



Technical Service Provider Network (TSPN)

June 30th 2011



MAKING CONSERVATION A PRIORITY

IN THIS ISSUE



TSPN Board Members:: (lower row, left to right) Bill Killian, At-Large; Dallas Heikens, Board President; Mike Sexton, Past-President; Joe Lally, Treasurer; (upper row) Alan Larsen, At-Large; Dennis Godar, President-Elect; Joe Schultz, Secretary. Not pictured: Renee Hancock, Nebraska NRCS Liaison.

It is daunting to be following in the footsteps of Mike Sexton, our former TSPN President. He did such a great job of guiding the organization's growth since its inception on September 7, 2011 and I can only promise to work hard to duplicate his success! I believe that I can speak for the entire board in congratulating Mike on his successful bid for the Iowa House of Representatives!

Overseeing an organization with such ambitious goals requires more than a little understanding of the history and mission of the group. As part of the Annual meeting, membership approved created our new board positions of Past-President and President-Elect. Mike will provide me with a support and guidance during my tenure as President, while Dennis Godar, our new President-elect, takes on more of a leadership position, ultimately providing a

A Changing of the Guard

by Dallas Heikens, TSPN President

smooth transition when he takes over as President.

I am eagerly looking forward to my tenure as TSPN President. The TSPN board has proven itself to being a working board, with each member committed to meeting our 2015 goals and creating more work and training opportunities for TSPs, and gaining more of a voice in NRCS national and state decision-making.

I also want to thank you, as our dedicated membership, for supporting this organization. Your support of higher quality in TSP work products and your encouragement to producers to implement conservation practices, makes this the premier TSP conservation organization. Thank you!



Iowa Appoints New TSP Coordinator

Eric Hurley is now the TSP Coordinator in Iowa. Learn more about him in this issue, as well as an update on Iowa training opportunities.

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NE Signs a MOU with TSPN

Meet Renee Hancock, the new NE TSPN Liaison!

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Progress Report

by Joe Lally, Board Treasurer

In September, 2014, TSPN successfully partnered with ISU to develop an application for a \$25,000.00 McKnight Foundation Grant. The work we'll be undertaking with the proceeds of this grant will be to work with 15 Ag Retailers across the state of Iowa to document their ideas on "the barriers that Ag Retailers see when adding conservation management sales" to the farmers they serve.

Survey after survey has concluded that the highest level of trust a farmer has is with their Ag Retailer. We believe that based on that conclusion, logic would dictate that this same farmer could and would accept conservation management sales/discussions with the CCA's/Ag sales representatives.

We also know that conservation management sales by the agencies and departments charged with this initiative are not meeting the public's needs for this service. Reduced staffing in NRCS district offices, combined with a reduction in federal funding, create real challenges to making progress in conservation management. It is up to the private sector to take a leadership role in encouraging and educating producers

about the economic and environmental importance of conservation planning.

Since

Jerry Muff, a dedicated TSPN member and a certified TSP, has volunteered to take on the responsibility of working with 5 Ag Retailers



receiving the grant, an Advisory Committee has been formed and has provided discussion points and suggestions for TSPN in moving forward toward meeting the objectives of the grant. TSPN will next be sending a poll to Ag Retailers to obtain information about their possible entry into conservation management sales.

in Eastern Iowa.

This is a one year grant of \$25,000, which will be paid to TSP's exploring these issues. The final report of findings is due October 1st, 2015. I will serve as the Principal Investigator.

Please share this newsletter with other TSP's you know, and suggest they consider joining

News from the Boardroom

by Dallas Heikens, Board President

TSPN Annual Meeting a Big Hit with Attendees

Approximately 40 participants attended the Annual Meeting & Training event held in Urbandale, IA in September. Survey results indicate that this year's event was even more successful than last year. Over 90% of respondents indicated that their knowledge levels had been increased as a result of attending.

Suggestions for future events included having a social event, including a TSP Coordinator Update, and inviting more national speakers. The UAV speaker was the overall favorite of the day, followed closely

by the National Organic CAP presentation and the Organic CAP speaker.

Board Member Orientation Packet

New Board Member Alan Larsen brought it to the Board's attention that Board members are no longer always founding members of the organization! As a result, we have created a draft Orientation Packet for new Board Members. Let us know if you think we should distribute a Members Packet also!

Nebraska NRCS Signs MOU with TSPN

Nebraska State Conservationist, Craig Derickson, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with TSPN in August, 2014.



TSPN Treasurer, Joe Lally, watches as NE State Conservationist sign TSPN MOU.

