



Region 5 Pre-SFIREG Spring 2025 Meeting Report

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EPA Region 5 Pre-SFIREG Spring 2025 Meeting Report

Meeting Dates: April 28th and 29th, 2025

Meeting Location: West Lafayette, IN with Microsoft Teams Meeting teleconference

Report Prepared By: Ryan Berzinski (WI) – Region 5 SFIREG Representative

In Attendance: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and EPA Region 5

1. State Updates:

Michigan

- Staffing
 - Hiring a training and QA specialist.
 - Standardize training and maintain/ improve standards
 - Hired a water quality specialist
 - Looking to hire an enforcement coordinator.
 - Cautious on staffing given national uncertainties.
 - Focus on updating job specs. Current specs limit opportunities due to educational specificity, enable wider hiring pools to include greater regulatory experience compared to educational requirements.
- Legislation – Water quality fee tied to registration of agrochemicals; fee change in legislation that wouldn't necessarily support agency.
- Inspection blitzes – develop work assignments, and conduct in a short period.
- C&T – planned to start rulemaking; putting it off until early next year due to enable messaging and communication as to why rulemaking is necessary.
- UAVs continue to grow; 30 UAV businesses last year, 45 this year with 8 in the queue.
- ESA implementation one of top 3 priorities.
- Hosting a PIRT course in Grand Rapids.
- Will host JWC meeting in fall.
- Streamlining complaint intake – online form, continued improvements to get reported incidents out to field faster vs licensing concerns, registry complaints, etc.

PSEP

- Paper tests include a 3 hour core training session.
- Developing an online self-paced recertification course as an alternative to taking exam to renew.
- PSEP working with programs on developing training. Revamped website to make more user friendly.
- Outreach on how to use BLT.
- Updating fruit cert manual (cat 1C).

Minnesota

- Staffing
 - Hiring a couple inspectors.
- Return To Office Executive Order – 50% return by June 1st.
- Legislation
 - Budget year.
 - PFAS, treated seed, UTS of for applicators

- PFAS Pesticide legislative report published.
- Complaints
 - ~140 complaints, 50 some investigations.
- Developing BMPs for chlorothalonil.
- Approved 24(c) for spinaid.
- Looking at sec 18 renewal for Ultra Blazer for sugar beets.

PSEP

- Moving to proctored exam for private applicators.
- Looking at online self-paced course for recertification of private applicators.
- Do about 5,000 private applicator certifications per year.
- Offering recertification via zoom for commercial.
- Offer in person workshops (25-35).
- In person field days for recertification (workshops vs CEU).
- Offer precertification options (2 in person workshops including testing).
- 4 asynchronous courses.
- Continuing WPS How to Comply webinars.
- Created a video library.
- Offered a respirator fit test train the trainer course (highly diverse audience).
- Manuals in revision.
- Use definition changed in legislation – impact uncertain for programs.
- Increase in number of categories individual applicators are carrying, creates a challenge for conducting workshops.
- Significant increase in drone usage, but no current testing for drones.

Indiana

- Legislation – bill to move OISC from Purdue to Department of Agriculture was unsuccessful.
- Executive Orders
 - Return To Office mandate.
 - Changes in rule re-adoption process (increasing time and effort, every five years, no rules exempt, includes multi-state review).
- Office remodel – office staff and labs in swing spaces for 2 years.
- Pesticide Residue and Formulation lab staying put.
- New Database – going live next year; working through details, using external vendor (for registration and licensing, support education process), streamline adding CCH credits to certification, provide online platform for applicator community.
- Exam development – completed general pest, redid the manual to comply with legal changes; adding drones into aerial; performed survey process with pilot applicators; expected to complete this year, update manual after. Next is mosquito control. Performs a “plain people” training for religious exemption persons (amish, menonite).
- Compliance – rule gutted in 2023, in 2024 rules were enacted into statute instead of rule. Created a challenge based on what violations were committed when, what rules applied etc.

Illinois

- Staffing
 - Fully staffed for field and licensing.
- Misuse – 16 cases this year, calls continue to come in.
- Drop in the tree cases, improvements in tree health.

- 241 investigations last year.
- Working to maintain high levels of credentialed staff, challenges with FedTalent.
- Finished large scale workshops, online benefits led to 50/50 online/in person split, done about 6000 in each this year.
- Spanish – tried combo exam with Spanish and English next to each other. Had some positive effect.
 - 20 pesticide related bills – down to 2 still moving forward,
 - New licensing division based on size/scale.
 - Industry CEU push observed.
 - Expecting a large Dicamba issues; potential for largest application yet, influenced by rate of Dicamba ready seed availability.
 - Concerned about volume of 2-4,d, tree complaint issues.
 - ESA education – staff training.
- PSEP – ended programs in April, ~5,000 people through program. Online enrollments slightly below 5,000. Manuals – focus on more obscure categories.

Ohio

- Staffing
 - Fully staffed in field, handful of staff in office
- Federal inspections completed before EOM Dec.
- New online complaint form – prioritizes human health/exposure; phone tree still points pest complaints to form; form becomes a form of statement for investigators
- 26 total complaints since Oct (mostly structural so far)
- Northeast Environmental Enforcement Project – involves providing training in preparation for testifying and other legal proceedings to prepare staff for facing examination questioning. Involved a practical exercise using actual cases in which investigators were mock examined by actual defense and prosecutor attorneys.
- Changes to budget – HB96 – includes funding and state plan changes; product registration – increases fee from \$150 to 250. Also creates an exam fee.
- Building a database for agchem products (fertilizer, SPA, looking towards pesticide reg).
- Looking at how manuals and guides will be impacted by bill changes.
- Private cert training/testing still all in person.
- Manuals – working on aquatic; fumigation and greenhouse likely coming up.

