021, and details were announced in January 2022. This year provided only a small window through March 1st for signups in the pilot states. Pilot areas were chosen based on limiting pilot acreage to about 30% of corn acres and overlapping areas that would receive the largest nutrient loss reduction benefits from in-season N application timing. Commercial N products applied during V3-V10 growth stages on non-irrigated acres in this designated geography are eligible for this crop insurance product as an add on to their base coverage. This is like hail insurance in that it is an add on and indemnity payment triggered by weather-related events that keep the producer from making N applications during these growth stages. Farm Doc Daily has interactive tools by state and county to show relationships between premiums and payout rates by location (<https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2022/01/the-post-application-coverage-endorsement-pace.html>).

Megan also provided an example of a coverage scenario and emphasized it that the PACE product is not a yield loss coverage, which is covered by a base insurance policy. It is coverage of assumed risk of not being able to make an N application during specific growth stages. Producer choices to delay N application as a rescue application later than v10 would not be considered eligible. Also, growers are required to submit their total N pre-plan and applied amounts.

In the future they will be focusing on an education campaign to prepare for more enrollment in the 2023 season.

Comment: Megan Baskerville asked whether the producer's total N plan is required to be within MRTN rates to be eligible.

Megan D. said no. Currently PACE is an event-triggered product. Team members are looking into the addition of MRTN criteria and watching the work done in Iowa, where MRTN rates are being georeferenced.

Comment: Dan Schaefer asked whether the product capped maximum allowable N rate on the split application, for example a 60/40 split, and if farmer-deemed N rates and application amounts were allowed.

Megan D. replied that currently the product requires the producer to commit to at least 20% N applied pre-plant. And the producer can elect up to 80% of the planned in-season N application as a coverage level. The total N application formula is generous, and farmer-deemed N rates are allowed.

ISAP NLRS story map *Jean Brokish, Illinois Sustainable Ag Partnership*

Jean Brokish provided background on ISAP, a collaboration of many organizations including members of the AWQPF. The NLRS continues to inform ISAP's core strategies and outcomes and activities are centered around information sharing. The story map, created in 2020, is interactive and communicates NLRS efforts and direction. It highlights county, watershed, and state level information, research, education and demonstration sites. It houses a service provider directory (retailers, crop consultants, seed dealers, etc.) and a farmer directory (those that use NLRS practices). New adopters could connect with any of these resources to learn where to buy seed, who could help with strip till, etc. Jean invites AWQPF member feedback and assistance to help build the service provider and farmer directories if members have contacts who could add records or if they know of existing story maps or directories that she could link to. She encourages members to integrate NLRS data on county, watershed, or state levels. Service directory is here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScUvoLm3JzvPDtqN0eei-4Tz4ZX8_Qu5deFISDY5GdsXRJzqg/viewform. Contact Jean at jbrokish@farmland.org.

Wrap up/Next Steps *Michael Woods, IDOA*

Michael Woods requested members participate in an upcoming poll for scheduling the Summer Meeting in June as a potential hybrid meeting.