Wanted: One TSP in Central Iowa and one TSP in Western Iowa to work on this project. You will be financially compensated for your work. Contact Joe Lally at jotbud1@gmail.com

TSPN ANNUAL MEETING PICS



New NE Liaison

New TSPN NE Liaison (left), Renee Hancock, pictured with the former IA Liaison, Judy Martinson



Iowa NRCS Update

NRCS National Energy Efficiency Liaison Strikes All the Right Notes

Rebecca MacLeod was a huge hit with the TSPs attending the TSPN Annual Meeting. They really appreciated her down-to-earth approach and terrific sense of humor!

Allen Gehring, Iowa NRCS State Engineer, was one of several Iowa NRCS State Office staff members who provided TSP updates and program information

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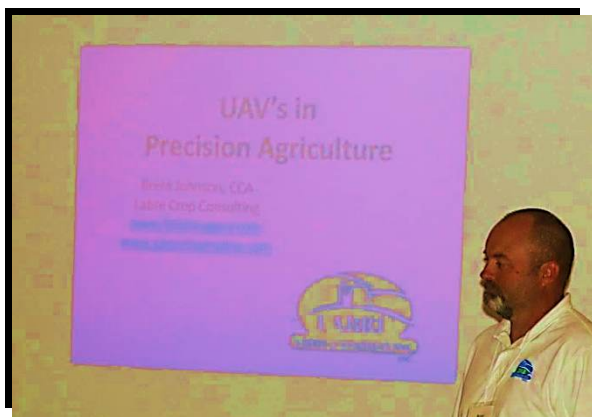
Judy Martinson, Iowa NRCS Technical Service Provider Coordinator since 2004 has been replaced by Eric Hurley, NRCS Nutrient Management Specialist. Judy will be concentrating her efforts on her position as Iowa NRCS State Training Officer. Eric brings many years of experience in manure management and is looking forward to his tenure as the Iowa TSP Coordinator. In addition to Eric, TSPs will also have several other Iowa NRCS Team Members they can call on for assistance with TSP issues. These individuals are: Mark Garrison, Environmental Engineer, Laurel Forman, Hydrologist, and Jered Finley, an Area Resource Conservationist (see contact information below.)

NRCS TSP Contact List:

Grover DePriest	Assistant State Resource Conservationist	515-323-2292
Eric Hurley	TSP Coordinator	515-323-2243
Mark Garrison	Environmental Engineer	515-323-2226
Laurel Foreman	Hydrologist	515-323-2291
Jered Finley	Area Resource Conservationist	563-422-6201

TSPN BOARD CONTACT LIST

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IA Liaison	Eric.Hurley@ia.usda.gov



Brent Johnson of Labre Crop Consulting provided an outstanding presentation on the use of UAVs in Precision Agriculture.



Lake Springfield Watershed Partnership

by Dennis Godar, TSPN President Elect

Background: "Illinois Council on Best Management Practices (CBMP) is launching a 3 year special nitrogen management program in the Lake Springfield, IL watershed. This program encourages ag- retailers and farmers to adopt a nitrogen management system in the watershed to minimize environmental impact, optimize harvest yield and maximize input utilization (MOM). In addition to CBMP, local Ag retailers and farmers, other vital partners in the project include City Water Light & Power (CWLP), Sangamon County SWCD and the Lincoln Land Community College Ag program." From:

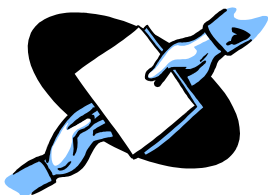
<http://illinoiscbmp.org/>

Update: The Lake Springfield Watershed (LSW), has recently received a 319 EPA grant to implement conservation practices in the watershed, designed to reduce soil erosion and nutrient losses that directly affect water quality of Lake Springfield, water source to over 200,000 people and a watershed area of 170,000 acres. The EPA grant includes funding for buffers, waterways, tile drainage improvements including bio-reactors, incentive payments to promote cover crops and last, but not least, writing NMPs on 1000 acres in strategic areas in the watershed.

Recently, I was invited to speak to the LSW Resource Planning Committee about what is involved to implement an NMP conforming to the NRCS IL-590 Standard. Consensus with other conservation professionals and watershed managers at the meeting was there are not enough trained TSPs, especially if NMPs become required in the future for similar watershed management programs. The LSW project is a model for watershed partnerships because of bringing together many stakeholders of various backgrounds that share a common goal, Water quality of our Lake Springfield. This partnership includes farmers, landowners, municipal property managers, homeowner groups in the various neighborhoods surrounding the lake, and also works with Ag-retailers to manage and monitor nitrogen inputs via the N-Watch program. Lincoln Land Community College is participating in the program with ag-students collecting and analyzing water samples through-out the watershed, and LLCC is developing curriculum to offer college classes in watershed management and yes, TSP training to write NMPs.

