

Environmental Report

2020-2021



Introduction

As staff here at Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB), we are lucky to work alongside our Board of Directors, county Farm Bureau leadership, and approximately 74,000 farmer members across the state. In the environmental space, there certainly is no shortage of issues. As demonstrated in this report, we work on many aspects of environmental policy including water quality, fertilizer and pesticide use, pollinators and the Monarch butterfly. We deal with changes that come at the state level, at the federal level, and sometimes both at the same time. The changes are sometimes tied to legislation, but more commonly they are tied to science, regulatory authority, or even litigation in our nation's court system. Each step of the way, we bring our knowledge of the issues, policy, regulatory agencies, and science to the table to advocate on behalf of the organization. We work throughout the year to educate our members of the changes as they take place. Sometimes, when we are really lucky, we have a significant period of time to roll up our sleeves, get to work, and track that work over the long haul. We make the extra effort to document each speech, article and field day to demonstrate progress for our members, fellow environmental or agricultural stakeholders, regulators, lawmakers, and sometimes even people who are completely unfamiliar with agriculture in Illinois. As you will see in the following pages, we have spent a great deal of time over 2020 and the past several years building a track record and a reputation for benefiting the environment. That track record will continue to be important in the coming years as we continue to establish our role in the discussions on environmental solutions. Thank you for allowing us to be your advocate in our organization's priority work focused on promoting Illinois agriculture's contribution to improve the environment.

Lauren Lurkins

Lauren Lurkins,
Director of Environmental Policy, Illinois Farm Bureau

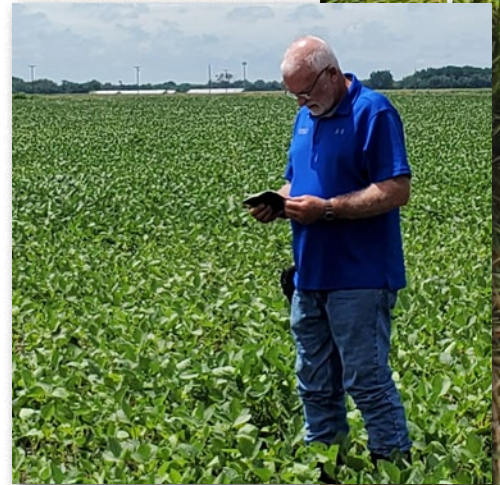




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Strengthening USEPA and IFB Relationships

Over the past several years, IFB has made concerted efforts to strengthen connections with United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) at multiple levels in both Washington and in Chicago at the Region 5 office. With regard to Region 5 USEPA, IFB concentrated on improving the relationship by taking groups of farmers to the Chicago office, inviting USEPA Region 5 staff to farmer roundtables and field days, and also gathering other midwestern State Farm Bureau staff and farmer leaders for similar meetings.

In 2020, IFB continued work to strengthen relationships with USEPA staff despite COVID-19 restrictions. In addition to regular phone calls, our farmer leaders, Environmental Advisory Team, and environmental staff were able to engage in several virtual visits with USEPA Headquarters and Region 5 staff. These virtual opportunities helped to set the stage for socially-distanced farm visits in Knox and Macon counties through the summer and fall. We also welcomed a new Agricultural Advisor to the Region 5 staff, Sharmin Syed, who we look forward to working alongside into 2021.

Memorandum of Understanding

During an October farm visit in Macon county, IFB and the USEPA Region 5 signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to formalize a voluntary partnership to continue to build upon the existing communication, education, outreach and information sharing between the two entities. IFB is proud of this opportunity to continue to work with USEPA to find additional opportunities for shared learning.

Committee Appointments

IFB staff also applied for and were selected to participate in several USEPA advisory committees this past year.

- Lauren Lurkins was selected to join USEPA's **Farm, Ranch and Rural Communities Committee (FRRCC)**, where she currently serves as Vice Chair. The FRRCC was established in 2008 and provides independent policy advice, information and recommendations to the USEPA Administrator on a range of environmental issues and policies that are of importance to agriculture and rural communities. The issues currently included in the Committee Charge include pesticides, water quality and water quantity, and food waste and loss.
- Lauren Lurkins was also selected to serve as the American Farm Bureau Federation representative on the USEPA **Pesticide Program Dialogue Committee (PPDC)**. The PPDC is a federal advisory committee comprised of 40 individuals representing a wide stakeholder network and meets to discuss regulatory, policy and program implementation.
- Dr. Austin Omer was appointed by the USEPA Administrator to the **Science Advisory Board's Agriculture Science Committee**. This provides him with the opportunity to serve the Administrator when he or she requests a review or scientific advice on information being used by the agency for research plans and programs, as well as guidance on regulations.



