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A coalition of interested parties dedicated to improvement of water quality in West-Central Indiana and regions downstream.



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"HUAP" Happened in Busseron!

HUAP is a conservation practice that is not often seen in this region. Most agricultural best management practices involve cropland and it is no secret that cover crops, precision agriculture, and WASCObS (Water and Sediment Control Basin) reign in popularity here. However, the humble HUAP offers great benefits, both to water quality, livestock, and landowners.

HUAP is an acronym for Heavy Use Area Protection, and is often referred to as a "Heavy Use pad". This practice was designed to help stabilize 'mucky' areas where livestock congregate: hay rings, feeders, and watering tanks.



It benefits water quality by filtering excess nutrients and creating an opportunity for landowners to manage manure in a way that can be profitable for both their operation and the environment.

Though HUAP requires an engineering plan before it can be eligible for cost-share, the practice is relatively simple if you have the right site.

The area is graded for a smooth, even surface and then a layer of non-woven geotextile fabric (feels like a thick piece of felt) is placed on the ground. Afterwards, it is covered with a 6" layer of #53 stone. Finally, it is topped off with a 2" layer of ag lime. The fabric prevents gravel from being lost in the mud and allows for water to filter out away from the concentrated traffic area. Manure can be scraped off to the side to be utilized later.

If you would like to learn more about this beneficial conservation practice for livestock, contact us! □

Right: Travis Walters, NRCS and landowner Jason Danko with new HUAP



Above: Scott Wagner and Tom Perkins, NRCS CIT (Conservation Implementation Team) inspect an animal guard on a WASCOB tile outlet.

Below: Travis Walters, NRCS and landowner John Gill discuss his WASCOB project on-site.





Above: Pete Bednarski and Scott Wagner, NRCS CIT check construction on a WASCOB riser.

Below: Children crowd around to get their hands dirty at a Sullivan Public Library Summer Program “Worms and Dirt”



What is On Farm Network?

Many people may not be aware that the WCIWA also helps bring other beneficial programs to the area aside from 319 cost-share dollars. On Farm Network is one such example. This program was started in our Middle Wabash region (consisting of Sullivan, Vigo, Clay, Greene, and Knox counties) in 2011 and currently contains around a dozen producers. This year, 11 producers have enrolled 31 fields for Guided Stalk Sampling tests for Nitrogen. These tests are a part of a collective study on optimal levels of Nitrogen inputs and will help producers make decisions about how they can get the most 'bang for the buck' when applying fertilizer.

Naturally, from a water quality standpoint, the WCIWA wants to provide opportunities for acquiring more information on optimal inputs, with the goal of retaining as much N as possible for the crop, rather than the possibility of losing excess during heavy rains. Producers want to know if they are applying too much N or too little, and how that affects overall costs when it comes to efficient nutrient management.

Producers remain anonymous and are provided with high-definition aerial maps of their fields, as well as an opportunity to meet with professionals to discuss the sample data and maps. Group data is also available to producers, as well. Meetings are held in the winter to review each year's data and to provide an opportunity for local discussion about what the data may indicate and how it can be interpreted.

The On Farm Network website <http://www.in.gov/isda/ofn/about.htm> tells the whole story regarding this innovative program in Indiana:

About Indiana On-Farm Network®

In August 2010 the Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was awarded a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) by the United States Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA/NRCS). The purpose of the CIG was the formation and implementation of The Indiana On-Farm Network®. As a pilot project, in August 2010, ISDA worked with the Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District to engage a group of 17 farmers. Aerial imagery and guided stalk sampling was conducted on 39 fields.

History of On-Farm Network®

The On-Farm Network® was developed by the Iowa Soybean Association in 2000 to address key challenges in advancing water quality goals in the state related to production agriculture – current approaches to nutrient management typically rely on generalized information and fail to show farmers how to make conservation pay. The farmer directors of the ISA pioneered an On-Farm Network to increase profits and decrease environmental problems from grain production in Iowa.

In 2001, ISA farmer directors invested organization funds to initiate innovative adaptive management programming, working with growers to conduct outcome-based, farm-specific evaluations to optimize N management for corn. In Iowa, the adaptive management process has

shown most growers can reduce their N rates by one-third while maintaining or increasing profitability. This reduction is below NRCS's current general guideline for nutrient management, meaning the program is able to generate greater nutrient reductions and water quality benefits than standard nutrient management plans.

The approach seeks to address the core challenge holding back more improvement in nutrient use efficiency by farmers today – current N recommendations seldom distinguish between time of application, N sources, method of application or rainfall, all of which are important factors in managing N, and they do not provide farmers with an accessible way to compare the economic impacts of different practices. Better prediction of N availability and N needs requires evaluative tools and a way for all people interested in improving the efficiency of N use to participate in understanding the results from the evaluative tools. Because N fertilizer is a major input cost for farmers, the ability to identify and implement strategies to apply N more efficiently is a win for farmers (increased profit) and a win for the environment (less nutrient loss to ground and surface water).

To overcome the hurdles to greater progress on nutrient management, we need approaches that

1) provide farmers with nutrient information that is field-specific, 2) allow them to better understand this new information, and 3) enable them to act upon that information. The On-Farm Network® creates the needed infrastructure for collection and assessment of field-specific information about the effectiveness of nutrient management practices.

This innovative strategy combines two new ideas - adaptive management and evaluation of N management practices - to create a powerful and effective program for change. The network in the On-Farm Network® is the coordinated interaction and learning build among farmers, advisors, and technical experts to facilitate group learning, interaction, and improved management efficiency based on improved access to information – to do adaptive management in real time with real impacts and benefits.

Experience in IA and PA has clearly shown that group learning through the collection and reporting of aggregated data in an area, such as a watershed or county, accelerates grower learning and adoption of more efficient N management practices and increases grower interest. This is the true innovation of the approach – utilizing effective tools for evaluating nitrogen status and needs within coordinated network look at N status information not only at the individual field and farm level, but at the aggregate level across multiple farms, creating a feedback loop to the farms individually and in aggregate to foster improved environmental and economical efficiency. Extensive information, data, and results from IA are available online at <http://www.isafarmnet.com/nitrogen.html>.

If you are interested in participating in the On Farm Network program in the future, please contact us to learn more!





Join the WCIWA Technical and Advisory Committees

-Busseron
-TTK

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Events and Important Dates

July 8th - CCSI Irrigation Field Day, Villwock Farms, Edwardsport, IN

July 9th - Merom Public Library Youth Program "Worms and Dirt"

July 5-12 Vigo County Fair Week

July 11-19 Sullivan, Greene, and Clay County Fair Week

July 22 - TTK Advisory Committee Mtg. 6:30

Aug.1-17 - Indiana State Fair

August 6 - CCSI Soil Health Expo and Precision Ag field day, Evansville, IN

Aug. 19 - TTK Advisory Committee Mtg. 6:30

Sept. 18 - Busseron Steering Committee Mtg. 6:30

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WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT