

2008 Training Needs Assessment

Michigan Analysis

May 8, 2008

Background: In February, March and April, 2008, an electronic needs analysis was conducted of agency staff and certified crop advisors (CCAs) in the six Great Lakes states by the Great Lakes Regional Conservation Professional Development and Training program. The survey was distributed to all SWCD employees in the state via email and a single email was sent by the American Society of Agronomy to all certified individuals in Michigan.

This summary includes the data for Michigan participants, and was produced by Kevin Erb, U of WI Extension. In the tables, the top 3 responses are bolded. Unique responses (i.e. a category seemed significantly higher than the mean) are italicized.

Geographic distribution of assessment users by zip code

Assessment Participation	
Total MN	125
NRCS	6
SWCD	68
Private Sector	28
Independent	8



Note that ~8% of respondents who listed that they worked in Michigan have offices located outside of Michigan

Q9: Self Identified needs in next two years:

	Mean <i>0-4.0 scale</i>	SWCD	NRCS	Independent	Private Sector
Farmstead Assessment/MAEAP/CNMP	1.74	1.44	2.33	2.63	1.86
590/Nutrient Management Plan	1.70	1.25	1.83	2.75	2.25
IPM Plan (595)	1.76	1.39	1.50	2.63	2.41
Whole Farm Conservation Plan	1.85	1.76	1.50	2.63	2.00
Feed Management Plan	1.27	1.19	1.50	1.63	1.29
Managed Grazing Plan	1.35	1.34	1.83	1.75	1.07
Cover Crops as part of mgt system	1.74	1.60	2.17	2.25	1.71

(0 is very low, 2.0 is neither low nor high, 4.0 is very high) Italicized/red are 0.5 higher than the mean.

Q11: Self identified needs continued

	Mean <i>0-4.0 scale</i>	SWCD	NRCS	Independent	Private Sector
Winter Manure Application	1.57	1.30	2.33	2.75	1.64
IPM-Specialty Crops	1.69	1.42	2.00	2.00	2.18
Invasive Plant Management	2.30	2.55	2.50	1.88	2.00
Forestry	1.80	2.37	1.83	0.43	0.96
Prescribed Burning Management	1.50	1.88	2.33	0.63	0.96
Wetland Management	2.30	2.65	2.50	2.38	1.75
Riparian Corridors and Buffers	2.36	2.66	2.00	2.57	1.93
Wildlife Management	2.04	2.59	1.83	1.75	1.33
Drainage-Pref. Flow issues	2.08	2.16	2.33	3.00	1.54
Drainage Management	2.13	2.27	2.67	3.17	1.64
Cover Crops	2.14	1.92	2.50	3.38	2.08
RUSLE 2	1.87**	1.64	2.33	2.86	2.04
Land Treatment/Erosion Control Practices	2.61	2.73	2.33	3.25	2.57

**21% left this question blank/did not know what RUSLE2 is.

Q13: Self Identified needs in next two yearsô Emerging Issues:

	Mean <i>0-4.0 scale</i>	SWCD	NRCS	Independent	Private Sector
Farmstead Assessment (env risk/strategies to minimize risk)	1.77	1.61	2.00	2.63	1.82
Conservation Effects of BioFuels	2.53	2.40	3.50	2.25	2.71
Organic Farming (practices/certification	1.93	2.22	2.33	2.13	1.43
On-farm Energy generation/conservation	2.28	2.19	3.33	2.50	2.14
Climate Change/ Carbon Sequestration	2.56	2.52	3.67	2.88	2.57
Groundwater Conservation/Protection	2.62	2.48	3.17	3.88	2.79



Barriers

Q17: To what extent is each of the following a problem when you want to enroll in any professional training?