So I am reporting positive news from central Illinois for increasing demand for TSP services and increasing numbers of certified TSPs. TSPN will be there to support our membership and hopefully adding new TSPs to our ranks in Illinois.

TSPN Membership Policy Update



What a Great Opportunity!!

by Joe Lally, TSPN Treasurer



It started in August of 2014, and continues today. Farmers (tenants, farmer owners, and landowners collectively) discussing land leases for 2015. What I've found was very few cash rent tenants had discussed the 2015 lease with their landowners prior to sending the landowner a written notice of lease termination. A request followed in September of a 'need' to lower the cash rent. The kind of leases varied, but the premise was the same everywhere: lower the land cost to the tenant.

The first question I find useful in these one on one discussions is (to the tenant) **"What are you interested in offering in exchange for a lower land cost?"** The opportunities are limitless. The priority must be that both landowner and tenant agree on is that, at the end of the day, the landowners property is in better shape in 2016, than it was in 2015, and that the tenant has a chance to produce more units in

2015, than 2014. I have never been a fan of land leases written on an acre basis. The real estate under consideration has a numeric value in the market place that the landowner is looking to "gain a return on investment". That's a discussion for another day.

My interest in sharing this article is to "Start the Conversation" about Conservation Management". And, what a great opportunity to use precision conservation to help us chart the future of landowner/tenant relationships. Gone are the days when a 5 lb ham from the tenant to the landowner was a good business practice. Now, it's how can we manage this farm that yields us another 50 units of production over the next 5 years, sustainably, and at lowest overall cost and creates the best impact to the environment.

Let's start with 2014 production as the basis for our 5 year plan. That means sharing the actual yields. Add to the metrics that fall of 2014 grid sampled soil test results (share these), and then overlay the yield maps from the combine computer with the soil test maps. Next assess and share the natural resource concerns identified by physical assessment. Note the places on the farm that need a grassed waterway (the permanent type), headlands, buffer strips, filter strips, tile lines (or lack of), exit points of tile lines (and water monitored at those points), crop rotation scheduled, fertility requirements (I recommend at least one soil health test of either the best dirt or worst dirt on the farm). Now you have the basics for a lease discussion.

If you decide that headlands need to be planted on steep end rows of a field, do you take those square feet off the farmable acres, and then run that exercise throughout all the tillable acres until you have arrived at the best use of the farm for continuous row crop production and a fair price for the very best dirt on the farm. Do you add cover crops within 2 weeks of soybean harvest? Deduct the conservation management acres off the tenants lease land. Next figure out the best use of the non-tillable square feet taken off the land's tillable cash rent. Best of all, you don't need the government subsidies to act on any of this. Some may qualify for CRP, some as hay production, some as rye cover, up the ephemeral gullies, some as wildlife habitat, or a bee production center. Whatever, we can do more on conservation management, but the great opportunity to start the conservation management conversation is NOW!

Nebraska NRCS Update



Renee Hancock, NE NRCS Technical Service Provider Coordinator, is also the new TSP Liaison for Nebraska. Renee held training in October for Prescribed Burning and CAP 112 Prescribed Burn Management Plans. TSPs from Nebraska, Illinois, and Iowa attended the training, along with a NRCS Range Specialist from Oklahoma and Dana Larsen, formerly with the NRCS TSP National Team.

NE NRCS TSP Contact List:

Renee Hancock	TSP Coordinator	402-437-4064
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TSPN Helps Iowa Farmers Implement Conservation

by Joe Lally, TSPN Treasurer

On Sept. 6, 2013, Iowa State Conservationist Jay T. Mar signed an agreement today with the Technical Service Provider Network (TSPN), which will help USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) more efficiently develop and implement conservation plans for Iowa farmers. The MOU says, in effect, that NRCS will provide a liaison to the TSPN (Martinson), along with



Iowa

information and support to technical service providers so they understand NRCS technical requirements and are aware of information available to them. The Wallace's Farmer, an online agricultural new magazine, hailed the agreement as a way to use private consulting to help get more conservation on the ground.



Judy Martinson, former Iowa NRCS liaison to the TSPN, stated at that time that the new memorandum of understanding (MOU) would increase the availability of technical service to Iowa farmers and landowners. "The MOU helps the two groups define their respective responsibilities and expectations," she said. "TSPN and Iowa NRCS share a common interest in the wise use and management of natural resources as well as improving educational and work opportunities for TSPs."

