

Compilation of state responses to AAPCO request for information on current IEMs/conservation practices at the state or county level

Overview: The AAPCO Work Group on the USEPA Endangered Species Act (ESA) Work Plan requested information from State Lead Agencies (SLAs) on conservation practices and conservation education as part of an effort to provide the Agency with current information related to the Interim Ecological Measures (IEM) being proposed by EPA. Eleven states responded, North Dakota (ND), New Hampshire (NH), Vermont (VT), Michigan (MI), Florida (FL), Washington (WA), Montana (MT), Missouri (MO), Iowa (IA), Arizona (AZ), and Nebraska (NE). Their responses are summarized below. More information on the SLA responses can be found in the attached response .pdf files.

Question 1. The USEPA is interested in the extent of implementation of soil and water conservation practices. Please provide contacts and/or website links for state level NRCS tracking of implementation of soil and water conservation practices, any programs run at the state level that assist in implementation of these practices, any programs that are run by county level or other sub-divisions of state government that assist in implementation of these practices.

All SLAs responded that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was the contact at the state level and maintain information on conservation practices implemented with NRCS assistance. State level contacts are available at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/state-offices>

Most SLAs also identified Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SCDs) as sources of information on local programs. Contacts are available in their responses.

SLAs that also have state programs that complement NRCS programs and their contact:

MI - **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** <https://maeap.org/>

WA - **Voluntary Stewardship Program (VSP)**: <https://www.vsp.wa.gov/about-vsp> and **Pesticide Stewardship Program (PSP)**: Margaret Drennan mdrennan@agr.wa.gov and or Chris McCullough Chris.mccullough@agr.wa.gov

IA - **Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy** implemented through the IDALS Field Service Bureau: <https://iowaagriculture.gov/field-services-bureau>

NE – **Nebraska Buffer Strip Program**; https://nda.nebraska.gov/pesticide/buffer_strip.html

VT – **Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets (VAAF) Water Quality Division** - <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/assistance-programs>

Question 2. If there are easily accessed statistics on extent of implementation of these practices, or which practices are most widely implemented, at a state level, please provide a link to that information.

The following states provided links to information available on implementation of practices:

MI - **Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP)** https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/-/media/Project/Websites/mdard/documents/boilerplate-reports/fy2021/FY_2021_MAEAP_Legislative_Program_Report.pdf

IA - **Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy** <https://nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu/tracking-iowa-nutrient-reduction-strategy>

WA - Brian Cochrane at bcochrane@scc.wa.gov

VT - VAAFMM prepares an Annual Report to the Vermont General Assembly.

https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/doc_library/AAFMFY22ReportonFinancialandTechnicalAssistance.pdf

This report includes an interactive data presentation feature:

<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiOGU4ZGVlOWYtNzFkZC00ODM4LTg1NDctYmI3YWZhNTNmYTM5IiwidCI6IjIwYjQ5MzNiLWJhYWQtNDMzYy05YzAyLTcwZWRjYzclNTIjNiJ9>

Question 3. Does your state have any incentives for implementation of soil and water conservation practices other than those available through the NRCS?

The following SLAs reported incentives other than NRCS programs:

WA – Sustainable Farms and Fields <https://www.scc.wa.gov/sff> . and STAR program Dani Gelardi dgelardi@agr.wa.gov

MO – MO DNR Parks, Soils and Water Sales Tax, <https://dnr.mo.gov/land-geology/businesses-landowners-permittees/financial-technical-assistance/soil-water-conservation-cost-share-practices>

VT – Best Management Practices (BMP) Program, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), the Capital Equipment Assistance Program (CEAP), the Farm Agronomic Practices (FAP) Program, the Grassed Waterway and Filter Strip (GWFS) Program, the Pasture and Surface Water Fencing (PSWF) Program, and the Vermont Pay for Performance (VPFP) Program. VAAFMM supports water quality improvement on farms through the Agricultural Water Quality Initiative Program (AgCWIP) -<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality/assistance-programs>

IA - IDALS Field Services Bureau (state program staff) are in every NRCS field office in the state and work closely together to assist with cost share projects. - <https://costshare.iowaagriculture.gov/swcdprograms-funding>

Question 4. Is there information available on which soil and water conservation practices are used on small acreage farms or specialty crops?

SLAs referred this question to the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts. This information does not appear to be readily available.

Question 5. Is the NRCS practice “Pest Management Conservation System – code 595” being used or implemented in your state? (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/guides-and-instructions/pest-management-conservation-system-ac-595-conservation-practice>) Who would be the best contact for information about the extent of use of this practice?

SLAs responded that the NRCS state office would be the contact for this information. The following SLAs provided specific contact information:

NH – jessica.rock@usda.gov

FL – Robert.luciano@usda.gov

MT – kyle.tackett@usda.gov

WA - Brian Cochrane at bcochrane@scc.wa.gov

Question 6. The USEPA is interested in how producers are educated about these practices. Please provide a contact or weblink for extension service efforts to educate producers about soil and water conservation practices.