2020 IFB NLRS Activity Summary

IFB continues to set environmental action as an organizational priority, following through by committing significant resources to do the job. Since 2015, IFB has contributed to the **Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (NLRS)**. Through leadership and participation from our farmer members and County Farm Bureaus (CFBs) across the state, IFB's NLRS efforts have made sizable strides in four priority areas:

- 1) education and outreach to farmers, landowners and the general public;
- 2) supporting research of best management practices to reduce nutrient loss from agricultural fields;
- 3) supporting farmer implementation efforts across the state; and
- 4) demonstrating progress toward the long-term goals of the NLRS. IFB reports these efforts to the NLRS every year in order to document our progress in these areas.



FINANCIALS



2015-2021
IFB COMMITTED OVER
\$2,000,000

Overall spent on the following
NLRS priority areas:

- outreach and education
- supporting research
- supporting implementation
- documenting progress

FARMING FOR THE FUTURE: IFB'S MULTI-MEDIA MARKETING CAMPAIGN



1 multi-media marketing campaign focused on Illinois farmers' conservation efforts:
www.ilfarmersconserve.com

9,000,000
social media
impressions, with over
85,000 clicking on
links to learn more



67,000
website visits,
with over
66,000
new visitors



2,400,000
impressions on Google
Ads, with over
1,000,000
people watching the
entire video and
2,800 clicking the
ad to learn more





IN 2020...

SOCIAL MEDIA



15 IFB social media posts regarding NLRS and environmental stewardship, reaching over **50,000** people

PRINT MEDIA



60 FarmWeek and FarmWeekNow.com articles focusing on nutrient loss and conservation

3 NLRS-related press releases released to IFB membership and press statewide

VIRTUAL FIELD DAY SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN



120,000+ people reached with nearly **70,000** video views

RADIO/TV



7 radio interviews on RFD radio and podcasts on RFD Today

28 videos produced and shared on various IFB platforms

FIELD DAYS AND OTHER EVENTS



9 Virtual Field Days produced through the Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program and Woodchip Bioreactor Partnership

4,770 people attended our Virtual Field Days, and counting!



930 were reached at other IFB events

Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program 2020



The Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program is a cornerstone of IFB's work to implement the NLRs.

In 2020, IFB committed \$150,000 to 28 counties working together on 14 projects. Despite changes due to COVID-19, IFB and the CFBs found creative ways to pivot their focus and meet their 2020 goals, including by hosting Virtual Field Days.

Bureau

Bureau CFB continued to collect water samples and several additional points of data. They also started analyzing results and developing a model based on three years of data.

Clinton

With the help of several active partners, Clinton CFB offered free manure testing to local producers. While they had to cancel all in-person events, including two field days and a manure management workshop, they were able to host a Virtual Field Day, which focused on the results of cover crop and manure application research plots in the county.

Crawford, Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Jasper, Lawrence, Richland

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, partners across 11 counties in the Embarras River Watershed (ERW) hosted nine watershed planning meetings to gather farmer and landowner feedback for an updated ERW Plan.

Fulton

Instead of hosting an in-person event, Fulton CFB worked with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to share a research white paper and video tour of the research site, as well as host a virtual farmer focus group to provide farmers an opportunity to share meaningful feedback on continued research at the site.

Hancock, Warren-Henderson, Mercer, Henry, Knox

Although these counties had to cancel their in-person meetings, they pivoted their focus to collect letters of support from CFBs, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), and state and federal lawmakers for an IEPA 319 Grant Application.

Jo Daviess

Jo Daviess CFB continued a cover crop research project and surface water runoff testing, as well as hosting a Virtual Field Day. Researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville also provided rainfall simulator demonstrations and presented results of on-farm research.

