

Communication Subgroup

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 12, 2023

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Via Zoom



Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Joan Cox, University of Illinois Extension

Joan welcomed the group and noted that Layne Knoche and Amanda Christenson are helping with technology and meeting minutes.

Review 2023 Biennial Report Launch and Promotional Toolkit

Emily Steele, University of Illinois Extension

Emily outlined the new materials and resources provided to partners for discussing the findings of the 2023 NLRS Biennial Report. The resources include an email with a direct link to the report, an Executive Summary, and a short URL, go.illinois.edu/NLRS, to the Illinois EPA website. The launch included media releases by the Illinois government, Illinois EPA and IDOA. Also, Illinois Extension did a media release. Hard copies of the report are available in Springfield at the Conference and the link to register was provided. The Toolkit materials are stored in an accessible Box file. The toolkit includes a common message PowerPoint, digital graphics, a media release, general talking points, instructions for accessing graphics, and suggested social media text. Additionally, there are key points from each chapter of the report, with page references. Illinois Extension is also working on communication products related to the report, such as a blog, podcast, and updates to related websites. Emily invited questions or suggestions regarding these materials. Discussion resulted in requests for photos of people and a brief user guide to be included in the toolkit. A question was asked about the cost of implementation scenarios and sources for this information were provided. Feedback was shared as to how partners have and will use the toolkit moving forward as well as a tool beyond solely report promotion.

Communications products and next steps for non-biennial report year.

Discussion

Joan shared Illinois Extension ongoing outreach efforts, which include the Biennial Report Media release, Nutrient Loss Reduction Podcast and blog scheduled to launch this week, plus a webinar presentation scheduled for Feb. 8, highlighting the Biennial Report. The report toolkit was also shared with Extension educators statewide. Nutrient loss reduction website is launching February 2024, Ag and watershed planning factsheet is in development for 2024, general social media outreach, and Watershed Outreach Associate educational outreach were mentioned as well. Links to some of these resources were shared in the chat.

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Amanda Christenson, Illinois Extension; Joan Cox, Illinois Extension; Albert Cox, MWRDGC; Rachel Curry, Illinois Extension; Emily Gaddis, Clinton Co SWCD; Robert Hirschfeld, Prairie Rivers Network; Layne Knoche, Illinois Extension; Raelynn Parmely, Illinois Farm Bureau; Brian Rennecker, IDOA; Trevor Sample, IEPA; Emily Steele, Illinois Extension; Rosalie Trump, Precision Conservation Management

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In the chat the following links were shared:

- Link to email: <https://emails.illinois.edu/newsletter/24/603863124.html>
- Link to Box Folder: <https://uofi.box.com/s/4c15rpfkgku9j7zro3qn2163933qf6exa>

Discussion:

- Raelynn Parmely: Shared that yes, Farm Bureau is using the toolkit. It was helpful. They had media requests leading up to the biennial report since about mid-July. It gave IFB an idea of what to expect from the state agency side as well as what media might have additional follow-up questions about. Farm Bureau has used the common messages PowerPoint and talking points documents because they provide consistent messaging regardless of who's communicating those points. For example, when the state's strategy first started and how it first came together. That's excellent for consistent messaging. It helps to make it clear how this all came together in Illinois. Because IFB has their own separate marketing and communications people, things like graphics aren't as helpful until they promote things like the January 25 conference to their membership and partner network. When they post on social media platforms, they use their own images. The messaging is helpful, and they copy and paste a lot of that wherever requested.
- Joan Cox: That's great feedback and thank you for all those details. Do you think that you'll be able to pull from the existing toolkit in the future?
- Raelynn: Yeah. There are certainly pieces from the background section or the talking points about the strategy in general that IFB will continue to use to inform responses to those requests. She uses the talking points to craft comments for field days to make sure that everyone is talking about the same issue in a consistent way. Just to clarify, she is speaking specifically about things that have logos on them. When looking at graphics, for example, IFB social media people are likely to develop a graphic that has a Farm Bureau logo on it unless they are helping to promote larger events like the January 25 meeting, for example.

