

Conservation Agriculture Systems Alliance

Conference Call

Tuesday, September 7, 2011

at 11 a.m. (eastern)

Participants:

Karen Scanlon, CTIC

Glen Shaw, SCCC

Susan Winsor, Corn & Soybean Digest

Chuck Chaitovitz, Global Environment Technology Foundation

Harold Reetz, Ag Drainage Management Coalition

Dean Graumann, Southern Plains Agricultural Resources Coalition

Agenda

- * WCCA proposal: progress in obtaining funding to send a CASA member to present at 5th WCCA in Australia
- * Update on cover crop / insurance issue: Led by Eliav Bitan, National Wildlife Federation
- * Drainage Water Management with invited guest Harold Reetz, executive director of Ag Drainage Management Coalition
- * Global Environment Facility project to build toolbox of nutrient reduction strategies
- * CASA member updates

WCCA proposal

GS: funding request held up in deputy ministry office. Still waiting to learn decision; previous conversations were positive.

KS: request support from Canadian Fertilizer Institute?

GS: if no word tomorrow, confer with Council leadership about next step.

Cover Crop/Insurance

Ag Drainage Management Coalition

HR: ADMC membership includes land contractors, drainage tile manufacturers and others. Group formed 8-10 years ago. Starting to expand to agricultural groups like commodity organizations and others. Recently, NRCS chosen to ramp up efforts in drainage water management to improve water quality and reduce amount of nutrients moved to water ways and target areas like Mississippi River Basin, Great Lakes and other regions. DWM means turning on/off tile lines to reduce amount of nutrients leaving agricultural fields. Last year finished CIG project in 5 Midwest states – 25% reduction in water flow and 35% reduction in nitrate losses (average) from 20 sites in region. New technology but simple – vertical tube in tile line to create a dam that raises water table behind it. Systems available in electronic and radio control form. NRCS set high priority on DWM; 16-person team is overseeing effort, led by State Conservation in North Dakota is leading. Working with Sand County Foundation to organize summit conference in Minnesota in October. Chief White is keynote speaker to kickoff NRCS effort. Will offer new management standards and new cost sharing for producers through EQIP and other incentives. Tour on Oct. 11 and meeting on Oct 12-13 in Minneapolis.

Recently awarded a new CIG. Project will install saturated buffers (3 in IN, IL, IA) to filter nitrate from tile outlet water. Start Jan 1, 2012 to 2014.

GS: DWM widely used in Ontario and other regions.

HR: not too widely adopted. Discovered that management after installation isn't as good as should be. May look to CCA to provide that service to producers.

SW: how much expertise needed to provide that service?

HR: Need to know when crops need water and adjust the water level accordingly.

SW: are soil sensors used?

HR: don't know of any, but assume you can do that. Some producers concerned about being connected to other neighbor tile lines.

Global Environment Facility

CC: working with GEF and UN to increase adoption of nutrient reduction strategies in the developing world. Want to identify best practices and case studies of successful application of those practices. Put those BMPs into a database that can be developed and shared with developing areas to increase protection of resources while increasing production. Areas targeted: Chilika Lake (India), Lake Victoria (Africa), Manila Bay, Bangkok, Brazil, Mexico.

SW: How do you raise these issues with local growers in these countries when they have such significant challenges – like hunger and sanitation, etc.

CC: link issues with agriculture, when appropriate. Clean water used for ag? We talk about production and protection.

SW: technology would help communicate with broad scope of people.

CC: technology used in US not possible in developing countries, so we're looking for what is possible.

SW: retired extension agent in Iowa; will send information. George Cummins. October world hunger congress in Des Moines.

Member Updates

GS: Board is mostly farmers, so it has been quiet. Dry on prairies, so harvest progressing well. Lentils and peas are off. Canola is harvested. Cereals next. Wet and cool down east.

DG: marketing no-till wheat on small scale to school systems in Oklahoma. Going well. Getting commitment, adding farmers to group. Getting interest from upscale grocery stores in Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Invited to setup booth with information. Transportation of flour and storage are next challenges.

SW: October issue out now. 50th anniversary of first no-till event. Controlled traffic.

CTIC: Indian Creek watershed project continues; two cover crop projects in the Great Lakes watershed; building a resource to increase access to successful nutrient management applications with partners.

Next call October 4 @ 11 am (eastern)