Knox

Through a project designed by the Knox CFB Young Farmers committee, Knox CFB planted 20-acre cover crop plots across each of the 20 townships in the county, totaling over 400 acres of cover crops planted in 2020.

LaSalle

LaSalle CFB shifted from hosting an elected officials and government staff education event and hosted a Virtual Field Day. The Virtual Field Day included conservation education, as well as updates on University of Illinois (U of I) on-farm research taking place in the county.

Mason, Cass-Morgan, Tazewell

These counties are continuing to collect data and develop a multifaceted groundwater monitoring project.



VIRTUAL FIELD DAYS:

- **9** virtual field days
- **28** videos produced
- **9** booklets shared
- Over **120,000** people reached to date!

McHenry

Through an active collaboration, McHenry CFB installed a woodchip bioreactor on McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) property and hosted a Virtual Field Day. This will provide partners an opportunity to highlight the environmental efforts to area farmers, environmentalists, and the general public.

Shelby

Shelby CFB hosted a Virtual Field Day to share preliminary results of ongoing Drainage Water Management (DWM) research taking place on a local county farm.

St. Clair

St. Clair CFB worked to host a Virtual Field Day at the CFB President's farm to share Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) on-farm research concerning flue gas desulfurization gypsum and its effects on phosphorous loss.

Warren-Henderson

This group hosted a Virtual Field Day to share results of a nitrogen strip trial focusing on two of the 4Rs of nutrient management – source and rate of nitrogen application.

Wayne

Wayne CFB continued to sponsor a Nutrient Loss Inhibitor Demonstration (NLID) plot to demonstrate fertilizer efficiency and economics. They also hosted a Virtual Field Day to share results with their members.

To learn more about 2020 Virtual Field Days, visit: www.ilfb.org/FieldDays



Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program 2021

For 2021, IFB committed over \$150,000 to the Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program. 28 counties will be working together on 21 projects throughout the state in order to help move the needle on NLRS implementation.

In 2021, projects will include planting test plots of cover crops, hosting education and outreach activities, watershed planning, and water and soil testing.

Bureau

Bureau CFB will continue to collect water samples and several additional points of data. They will also start analyzing results and developing a model based on four years of data.

Clinton

Clinton CFB is once again offering manure testing, as well as manure management outreach opportunities. They will also host spring and fall field days to share the results of ongoing cover crop and manure research being conducted by Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) at a local on-farm research site.

Coles

In an effort to meet education and outreach goals in the ERW, Coles CFB is hosting a field day focused on cover crops.

Cook

Cook CFB will collaborate with Fulton CFB and MWRD to develop a rural-urban exchange program, with opportunities for farmers to meet with MWRD staff and visit the Fulton county research and demonstration site.

Fulton

Fulton CFB is continuing to build their partnership with MWRD by hosting an education and outreach opportunity in collaboration with Cook CFB.

Hancock, Mercer, Warren-Henderson, Henry, Knox

These counties are hosting a series of five watershed planning meetings to educate farmers on the NLRS and the importance of having a watershed plan in place, as well as gathering feedback for implementing a Mississippi North Central (Flint/Henderson) watershed plan.

Henry, Rock Island

These counties are hosting a kayaking event in collaboration with local SWCDs in order to provide a unique water quality education opportunity.

Jefferson, Franklin

Jefferson and Franklin CFB are collaborating with Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to host a cover crop field day near the Wayne Fitzgerald State Park.

Jo Daviess

Jo Daviess CFB is continuing surface water runoff testing as well as a cover crop research project, in addition to providing education and outreach opportunities for farmers.

Knox

Knox CFB is continuing to expand their cover crop program, with hopes of creating a booklet to start sharing results of soil sampling and other updates with participants and other farmers.

LaSalle

LaSalle CFB is planning to host an educational "night at the farm" event for elected officials, with several stations focusing on various livestock and conservation practices.

Lawrence, Richland

Like Coles CFB, Lawrence and Richland CFBs are working together to host a cover crop field day in the ERW.

