

Advancing Outreach Effectiveness to Improve Conservation Practice Adoption

a virtual series of morning coffee hours to improve private public partnerships

January 26 - 28, 2021, 9:00 am to 1 pm, EST

Rationale: Despite increasing knowledge about where agricultural best management practices (BMPs) can provide exceptional benefits to soil and watershed health, practice adoption rates are not on track to meet restoration goals. Outreach practitioners report that increasing adoption requires building trust with farmers; however, engagement strategies, incentive devices, and perceived barriers vary widely even within organizations. It is unclear whether slow adoption rates in high priority locations reflect a lack of feasibility given other stakeholder concerns, perceived risks associated with inadequate technical information, insufficient incentives to outweigh economic costs, public program complexities, ineffective communication strategies, or even limited knowledge and biases by outreach practitioners. To improve outreach effectiveness and best meet farmer and landowner interests for their agricultural operations, please join the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) and our partners for a three-day series of connected, interactive discussions among farmers, outreach practitioners, and social scientists.

Workshop Objectives:

- Share outreach strategies and synthesize lessons learned by practitioners and researchers to increase the adoption of agricultural conservation practices.
- Explore alignment between applied outreach strategies and our understanding of behavioral influences and decision-making by farmers and growers.
- Identify research gaps and collaborative opportunities to increase agricultural conservation practice adoption.

Who Is Invited: Approximately 100 experts including farmers, outreach practitioners (NGOs, state and federal agencies, private technical service providers), program managers (e.g., NRCS, SCD, FSA, State Cost Share programs), and social scientists who work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed or the Great Lakes and Upper Mississippi River basins.

Organizing Committee: Kathy Boomer (chair, FFAR), Amy Jacobs (TNC), Collin Weigel (JHU), Robyn Wilson (OSU), Linda Prokopy (Purdue), Michael Runge (USGS), Jake Reilly (NFWF), Rochelle Krusemark (USFRA), Paul Wolfe (Walton Family Foundation), Allison Thompson (Field to Market), Christine Conn (MD DNR)



Thank you sponsors!

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Workshop Approach: The workshop consists of six sessions strategically woven together to explore how well outreach strategies address farmer concerns related to conservation practice adoption. The first four sessions use a combination of polls and targeted discussion questions to collect information that will enable us to explore this intersection. We will present results on the third day and finish with a discussion of emerging ideas for improving outreach effectiveness.

Day 1, January 26th:

- 9:00 Optional Tech Check-In
- 9:30 **Welcome and Introductions:** Welcome and Sponsor Introductions; 2) The Pocomoke River Case Study and Workshop Genesis, 3) Workshop Introduction: Setting the Decision Context; 4) Participant Introductions; 5) Introduction of Workshop Framework
- 11:30 **Understanding Concerns Underlying Decisions related to Conservation Practice Adoptions:** Panel Discussion and Facilitated Exchange

Day 2, January 27th:

- 9:00 Optional Tech Check-In and Breakout Coffee Room
- 9:30 Welcome Back and Shared Reflections
- 9:45 **Assessing Potential to Influence Operator Decisions:** Following a session overview, breakout discussions will provide a basis for anticipating how farmers might respond to selected outreach strategies.
- 11:30 **Outreach Strategy Exchange:** Rapid response, lightning rounds will allow participants to share preferred outreach strategies based on conservation practice type and land tenure. Follow-up discussions will provide an opportunity to reflect on the shared information.

Day 3, January 28th:

- 9:00 Optional Tech Check-In and Breakout Coffee Room
- 9:30 Welcome Back and Shared Reflections
- 9:45 **Cross-Walking Perspectives:** A summary of the information exchange sessions on Day 1 and Day 2 will provide a basis to explore how well preferred outreach strategies align with farmer's concerns and our understanding of decision-making related to the adoption of conservation practices. Follow-up breakout sessions will allow participants to reflect and react to the findings.
- 11:30 **Tying It Together: Key Take-Aways, Next Steps and Closing Remarks:** Panel & group discussion.

