



Regional Conservation Professional Training Program

GREAT LAKES
REGION



National Themes:

Animal Waste Management
Nutrient and Pesticide Management
Pollution Assessment and Prevention

Project Description

Conservation Planning is an integral first step in making sound land use decisions affecting both agricultural and non-agricultural areas. True conservation planning involves a working knowledge of the science behind the resource and potential management solutions, as well as understanding of the cultural, social and economic factors that influence a landowner's decisions. A farm's conservation plan is the base document from which all other land management options should start.

The Conservation Professional Training program is a six-state project that provides both a base level of training for conservation staff (soil and water conservation districts/partner agencies, private sector consultants, Extension) and advanced technical targeted training in specialized areas (such as pest management, comprehensive nutrient management planning, forestry, etc). It is led by university Extension systems in Great Lakes Region states, and is developed and supported by a core leadership team representing the Great Lakes Regional Water Program (GLRWP), a partnership between USDA-CSREES and the Land-Grant universities in the region. Each program is developed in consultation with Land-Grant specialists, conservation agency staff and Certified Crop Advisors in each state. Course tracks include: Integrated Pest Management, Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning (CNMP), Grazing, and Conservation Planning. This project was originally piloted in Wisconsin and Minnesota, then made available to partner states. Conservation Professional Training programs are now implemented in a variety of ways by various states in the region.



A Conservation Planning class learns how different tillage practices leave silage.

The purpose of the Great Lakes Regional Conservation Professional Development and Training Program is to provide integrated, flexible conservation training that provides conservation professionals with:

- the skills and knowledge to write conservation plans (esp. CNMPs and nutrient management plans);
- a holistic conservation perspective in order to write more effective conservation plans;

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- greater ability to develop positive relationships with landowners that either require conservation plans or that voluntarily implement them;
- the capacity to help their agencies reach various goals for implementation of conservation planning; and
- a positive view of their own potential for career growth.

Outcomes

Wisconsin has developed a fully functional and well-attended conservation training program. Thirty Technical Service Providers have been successfully trained. The program has expanded to a jointly facilitated CNMP course in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Minnesota is currently implementing a two-year strategy to provide statewide conservation training. Sharing ideas and curricula among the partner states has saved both time and money. For example, Minnesota borrowed Wisconsin's CNMP and RUSLE 2 curriculum and implemented it with minor modifications. In addition:



Learning tree identification at the University of Wisconsin arboretum during the invasive plant management course.

- Private sector Conservation and CNMP Planners report using the skills learned in the site assessment training to make suggestions for implementing environmentally beneficial practices on each farm for which they have written a CNMP or Conservation Plan;
- More than 130- 595/Pest Management plans have been written in Wisconsin by planners trained under the program; and
- More than 150 CNMPs have been written in Wisconsin and Minnesota by planners trained under the program.



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