- Emily Steele: Yes, that makes sense. That's why Extension tried to provide a mix as far as those digital graphics. Some are photos, some are the cover images, and some are more branded. Extension understands and respects that our partner organizations are going to do their own branding when they talk about their own promotions.
- Raelynn: The images of the four reports are helpful. One that she didn't see but would have been helpful is photos of meetings with the larger group. IFB always likes to show people doing things, they like to use pictures of nutrient field days or photos from past conferences. They would probably use that on social media platforms to promote the next conference. People doing things is always preferred.
- Emily: That is something doable. If this toolkit is going to be used over the course of the next two years, Extension should add a basic photo library with something from the conference and maybe some other photos. That's a good suggestion.
- Trevor: One of the things that Extension brought up before is that they have a new requirement that they need signatures for anyone whose face is identifiable. That put a wrench in those photos.
- Emily: Can folks sign off on a photo release at the conference as they sign in?
- Joan: Yes, folks did this at the last policy working group meeting in March. The sign in was at registration and there was a person making sure everyone signed it. Some of the photos for that meeting might be usable. Other than that, it would have to be something back in the room where people's faces aren't visible, and presenters are in the distance.
- Raelynn: Emily, just a thought, in those instances where committee members are passing on the toolkit to their respective media people, adding a statement letting them know what to do with it.
- Emily: Typically, if sharing a series of photos for people to use Extension likes to include a word document that spells out any sort of accreditation that's needed. It says that these photos are available for your use related to NLRs work and things like that. So, there is a basic user guide along with it that spells out the details and includes contact information if there are any questions.
- Joan: Okay, good points. Does anyone else want to comment on how they might use the toolkit in the coming year or have any specific requests that would help make their job of promoting easier?
- Emily: Along with the conversation about sharing a photo library. It would also be good to get B-roll video, of a stream or agricultural conservation work that could help with TV media pick up.
- Raelynn: When she delivered the toolkit to IFB's media folk, one of the questions they had was what's the timeline on this? Right now, that's not necessarily clear. It seems like a short-term Media toolkit. It might be helpful to remind folks that this is a year-round issue.
- Emily: This could be sent out to working group members a few times a year or in the off year with a reminder that this exists and is available.
- Joan: Yeah, a guide could identify which ones expire. For example, the key points use a lot of the data that are clearly labeled 2021-2022 data. At some point that won't be what you want to quote from, but a lot of the other stuff is general enough that it wouldn't expire. Is that accurate?
- Emily: Yeah, some of it is tailored to the report itself, but it is also generalized. The talking points and the graphics are going to be good until we have the next report.
- Joan: It sounds like it would be useful to include a timeline of when some of these products would expire versus if they're evergreen. A user guide would be the easiest place to do it.
- Robert: Asked in the chat "This goes beyond the purview of the comms group, but in terms of communicating the report to media and the public, it would be helpful to put some dollar figures to the various NP scenarios. i.e. What's the (admittedly estimated) cost of accomplishing the implementation goals in NP2, NP3, NP7, NP8." Then he unmuted to clarify. Have these calculations been done? It would

be great to have dollar figures attached to the various NP scenarios that are listed in the report. How much would it cost for those non-point source goals can be attained by various levels of implementation of the different practices, whether it's saturated buffers or cover crops and different combinations. This is something that Prairie Rivers Network (PRN) has been talking to the media about. They ask, what is the cost? PRN doesn't have anything readily available but think that would be helpful.

- Trevor: The NP2 and 3 should be in the original strategy the 2015 strategy and NP7 and 8 might be in the previous biennial report and if they're not they would be in the standalone report that Reid Christianson created. Trevor or the Extension team can try to get you those numbers in the next couple weeks. The NP2 and 3 will be in 2013 dollars so a conversion might be necessary.
- Joan: Good suggestion, put it in the dollar context. Trevor, thank you for listing all the places those resources exist because a lot of those happened before the current Extension team came on so appreciate that.
- Albert: He did not have time to go through the toolkit but as in this brief look at it, generally the point sources can use it when they are sharing information through presentations. They sometimes would like to cite things from the report, and it is nice to be able to have those figures and graphics that can be easily pulled from this toolkit. He can share those with the MWRDCG public affairs group whenever they want to share information about the strategy. With regards to the question about attaching the cost to those specific scenarios, he knew that when this strategy was being developed, coming up with those values was a tremendous effort. He is not sure about the effort of trying to get the cost for the scenarios, in addition to those that were already developed at the beginning of the strategy. It might be a significant undertaking to come up with the cost numbers for those other scenarios.
- Joan: You mean, when you say other scenarios, do you mean NP7 and 8?
- Albert: Yes.
- Joan: Trevor, I think what I understood is these data can be found in either in Reid's publication where he talked about developing those NP7 and NP8 or in the 2019-2020 report. Is that correct, Trevor?
- Trevor: It would have been the 2021 Biennial Report, I believe.
- Joan: Okay, so either one of those two places He had done that cost analysis and it was talked about in one of those documents. Did you have any thoughts about additional and cost analysis? It would be quite an undertaking to do more scenarios and more cost analysis in addition to those. Thank you for your comments on how you think MWRDCG public affairs group could use the citations from the report and the graphics as well. If you find in working with them that there's additional pieces that would make it easy for them, please reach out. It might be something easy to add that everybody could use. Any other thoughts? Hearing none, let's move on.

Communications products and next steps for non-biennial report year

Discussion

- Joan shared Illinois Extension ongoing outreach efforts, which include Biennial Report Media release, Nutrient Loss Reduction Podcast and blog scheduled to launch this week, plus a presentation on Feb 8 highlighting the Biennial Report. We shared a report toolkit with Extension educators statewide. Rachel shared a few details about the podcast and blog and asked for any suggestions for the upcoming Ag Conservation Fact sheet. The Nutrient loss reduction website is launching February 2024, Ag and watershed planning factsheet in development for 2024, general social media outreach, and Watershed Outreach Associate educational outreach. Emily mentioned that this year we were trying to reach out to Extension Educators around the state to expand our reach and target them with NLRS content. Joan

asked the group if anybody else would like to share products or planning that they have that's going on for NLRS promotion this coming year, but there were none, so we ended at 2:45. The following links were shared in the chat.

- Podcast will be posted here - <https://extension.illinois.edu/podcasts/illinois-nutrient-loss-reduction-podcast>
- Blog will be posted here - <https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/nutrient-loss-reduction>
- Webinar Registration - <https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2024-02-08-empower-illinois-strategies-reduce-nutrient-pollution-and-protect-waterways>
- Website- <https://extension.illinois.edu/rainfall-management>

Meeting adjourned at 2:45.