The following SLAs provided contacts for extension service providers regarding soil and water conservation practices:

NH - <https://extension.unh.edu/event-tags/agriculture-gardens>

FL - <https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/agriculture/>

MT – Dr. Bob Peterson <https://landresources.montana.edu/swm/index.html>

WA- Jodi Prout of the Palouse Conservation district (JodiP@palouseCD.org)

MO- <https://dnr.mo.gov/land-geology/businesses-landowners-permittees/financial-technical-assistance/soil-water-conservation-cost-share-practices>

IA - *There is a specific dashboard that addresses outreach/education efforts – The Human Indicator,*
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/233374d5ba304318b960a82aff1397fa>

VT - Northwest Crops and Soils Program <https://www.uvm.edu/extension/nwcrops>

Question 7. Do crop consultants or other private experts assist producers in the selection and implementation of soil and water conservation measures? If so, what certifications are needed so that these individuals can provide these services?

SLAs referred to the NRCS or Extension Service for this information. NRCS provides a registration process for certified Technical Service Providers who meet appropriate criteria. <https://techreg.sc.egov.usda.gov/CustLocateTSP.aspx>

Question 8. Do you have any state level information on the effectiveness of soil and water conservation measures for reducing soil erosion or surface water run-off that are being implemented?

SLAs that provided contacts or links to state level information were:

MI – Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program: <https://maeap.org/get-verified/cropping-system/>

IA – Palouse Conservation district has been involved in some studies that could be of interest to this particular question. Contact Ryan Boylan: RyanB@PalouseCD.org <https://www.palousecd.org/research-and-monitoring>

IA – Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy - Edge-of-Field Practices and Structural Erosion Control <https://nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu/tracking-iowa-nutrient-reduction-strategy>

VT - State level monitoring of soil and water conservation measures are currently focused on the effectiveness of nutrient management. The results of these measures are included in the Annual Report available here:

https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/doc_library/AAFMFY22ReportonFinancialandTechnicalAssistance.pdf

Question 9. Does your state have any information on the effectiveness of practices that reduce off site movement of pesticides from soil movement or surface water run-off?

SLAs referred to university extension research and demonstration projects for this information. Many states have data sets on water sampling for pesticides maintained by the SLAs or by an environmental agency. SLAs that provided state level information were:

WA – Data on pesticide concentrations in surface waters: <https://agr.wa.gov/departments/land-and-water/natural-resources/water-quality/surface-water> . In areas where soil and water conservation practices are quantified and available, correlations may be possible. The pesticides in surface water dataset is available to VSP participating counties for their use. Coordinating efforts with these two datasets (pesticide surface water concentrations and conservation practices) is being pursued in some areas. For more information contact Abigail Nickelson anickelson@agr.wa.gov.

VT - VAAFMs conduct routine surface water sampling for pesticides in certain watersheds. The latest report is available here: https://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/agriculture/files/doc_library/Surface%20Water%20Report%202022%20FINAL.pdf

Question 10. Does your state regulate or monitor offsite movement of nutrients or pesticides from tile drains in agricultural operations? If so, is there information on this program and how effective it is in reducing or preventing offsite movement?

Only two SLAs reported information relative to tile drains. Many SLAs noted that tile drains are not a significant part of their agricultural systems.

WA – The Washington State Department of Ecology’s Environmental Information Management system houses large datasets including nutrients and pesticides. <https://ecology.wa.gov/Research-Data/Data-resources/Environmental-Information-Management-database> for sites in these areas that have tile drains.

IA - See dashboards - <https://nrstracking.cals.iastate.edu/tracking-iowa-nutrient-reduction-strategy>

Question 11. Does your state have any requirements for prevention of off-site movement of pesticides through drift or run-off other than those established on pesticide labels? If so, please provide a link to that information.

Most SLAs responded that Run-off and off-site movement are regulated through pesticide label language. SLAs that provided information on additional regulations were:

WA - Counties in Washington that have specific restrictions regarding volatile pesticides. More information at this link : <https://agr.wa.gov/washington-agriculture/laws-and-rules/pesticides/county-use-restricted-pesticide-rules>

IA - State-specific regulations here - <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/law/administrativeRules/rules?agency=21&chapter=45&pubDate=05-08-2019>

FL - Florida has 5E-2.033 or the Organo-Auxin Rule that places additional restrictions and recordkeeping requirements on the use of auxin herbicides (such as 2,4-D, dicamba, and triclopyr) to help prevent drift and off-site movement (<https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleno.asp?id=5E-2.033>)

Question 12. Does your state have a weather information system that can be used by crop producers to schedule pesticide treatments (e.g., fungicide applications) or to predict rainfall events for the management of nutrient loss? If so, please provide a link to information about this system.

SLAs that provided information on state level weather information systems:

MI - Michigan State University Enviroweather. <https://enviroweather.msu.edu/>

FL - The Florida Automated Weather Network (FAWN) and My Florida Farm Weather. They are operated by UF IFAS and The Florida Department of Agriculture, respectively. <https://fawn.ifas.ufl.edu/>

MT - MESONT and Montana Climate Office <https://www.umt.edu/climate/>

WA - Washington State University maintains an extensive weather station network. <https://weather.wsu.edu/>

MO - <http://agebb.missouri.edu/weather/stations/>

ND - North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network <https://ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu/>.

VT - Tree fruit growers often use the NEWA Tool (<https://newa.cornell.edu/weather-tools>) to predict fungal pressure based on growing degree days and moisture forecasts.