	Mean <i>0-4.0 scale</i>	SWCD	NRCS	Independent	Private Sector
Number of days allowed by employer	2.39	2.48	2.60	2.13	2.39
Getting approval from employer	2.49	2.55	2.40	2.25	2.54
Scheduling given job responsibilities	1.46	1.62	1.17	1.63	1.11
Cost of training regardless reimbursement	1.25	0.89	1.50	1.63	1.86
Cost of staying overnight	1.24	0.82	1.67	2.13	1.93
Budgets	0.98	0.55	0.67	1.75	1.82
Getting approval for out of state travel	1.53	1.23	1.83	2.13	1.75
Attitude of Supervisor	1.34	1.32	1.83	0.88	1.29

Agency / TSP breakdown: Willing to pay for training: (we gave ranges, took middle of range for analysis)

MEAN	\$66.73
SWCD	\$63.25
NRCS	\$66.67
Private	\$78.57
Independent	\$65.62

Question 15:

Considering your professional needs for the next two years, are there specific courses that you would like to see provided?

Conservation Districts

- Bio-energy, new GPS soil sampling using fertilizer recommendation to meet 590 standards, feed needs ration balancing, cover crop plans, drainage and structures
- arcGIS training, tool kit
- Human resources, Grant management, Personnel policies, EEO, budgeting and reading reports for MDA
- Budget Projecting, Cash Flow Analysis, Goal Setting for Success
- Forestry training, Advanced GIS training, Tree and shrub ID.
- strategic planning, accounting, ways to reach sustainable funding
- A focused course on cover crops
- Wetland Delineation, Conservation Planning Certification, Survey and Design Refresher Training, arcGIS/GPS Training, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Certification Training
- CAD, engineering design etc.
- MCCI verification
- Employee Management, Accounting with understanding tax status and legal requirements of conservation districts.
- Hydrology, Geomorphology, In-Stream Habitat, Helping communities through the dam removal process, 301 Permit application help, marketing and selling conservation to the public, managing woody debris in streams, how to create a good monitoring program in watersheds (what type of monitoring, cheap ways to monitor, but getting good information), writing QAPP's, How to write and facilitate Strategic Plans, Facilitation Training
- Strategic Planning
- Marketing conservation programs
- Management, Supervisory, Strategic Planning, Fund Raising, Grant Writing, Communications, Working with Legislature and other public officials
- Nutrient Mgt. Planning, Carbon Seq., Prescribed Burning, Conservation Planning for whole farms -- a lot of what I marked 4/5 in earlier questions
- updating accounting procedures, reaching and working with absentee land owners, wildlife habitat wetland restoration
- Leadership & Strategic Planning
- Strategic planning models
- fundraising, grant writing, forming partnerships, energy conservation, urban conservation
- reviewing USACE and MDEQ permits, red card certification for controlled burns
- cnmp training
- Carbon sequest., organic farming
- none at this time
- Storm water Management, wetland identification, soils information
- Managing employees, conflict resolution, strategic planning, marketing
- board development, business plan development
- Grant applications, calculations for matching funds,
- GIS related courses
- More on organics. Natural insect control. Using Native Plants. Greenhouses.
- Wetland delineation.
- Successful grant writing course
- Biofuels- I would like to understand the difference behind biodiesel, bioethanol, cellulosic ethanol and why certain crops are better stock for specific fuels.
- CNMP Training, Rotational Grazing Systems, Engineering practices, irrigation training
- soil erosion methods and materials
- Specific training would be more helpful. Forestry, pest and plant ID

Independent Consultants

- There seems to be a large gap that lies between true agronomists who are working with farmers on maximizing production, and giving these same agronomists the skills and ammunition to help farmers take total advantage of all of the help that is out there to improve the ecological part of their operation. There are way too many governmental agencies who have positioned themselves for government money for these programs, so all of the programs are hamstrung both economically, and by the mass confusion that is brought on by all of the programs that are available.
- How to handle the rising conflict between landowners(public) and CAFO's
- Odor impacts to the surrounding area, Water and nutrients movement in the soil profile.

