

Madison Networking Session Notes
November 6, 2008

Education and Outreach

Tanners Creek and Hogan Creek Watersheds

- Promo items with logo
- Logo contest for schools
- Field days/Pasture walks-had 150 participants from sending a flyer in the mail
- Getting one landowner to host a field day really promotes cost-share opportunities
- Newsletters- hand out to school teachers during classroom visits
- Used to use an 8-page newsletter but it was too much for folks to want to read, so went to a 2-sided leaflet with “tips” on “Go Green, Go Clean”. Mailed as a trifold
- Watershed signage- mixed feelings from groups- can be too much visual clutter, but can be good because it promotes watershed efforts. Placed signs at bridges over creeks

South Laughery Watershed

- Put watershed signs in headwaters along roads- reach more people that don't know they are in watershed, affect stream or river miles away.
- County highway department member on steering committee
- Signs in homeowners' yards about trash clean up

Discussion

- How to develop a good landowner database?
 - Plat books, GIS by county
 - How can you afford to mail thousands of letters or flyers?
 - Absentee landowners are problematic to reach
- It is difficult to get folks to field days
 - timing of event may conflict with other local activities
 - topics get stale
 - food draws a crowd

Youngs Creek Watershed

- Seek a proactive farmer willing to host field day- will have many BMPs to showcase
- SWCD members are farmers typically and know local landowners who could participate
- Hosting a field day on a weekday in June was very successful. They tagged on to a Purdue Extension breakfast and had the field day afterward. Corporate sponsors/vendors covered lunch costs, got advertising for field day by joining with Purdue event
- Grocery store bulletin boards good idea for posting flyers, volunteer requests about project watershed

Orange County

- How to get started in watershed work?
 - Educate community/stakeholders first
 - Survey “What is a Watershed?”

- Website
- County fairs, displays, questionnaires, maps of watersheds/county with stick pins for folks to find their homes in watershed

Trail Creek (Michigan City example)

- Outreach program includes a 3-week summer program for 4th and 5th grade children with a watershed track, field days, Hoosier Riverwatch training

South Laughery

- SWCD Annual meetings, “Goat workshop”, other non-traditional workshops- good venues for highlighting your watershed project with a display, presentation, speaker

Silver Creek

- Used bottled water with watershed logo for promotional item

Tanners Creek

- Conducted school presentations and Hoosier Riverwatch Days- you see “priceless looks” on the students’ faces when they DO the study and see how it all works. They gain “ownership” of their watershed.

Questions on Outreach/Education

- Are websites cost effective to do on your own or is it better to post watershed info with others?
- How to keep efforts going beyond grants?
- How to spur volunteer efforts?- RC&Ds are great partners, get local officials involved

Working with Volunteers

Muscatatuk Watershed

- Volunteer appreciation and recognition program keeps volunteers active, excited and is good for match needs also
- Certain issues “rile people up” so they want to become involved:
 - Hog farms/CAFOs
 - Algae/toxic water
 - Floods/drainage issues
 - Government mandates
- Many folks volunteer because they are interested in the environment. Seek:
 - Hoosier Riverwatch participants
 - Science teachers
 - University graduate students
 - Retired citizens
 - NRCS Earth Team members
- Important to separate and track your steering committee(s) from other volunteers
 - Sometimes a volunteer coordinator is needed above and beyond the watershed coordinator to communicate with volunteer base, educate them, give them assignments and follow up on their efforts

Cost Share

Successes:

- Adjust cost share rates to fit practices
- Promote via articles, newsletters, SWCD Annual Meeting presentation, County Chamber of Commerce meetings, annual Agricultural Economic Outlook meetings/breakfasts
- Working with landowner, not tenant farmer, is often easier to sell conservation practices as they may have a different mindset for conservation than farmer does.
- Quote to keep in mind when it comes to promoting cost share: “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”.

Challenges:

- Don’t assume landowners know what you mean by certain practices- terminology differs!
- You need to do one-on-one site visits landowners to explain practices, LISTEN to what he/she has to say. Don’t try to solve all their problems, promoting everything at once.
- There needs to be an economic benefit to the landowner, not just a water quality benefit for them to be able to participate

Questions/Discussion on Cost Share:

- How can you promote/set up your cost share program during the watershed planning phase?
 - Annual meetings, agricultural businesses/co-ops, grocery store bulletin boards, mail out flyers, District supervisors (word of mouth)
- There is a fear of losing interest in cost share if you start asking for 40% match from landowners since 319 grant is now 60-40 match. (Some watershed groups reducing cost share to 60% instead of the allowed 75% because of match)
- How do you target/prioritize your cost share by critical area?
 - Producer associations, Farm Bureau membership mailings
- How can you get BMPs engineered since NRCS staff don’t/can’t work on 319 funded projects in many cases?
- The 319 program defines a critical area, but what is realistic as far as landowner buy-in for those critical areas?
 - It is important during the WMP inventory and analysis to begin thinking of how and where cost share funds will be used- you may have to factor in the probable willingness of landowners as you determine what is critical
- For urban cost share programs, how can you find out who the homeowner association contacts are?
 - In Marion County for example, there is the Marion County Association of Neighborhood Associations (MCANA)