Wisconsin

- Staffing
 - Several openings remain in Compliance section
- Roadside ditch spraying – seeing an increase in spraying of roadside ditches with persistent active ingredients Imazapic and aminopyralid. Significant cost savings in spraying versus mowing, practice is expanding. Potential for runoff from ditches and feedthrough in cattle during droughts a concern.
- Online certification exam rates continue to increase.
- Continuing C&T plan implementation. Presently still on track to meet plan timeline.

EPA

- Staff updates – enforcement remains at 6, in office. Claudia compliance coordinator. Focusing on continuous improvement and efficiencies.
- Planning to send update on 2025 enforcement activities soon.
- 18 inspections, supported state inspectors with OJT.

- Budget update – full year CR act signed March 15th, funds through 30 sep at 2024 levels. Some reductions, still waiting to hear what that means. Will share when available. Learned that PREP, SFIREG, PERC grants are/were terminated. PREP rcvd letter, others didn't.
- SSG – keeping funding tentatively at 2025 levels; ECAD – focused PEIs 8, MPIs at 9; identify unregistered products; incremental funding – moving ahead with it for FY25 as possible, may require modifications to CAG documents related to climate change and EJ.
- Staff changes – Several retirements and reassessments.
- Tribal water monitoring project no longer funded for FY25.
- C&T – plans for modifications has not been released yet.
- Pollinator protection – active in quarterly groups, Jake Bova now pollinator poc.
- Hosted a state lab directors meeting in Nov 2024.
- Regional representation on national ESA groups.
- AEZ changes finalized; bed bug training sessions in coordination with IL and MI. IPM webinars on hiatus.

2. Enforcement Update (EPA)

- Training – over 100 attendees, notes collected for improvement (more field based training, make participation mandatory, more PEI training); Next Topics – narrative writing, law/rules interpretation.
- Credentialing – made an ECAD priority; collected feedback state by state on timeliness, improvements; credentialing office working on a sharepoint site to aid in this effort.
- CBI collection – Amounts/quantities of pesticide or device produced per batch is considered CBI; Insp Manual Exhibit 9-1 note: CBI only viewable by federal inspectors; under discussion with HQ and regions; LSS – EPA looking to see if adjustments needed for CBI collection uniformly. If CBI is collected, should be marked as such on RFS in addition to normal CBI disclaimer. Distribute slides if possible.
- EtO – presently no request from EPA to conduct, if it does come EPA plans to provide resources.

3. New Administration Priorities

- Working to process changes (climate change and EJ concerns) to get incremental funding though for remainder of FY25. Administration changes has added layers into approval process to close out FY25 funding provisions. Includes addition of administrators to ensure compliance with EO's.
- CAG – strongly recommends starting to work on applications on grants.gov to get the ball rolling in time and begin process. Don't wait on finalization of CAG to submit grant application. Can submit work plan with grants.gov application.
- Ensure awareness of terms and conditions of drawdowns for existing grants.

4. ESA Issues and Concerns

- BLT (<https://www.epa.gov/endangered-species/advanced-resources-bulletins-live-two>)
- JWC – ESI committee focusing on the BLT type improvements as well as advocating for education and outreach processes and resources. Looking at options to use resources most intelligently in a uniform fashion. Potential for checklists or flowcharts, similar resources for states to use to enable growers best chance at compliance. Improvement recommendations to the toolbox;
- Monarch decision – FWS wants comment on the decision to get an idea of how SLAs will respond to their decision. Discussion ongoing. Also discussion on impact of changes to

the meaning of term "harm". Glufosinate-P training requirement – discussed with BASF to get some idea of their plan to meet requirement; unknown if that requirement will follow through onto every product henceforth

- Webinar provided to MI. PULA refinement process – checking the species to refine PULAs. Presentation from CA on AAPCO JWC website. JWC ESI committee had Dr. Stanley Culpepper from GA present – a good resource to examine methods to model outreach and education on as a starting point.
- Potential for a regional work group to try to create more uniformity regionally due to reciprocity?
- Potential for FAQ?

5. Registration

- GU to RU changes <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/restricted-use-products-rup-report>
- Carbaryl – per Jennifer Dodd, late 2025 interim decision from EPA.
- Chlorpyrifos – differences between MN and Dakotas?

6. National Questions

- Backpack misters/blowers (mosquito applications)
- Increase in complaints in MN.
- IL also has increases, state legislation involving barrier
- Feed through pesticides and medicated feed question.
 - not a known issue

7. Lab Concerns

- Repository standards are becoming more difficult to obtain due to staffing issues at Ft Meade. Some labs are going to commercial standards vendors when the ordering cycles do not line up or a short notice sample is required.
- Regional check samples being coordinated on a quarterly basis that go through OISC.
- Development of Sampling Process is ongoing.

8. C&T Plan Implementation

- All states are more or less on track. Change guidance and thresholds not official yet. Work with Region 5 rep if changes occur to prepare for approval, plan modification, etc.

9. Water Quality

- Minnesota has developed an interactive mapping resource providing the public access to geospatially correlated results, with filters based on active ingredients and detection levels.

10. Future Region 5 Pre-SFIREG Meeting Dates:

Illinois will host in late October.