NRCS

- project management
- Strategies to maintain the percent solids of Liquid Manure high enough that Preferential Flow into drainage tile or bedrock aquifers those not occur...
- Adaptation and use of cover crops; role of carbon in soil health
- Biofuel related to crops and grassland improvement for energy consumption

Private Sector

- Indiana needs to offer local CNP planning seminars and should be in conjunction with NRCS,EPA and Farm Bureau
- nitrogen management
- Strategic planning
- Bureacracy training with MDA
- Using seed technology
- You have covered it pretty well
- Anything to deal with government regulations and the Agri-Chemical industry.
- A program wrote that is user friendly for writing manure plans, fertility plans
- Uses data collection and decision support systems to enhance producer efficiency, reduce impacts and enhance profitability.

Other Agencies/NGOs

- Watershed management courses
- the impact of the biofuels rush on conservation practices
- Pest Management
- Courses specific to wetland management and hydric soil identification would be very helpful.
- Training new Administrative support with the conservation district budget crunches.
- Source Water Protection
- Courses pertaining to the areas above that I rated high
- Soil Quality, Area Wide Conservation Planning

Question 16A:

Are you now considering taking professional training to meet any certification requirements? (e.g., NRCS TSP Certification, NRCS technical approval authority, State certifications, etc.)

Conservation Districts

- Yes (9)
- No (45)

Independent Consultants

- Yes (3)
- No (4)

NRCS

- Yes (4)
- No (1)

Private Sector

- Yes (5)
- No (23)

Other Agencies/NGOs

- Yes (5)
- No (18)

Question 16B:

Relating to Question 16A – If “YES”, Which topics?

Conservation Districts

- yes, Bio-energy
- Surveying
- Certified CNMP Provider
- Certified Crop Advisor
- Currently taking advanced wildlife management courses at the graduate level, and forestry courses at the undergraduate level.
- GIS, Watershed Management
- Certified Conservation Planner
- Currently uncertain as to which is most important.
- Stormwater, sedimentation control
- Nutrient Planning Workshop with OSU Extension
- NRCS Nutrient Management 3 day course, NRCS Pest Management 3 day course
- soil erosion inspector

- Restricted use pesticide training.
- certified plan writer for state
- Wetland delineation
- TSP Certification
- Taking the CNMP Requirements
- Certain NRCS courses. As a conservation district employee, I don't know if I can be certified. But the knowledge will be useful.
- Wetland delineation certification

Independent Consultants

- All topics regarding renewal of my CCA certification
- Not sure what will be available this year
- Anything that gets CEU's in the needed categories. After that whatever time I have left to fertility & IPM
- NRCS TSP Certification

NRCS

- NRCS, Soc of Wetland Scientists, CCA, Cert ARCPACS Prof Soil Scientist
- Contracting Officer Technical Representative refresher

Private Sector

- NRCS TSP certification
- State certifications
- TSP Continuing Certification
- I am a tsp already and want to stay certified

Other Agencies/NGOs

- FDFGD
- no
- Certified Professional Agronomist certification
- Courses related to hydric soils and wetlands - if available.
- NRCS TSP certification

Question 19:

Are there other important or limiting factors not mentioned in the previous question that you consider when making decisions about enrolling in professional training?

Conservation Districts

- How far to travel and how many times I need to go to the training. Don't like when trainings are a few days here and there which cause more travel time for me. It would be nice if you can get most of the trainings done in one shot. Make Trainings closer to middle of state for those of us that have to travel long distances.
- I am the only employee at this office and no one will be here if I am away.
- Lack of funds is the biggest problem right now.
- Time expense, travel expense, and reputation of organization
- Scheduling during busy months, my job responsibilities are seasonally intense
- Nothing that I can think of
- No (2)
- location, distance travelled, length of training
- travel time
- Is it during the work week or weekends & how many days might be away/overnight & if overnight availability of hotels/restaurants in area if meals and lodging are not included
- General attitude in our organization that grant-funded employees do not "deserve" training.
- available to attend
- Length of day in training, mind shuts down when too much is given to you over long period of time.
- Time involved.
- Being sure that trainings are directed toward us and taught by an organization who specializes in the specific training- not someone who thinks they know. That is how lawsuits happen in HR.

