

MCCC Annual Report:

1. Utilities Work
2. Cover Crop Champions and additional trainings
3. Crop Insurance in the Farm Bill
4. Supply Chain interest in sustainability

Utilities Work

NWF has begun to engage municipal water utilities in its larger agriculture work. Staff is working to link farmers with nearby utilities (with projects beginning in Iowa and hopefully soon in Illinois) to help spread the message about the benefits to area water quality through conservation practices, and specifically cover crops. The objective is to get utilities and the agriculture community working together to improve source water and address nutrient pollution problems on a watershed scale. NWF will work with the utility and local stakeholder groups to initiate good relationships with farmers and facilitate open communication while also testing different outreach and funding strategies. We are using and adapting the lessons learned through the Cover Crop Champions program on messaging and culture change to teach utility operators to be more effective communicators.

Cover Crop Champions

2018 is the sixth year of the Cover Crop Champion program. The Champions are cover crop leaders who provide region-specific information and farming knowledge to farmers and crop advisors. Financial and technical support from NWF allows Champions to travel around their state to discuss the multiple benefits of cover crop implementation. Training consists of a webinar series as well as an in person communications training to equip the Champions to spread their message more effectively. This year the program has 31 individual champions who work across 6 states.

The program is currently limited to the Upper Mississippi River Basin due to funding priorities. Staff is working on obtaining additional funding, which would allow the program to expand to Great Lakes, Plains and Mid-Atlantic regions.

NWF has also provided a number of outreach trainings in Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin to conservation and extension staff. NWF plans to expand this work, particularly around the Great Lakes, over the next two years.

Crop Insurance

With the Farm Bill up for renewal this year, we have an opportunity to introduce legislative solutions to the crop insurance issues around cover crops. Already we have seen bills introduced in the House and Senate that would address the crop insurance rules, definition of termination, and other issues within crop insurance.

Supply Chain

NWF participated in a couple of supply chain conversations about getting more producers to adopt cover crops, no till, and more diverse crop rotations. A number of knowledge/technical barriers exist including: logistics, easy and consistent documentation, information integrity, verification, and ultimately how to get farmers to adopt these practices since the supply chain does not want to offer any incentives or premiums.