

Upper Wabash Nutrient Management Coalition

December 4, 2009

Bluffton, IN

Notes

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Amy Babey (by phone)	US Army Corps of Engineers
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US Army Corps of Engineers Outreach Program. Amy Babey. Focus on partnerships, need local government partners. Dollars available for technical assistance and watershed assessments. Dollars also available for practices. Projects can cross state lines. Ecosystem restoration program (wetlands, unique watershed features). Section 206—projects less than \$5 million. First \$100,000 no match required. Then cost share 50/50. Design and implementation phase : 65/35 cost share. First step is letter of intent (template available) . time frame for feasibility study 12-18 months. Basic match is cash; also work in kind. What can group do to help this along? Groups can ask for congressional earmark. Opportunities for moving forward on Goal 2A:

- Upper Wabash River Basin Commission has funding for water quality practices—cost share program--\$200,000.42 month program. Nutrient management plans can be funded.
- Conservation Reserve Program, Conservatio Reserve Enhancement Program (Indiana side), Environmental Quality Incentive Program
- Conservation Cropping System Initiative. Focus on Core 4. No-till workshops , education, Dan Towery, Hans Kok.
- Mississippi River Basin Initiative (MRBI). \$80 million per year, each year for 4 years. Focused on watersheds within Mississippi River Basin. MRBI relies on local partners. Need committal of staff time. Need locals to help provide TA. Natural Resources Conservation Service will come

out to explain program. Request for Proposals will come out soon—Shannon will send to Christa for distribution. Groups need to make requests. No cash match required. Funds come through Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program. Also separate funds for Conservation Innovation Grants in Upper Mississippi River Basin. No money can go to technical assistance. Could be expansion of Conservation Cropping System Initiative. Looking at 12 digit focus area. Showcase good actors.

- IDNR Lake and River Enhancement Fund. Up to \$100,000 available. Most of area has been studied. Streambank, agronomic, and structural practices funded.
- The Nature Conservancy Risk Protection Program/American Farmland Trust BMP challenge. Protection program for conservation tillage. Provided crop consultants to work with producers. Looking for local group to link producer with program. Nitrogen & Phosphorus. available across state through American Farmland Trust.
- Indiana State Department of Agriculture's Conservation Consulting Initiative. Needs to be revamped. Incentives to consultants and farmers.
- OH—Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and Conservation Reserve Program. Need to be able to make hay on ground in program. Need to change rule.

Producer barriers to adoption.

- Economic. It must make money for the producer.
- It must be simple. Input to return ratio.
- Not convinced of what nutrients are being lost.
- Landlord needs to know what is available
- Producers look at CRP as competition for ground
- Need to be able to make hay off of crp ground
- Controlled drainage may not make sense on Ohio side—too much grade. Works better on flat ground. Doesn't pay in IN. Needs costs covered up front because there needs to be total redo of drainage system. TNC looking at 2 stage ditches. NRCS pays for construction as well as annual payment. Could be a conservation innovation grant through Mississippi River Basin Initiative.
- Need to eliminate compaction with cover crops. need to focus on cover crops. Show savings in N costs and can sustain themselves. Need to demonstrate economic benefits.
- Failures with no-till corn. Technology was not there years ago and producers got frustrated and went back to tillage. Resistance to go straight no-till because farmers want to incorporate manure.
- Need people on the ground –CCS/state/local/fed technical assistance.
- Bundling practices through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) scares off producers. MRBI could fund individual practices that won't be funded through EQIP.
- Who's going to educate farmers? What money can go to technical assistance? (EPA? 319?)

NRCS could pay for private technical service providers. Multi-county personnel are a possibility. County can hire contract personnel.

Technical service providers need to be able to make a profit. We could make recommendations to tweak the system to make it work better.

Farmer clubs (OH)

Next step.

How do we find the warm bodies to spend the conservation \$\$? (write technical service providers into the MRBI proposal). The Nature Conservancy could possibly match what districts put in for staff. CTIC could put in some funds from EPA grant.

Could use CTIC funds to hire someone to write watershed plans. With watershed plan can apply for funds for watershed coordinators.

Salamonie group starting to meet.

Use supervisors' farms as place for field days.

Do we need to be talking to information multipliers instead of individual producers?

What about interpreting soil tests? Some producers don't know how.

Could possibly use conservation innovation grant dollars for warm body to help with technical assistance.

Need to get SWCDs together to get commitment—to chip in \$\$ for warm body.

Needs to include OH and IN. Adams/Wells/Mercer is a good meld.

MRBI proposal. Christa will start to draft. Laura, Robert, Kent, and Lisa will help

Next meeting Jan. 14. Conference call @ 10:00 am.