More recently, the TSPN board members met with the national TSP team and Iowa Congressional representatives to discuss opportunities and challenges for TSPs. In July, TSPN successfully applied for a McKnight Foundation for a \$25,000.00 grant. This grant will enable the organization to develop a collaborative effort with agricultural retailers in Iowa to promote TSP skill in water and conservation practices. The group holds seats on the Iowa State Technical Committee and the Illinois Farm Bureau Legislative Roundtable. The group also co-sponsored the Iowa NRCS Conservation Planning, Part II training for TSPs, held their 3rd Annual Meeting and Training, participated in the Iowa Cattleman's Feedlot Forum, and met with producers in several Iowa counties to kick-off their "Get the Conversation Started" campaign. The campaign is designed to promote voluntary conservation efforts and improve understanding of the TSP Initiative.

The group is currently working towards signing a MOU with NRCS as a certifying organization. There are also plans to host several additional training sessions for TSP for writing CNMPs and to promote better understanding of NRCS standards and specifications. Nebraska NRCS has signed an MOU with the organization and TSPN board members have met with several other NRCS State Offices to gather support for the organization's training efforts. The group currently has approximately 50 members from 10 states.

Partnership Update with Iowa State Conservationist

by Joe Lally, TSPN Treasurer

On Wednesday, February 18th, Mike Sexton, Past-President of TSPN, and Joe Lally, TSPN Treasurer, met with Mr. Jay Mar, Iowa NRCS State Conservationist, Eric Hurley, newly designated TSP Coordinator in Iowa, and Grover DePriest, Assistant State Resource Conservationist. The meeting was held in the Iowa state legislative offices of Mike Sexton, recently elected to the Iowa House of Representatives.

The purpose of the meeting was to gain updates on the personnel changes at NRCS state level, discuss strategic initiatives like Conservation Planning, additional area office staffing and responsibilities, i.e. agronomist, and renewed communication from the State NRCS Office to area offices, and including district offices. We discussed the need to keep all TSP's in the loop on both staffing changes and policy changes that impact our mutual interest in gaining conservation on the land. The TSP Initiative was designed to ease the workload on NRCS staff. NRCS has the responsibility of providing training and education of both its staff and TSP's.

Mr. Mar assured the group in attendance that the TSP Initiative was important to NRCS and the same level of partnership expectations for TSP's and TSPN, (the TSP network) was important to the state. The TSPN liaison support provided by Judy Martinson would now be handled by Eric Hurley, Iowa TSP Coordinator. These duties included training and education support, TSPN newsletter, TSPN website updates, and individual assistance with TSP profiles and certification on the TechReg Website. Pending CNMP Training for Engineers, CAP 138 training, and additional mini-camps training are being developed.

Future educational initiatives will include both NRCS and TSPN members to promote better communications and common understanding of policy initiatives. Mr. Mar indicated the best place to begin the common training would be with the state leadership team.

We all committed to doing a better job on improving our partnership, especially on interagency communication, as we strive to bring the best possible programs and plans to our common customer, the farmer.

Thank You, Judy Martinson (Iowa TSP Coordinator: 1994-2014)

by Donna Jolly, TSPN Member

On behalf of TSP's in Iowa and several states, we would like to thank Judy for all the assistance she has provided us over the past several years. Judy went above and beyond the "call of duty." Training has been her expertise, and curriculum development has always entailed both classroom and field exercises. It was important to Judy to create an adult learning experience that was both fun and relevant, but also left a lasting impression for future use in real life situations. Judy's priority was to have TSPs learn "the NRCS way" in applying the programs. She has provided us with guidance, support, and a valued friendship which we will always treasure. Judy has been with us all the way as we started with an idea of an organization to where it is today....a robust, growing "Network" whose future is very bright. Judy has assisted us with our training, education, editing profiles, and offering us encouragement when we needed it most. We were fortunate to have a TSP Coordinator who truly believed in the TSP Initiative, and in all

of us who are a part of the Conservation movement. Judy truly loves the land. She also loves the conservation of the land, and the Technical Service Providers she has helped train.....the feeling is mutual.



Judy Martinson (far left), Iowa NRCS TSP Coordinator 2004-2014, posing with the new TSPN Board at the 2014 Annual Meeting.

Individual membership - \$100 per year – Certified TSP – Current

Business Membership - \$200 per year – Priority Service is Conservation Planning

Allied Business Membership - \$200 per year – Support Role to TSPN

Associate Member – \$75 per year - TSP-Elect – Working to gain TSP Certification

Allied Individual – CCA - \$50 per year – Support role to TSPN

Training: Members Advantage –

Individual Day long event – 50% discount

2 day event – 25% discount

3 – 5 day - \$100 discount

Remembering the 3rd Annual TSPN Meeting!

Comfort Suites

Urbandale, IA

September 5th, 2014



In Partnership with:



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Tentative Topics Include:

- ✓ TSP Opportunities through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program
- ✓ **Important Vote on bylaws change**
- ✓ Unmanned aerial systems
- ✓ The Benton/Tama Strategy Initiative
- ✓ International export/import