Independent Consultants

- Is it new information to be learned?
- training needs to be relevant to a service that will generate income
- Pretty much do as I please

NRCS

- Amount of time invested to prepare, travel, and take training course

Private Sector

- Quality of the program - reputation of the organization and provider.
- The state of Wisconsin historically has not offered a variety of training courses for soil scientists. We should have short courses on hydric soil identification, wetland delineation from a soil scientist point of view, more nutrient management training, and more conservation training. The University through their soils dept used to offer a nice two day course on soils in Madison - and there used to be a two day course on nutrient management at one time, but I have seen nothing since that time. Also, there is no real method of letting certified professionals know when training is being offered.
- Availability of multiple training dates for the same topics. Last year Iowa only had TSP training on 2 occasions of which I could not make either.
- Time that the training takes, including travel.
- time
- Travel time

- Many of the skills regarding "complete" agronomic consulting are limited to few independent professionals. Most people, such as myself on has been trained in a focused area - such as fertility or pesticides and could certainly use a well rounded training in all areas
- time of year training is given
- Employers are not in "the know" as to the need for CCA's to be certified.

Other Agencies/NGOs

- UIGG
- Going to training long distance isn't applicable for me; I have too much going on.
- CCA CEUs
- My biggest limits are time with other job responsibilities and budget constraints.
- Effectiveness of people doing the training
- no
- Length of training
- Reputation of the group providing the training and the quality of the training.

Question 37:

Is there any other information you would like to share about your need for professional conservation training or the quality of training you have received in the past?

Conservation Districts

- Budget constraints have hit conservation district hard. Keep costs down! Don't forget about the folks in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We cannot afford to travel 10 hours downstate to Lansing for training. Costs are exorbitant for those of us living above the Mackinac Bridge.
- NRCS and Districts used to be the technical experts when it came to erosion and water control...now we are just chasing funding and program \$\$\$\$\$. We need our people to have solid on the ground training with practical applications. Computers are good in calculations and designs, but unless we know what numbers go where and why, the data could be flawed. I think we need to learn stuff by hand first - then apply it with computers. And then, we need to install what we have designed so we know what works and why!!!! Thanks for the opportunity to comment.
- Nothing
- no
- more hands on training
- I think that more effort needs to be made for quality training time
- It seems inter-agency training events have been the best in the past.
- Midland CD employees have not had the NRCS training made available to them and this need to happen in order for us to be more valuable to the landowners.
- At this point, I'm probably too late to be thinking about training in anything.
- No- Just that again it is important to have qualified trainers.

Independent Consultants

- Brookside Laboratory Association has been a big help to getting new information.

NRCS

- Needs to be more "Hands on" and "In the Field" Training rather than filling out forms...
- The training I have received in the past has been great. I like the idea of Conservation practice training outside of NRCS. I would like to see more online courses for certification for the Midwest area.
- Classroom without field exercises are extremely ineffective for technical training.

Private Sector

- I belong to the Wisconsin Society of Professional Soil Scientists - I strongly believe ARCPACS should work more closely with them to offer training courses for soil scientists. At present - they do not do that and that would be a great opportunity for those of licenses in Wisconsin and also through ARCPACS as a professional soil scientist.
- Tell us what are customers (farmers) are required to do, so we can support that in our sales activities. We don't need the theory behind it as much as understanding the governmental requirements. We're there to make them profitable, not list rules and regulations like the government employees. We don't get paid to be trained in this area, it's a requirement. We need to be out in the field as much as possible to relay the message.
- Working with MABA should benefit everyone

Other Agencies/NGOs

- I have worked in the wastewater permit program for 20 yrs, but have worked in the animal agriculture regulatory program for less than one yr.
- It would be nice to have brief training on all the programs offered by the CD for all employees not employed by NRCS
- simple instructions/training on what NRCS needs in reporting for NMP and PMP from a TSP