

Conservation Agriculture Systems Alliance

Conference Call

Tuesday, April 05, 2011

at 11 a.m. (eastern)

Participants:

Glen Shaw, Soil Conservation Council of Canada

Paul Thoroughgood, Soil Conservation Council of Canada

Doyle Wiebe, Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association/SCCC

Don McCabe, Soil Conservation Council of Canada

Sjoerd Duiker, Pennsylvania State University/PANTA

Bill Kuenstler, USDA NRCS

Tim Healey, Agrotain

Chuck Chaitovitz, Global Environment Technology Foundation

Randy Raper, USDA ARS

Karen Scanlon, CTIC

Agenda

- Financial info from Theo
- Timing (winter vs summer)
- Location of 6th WCCA

Discussion

Reviewed past WCCA financial/attendance records provided by Theo.

Registration costs? We want lower fee than 5th WCCA so we attract more farmers. Perhaps offer different events to make more affordable. Include farmer registration rate, student registration rate, etc.

Timing?

BK: to show off CA in North America, event should be during a growing/cropping season. To see CA in Canada, has to be in summer. May make sense to stay in Canada.

DM: SCCA discussed yesterday. Narrowed to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Offers diverse systems and soil conservation techniques with challenging soils. Sask next door has large rates of no-till adoption. Field trips to US from Winnipeg. Endorse summer timing – see first-hand on the land. Can use industry facilities in area.

GS: can't see much in winter and there are a lot of meetings already planned.

PT: last half June and July is more desirable. August may have some harvest.

RR: farmer participation can be better during winter; but understand not ideal in northern climates. Also better to show technology. Between spring and harvest is best to demonstrate technology to audiences.

DW: earlier in season is better to see impacts to soil, which is theme of conference. Late June, after Canadian Farm Progress show, 3rd week of June.

Location?

SCCC presented Winnipeg as preferred location.

BK: crops?

PT: wheat, canola, soybeans, corn

DW: diversity of minor crops: sunflowers, flax, dry bean, and more, potatoes under irrigation

GS: ag Canada research station not far with largest variety of crops grown in Canada

PT: some forage seed production in area as well

BK: cover crops? Not going to see in growing season, but can we talk about it used in these systems?

GS: North Dakota doing work on cover crops, which is close/feasible for tour.

PT: Richardson farms incorporated alfalfa in short-term rotation as water management tool. UM scientist promoting cover crop of red clover and sweet clover. Not adopted at field scale yet.

BK: Ontario researchers working with cover crops.

PT: wet heavy clay with hi organic content; moving west (2 hours) see more kinds / mixtures of soil with high organic matter (sand, loam, clay); fragile soils in Sask. (long field trip)

PT: spoke with grower groups and small companies in area and received interest of in-kind support for event.

DM: WCCA needs to be showcase for North America. University research networks tie in Univ in Canada to Midwest US Univ; exploit that as we move forward. Use similarities in climate/latitude to facilitate global conversations.

TH: fine with Canada

BK: Canada location good and ground work done.

Could we have a field trip into US from Winnipeg?

DM: border crossings can be good or bad, depending on conditions at border. Inform customs well in advance, understand logistical issues and required documentation.

MANDAK has new manager

TH: target attendance # and types of people. If we want majority to be farmers, how do we get them there?

DM: how will organization and financials be handled?

We want this to be a North American showcase. Will need private sector involvement.

BK: wealth of knowledge throughout NA in CA systems.

NEXT MEETING

Karen ask Theo for proposal deadline

SCCC look at ideal dates for Winnipeg

Wednesday, April 27 @ 10 am eastern

Time -- Winter event

Pros: farmer participation likely higher; piggy back on existing event (national no-till conference)

Cons: weather events prohibit travel; no field trip

Time – Summer event

Pros: field trip possibilities better

Cons: farmer participation lower; weather problems

Susan: will financial considerations help drive decision on time/location?

Dick: build it and they will come. Winter timing will be negative for international audience. If goal is to attract time of year that makes it attractive to those outside US/Canada.

Glen: Canadian producers visiting South America got most value from field trips.

Doyle: CA is not just no-till

What will you take away from today's conversation?

Dick: focus on target audience; desire to make event producer friendly and balanced with science/research community; strong arguments for winter vs summer; consensus to not pair with commodity conference but could pair with no-till conference

Glen: favor summer conference not piggybacked with another event; don't hear consensus on location, need more work that

Doyle: ditto Glen

Susan: look at who attends and what place is easy to get to from there; focus on content being a great draw; farmers come for field trips and would vote for that

Sjoerd: vote for integrating with no-till farmer conference;

April 5 @ 11 am eastern