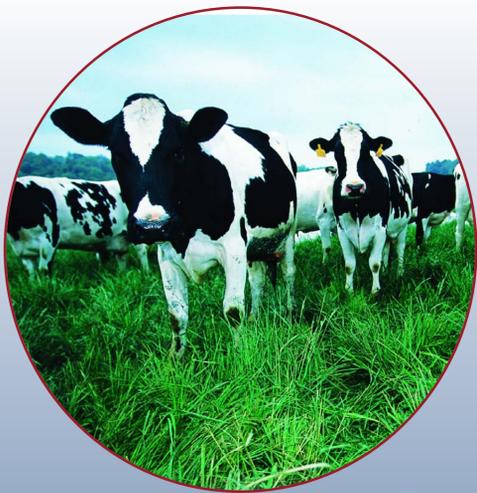


# Multi-State Approach to Integrated Conservation Professional Development and Training



## Situation:

A significant percentage of land grant and county/state/federal conservation staff have reached retirement age or have been offered early retirement. This loss of the most experienced conservation educators will accelerate over the next few years as a greater percentage of employees become eligible for retirement, while federal and local budgets dictate a shifting of resources. This potentially leaves the next generation of conservation staff less able to meet the ever-growing need of farm and non-farm landowners. In some areas, this trend is already affecting the level of service available. In response to these trends, the Great Lakes Regional Water Quality Leadership Team and the CSREES National Water Quality Program are meeting this need by supporting this integrated section 406 project, with additional funding for implementation provided by NRCS.

## Objectives:

The project objectives include the development, implementation and evaluation of conservation training in the following focus areas:

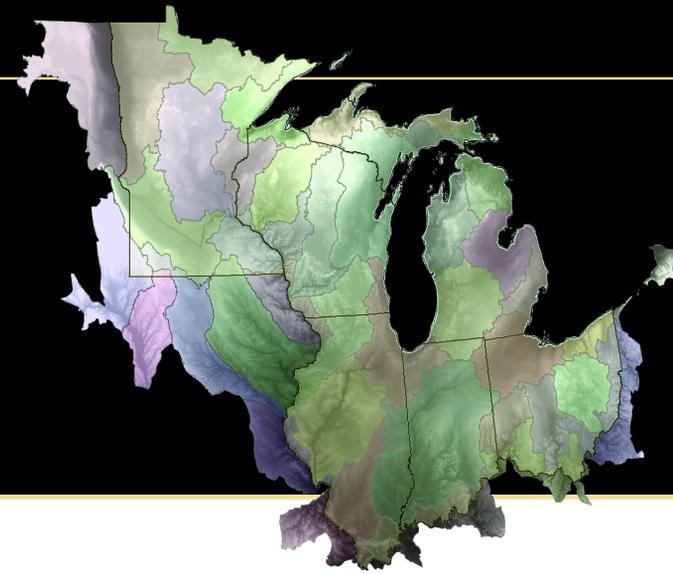
Core Conservation (targeting local conservation staff with less than 2 years experience): Designed to bring staff to a common base level of knowledge in people skills, evaluation techniques, conservation history, ethics, and landowner communication skills.

Conservation Planning (staff with 2-5 years experience and private sector consultants): A set of modules designed to bring participants to a common skill level in watershed planning, hydrology, and land use/conservation interaction.

Targeted topics (TSPs, CCAs and other private sector consultants): Specialized training in managed grazing, CNMP, forestry, pest management and other topics.

**Regional and National Implementation:** Project staff are currently working with NRCS to develop a national MOU for several of the curriculum areas. Once signed, the team will work with other Land Grants that want to adapt this training program and approach to the needs of local conservation staff in each state. The MOU should allow each NRCS state office to recognize the training program, and develop their own approach to certifying individuals who have trained under the program. *This type of program has the potential to greatly strengthen relationships between Land Grants, local conservation agencies, NRCS and the private sector by creating collaborative opportunities, allowing each to achieve their goals in a more efficient manner. NRCS in Wisconsin has contributed more than \$200,000 to support this program, because a fully trained and competent private sector and conservation staff increases their productivity.*

# Multi-State Curriculum Development



## Curriculum Focus: Core Conservation and Conservation Planning

A primary focus of this training program is Conservation Planning both for conservation agency staff and private sector TSP's. Three tracks (new hire, experienced staff and private sector - with 1-3 sessions each) feed into a four module series over 12 month period. Programs are taught by a combination of Extension (state specialists and local staff), agency partners (local conservation districts, federal partners) and private industry (CCAs, TSPs). This combination gives students a broad cross section, while at the same time exposing them to the practical realities of conservation on the land. The curriculum is being taught by a private-public partnership in Minnesota in summer, 2006.

## Curriculum Focus: Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning

Comprehensive Nutrient Management Planning was the first of 5 topic-oriented curriculum implemented in Wisconsin, and more than 150 private sector and local conservation agency staff have participated. The modules combine a hands-on approach (farm inspections, manure spill runoff demonstrations) with technical expertise lectures and a plan development exercise. An optional one-day session allows participants to review and evaluate existing plans to view how others have approached CNMP implementation



## Curriculum Focus: Rotational Grazing, Pest Management

Several other curricula are developed and are being packaged for multi-state distribution. These include Rotational Grazing Plan Development, Feed Management (for CNMP or as a stand-alone practice for N and P levels in dairy and beef rations) and Pest Management. A series of annual update seminars bringing for conservation planning are also under development.

# Contacts:

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