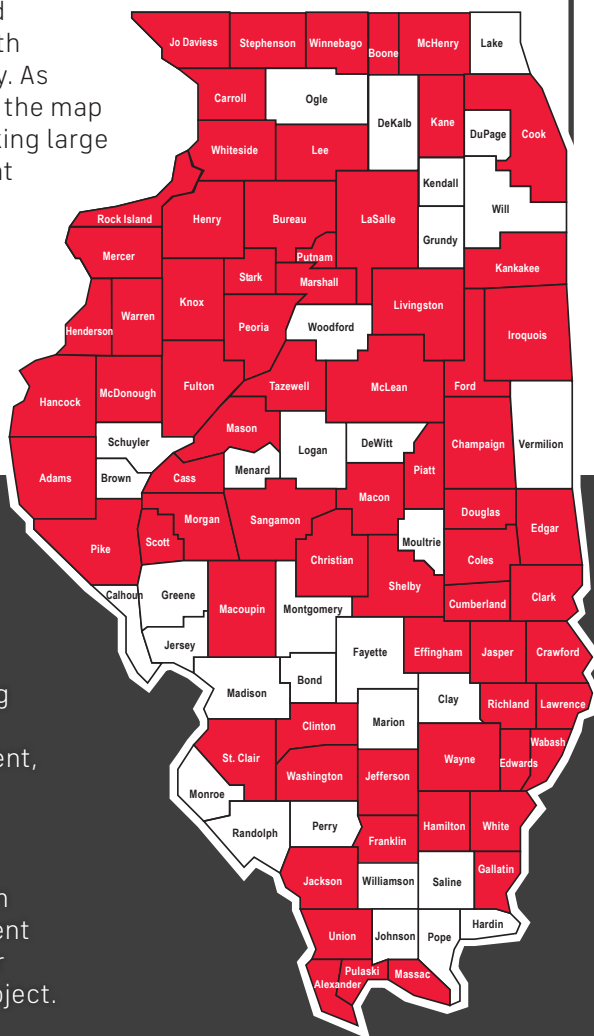
Macon

Macon CFB is hosting an education and outreach event focusing on water quality and conservation efforts taking place in the Lake Decatur Watershed.



Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program 2016-2021

With the first year of work being completed in 2016, our work in 2021 will mark the **sixth year** of the program with **over \$700,000** being committed to local soil health and water quality. As demonstrated in the map below, IFB is making large strides in nutrient stewardship across Illinois.



Marshall-Putnam

As part of a new proposal, Marshall-Putnam CFB is hoping to implement cover crop plots near the Illinois River, as well as develop and distribute a side-by-side cover crop analysis tool for farmers.

Mason, Cass-Morgan, Tazewell

These counties are continuing to collect data and develop a multifaceted groundwater monitoring project.

McHenry

In order to continue developing their collaboration, McHenry CFB is going to begin water sampling at the woodchip bioreactor installed in 2020, located on MCCD property.

Sangamon

Sangamon CFB will be hosting a cover crop-focused field day in the Lake Springfield watershed as part of an effort to announce RCPP and 319 grant funding opportunities in the watershed.

Stephenson, Carroll

These counties are planning to host a series of presentations on conservation practices that could improve farming practices, including cover crops, nitrogen management, and manure application.

Warren-Henderson

Warren-Henderson FB will be shifting their focus from solely Nitrogen management research by adding a cover crop component to the project.

Washington

Washington CFB is developing a cover crop project in the county, with hopes of incorporating soil and water sampling in the future.

Wayne

Wayne CFB is continuing a sponsor field trials to demonstrate fertilizer efficiency and the economic advantages over traditional fertilizer applications, in addition to sharing results at a field day.

Partnerships with Drinking Water Suppliers and Wastewater Treatment Plants

The NLRS is a framework for using science, technology, and industry experience to assess and reduce nutrient loss in Illinois waters, as well as the Gulf of Mexico. The NLRS calls for collaboration between many groups of stakeholders to see progress on each of the NLRS goals. As such, IFB has made it a priority to build relationships and cooperative efforts with our state's drinking water suppliers and wastewater treatment plants.

Drinking Water Suppliers

Throughout 2020, IFB has served as an active supporter of several drinking water supply projects across the state, including:

- IFB has worked with the City of Decatur to support a USDA-NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grant in the Lake Decatur watershed. The **City of Decatur** and its supporters, including **seven CFBs (Ford, McLean, Champaign, Dewitt, Macon, Piatt, and Shelby)**, have prioritized addressing soil erosion and water quality within the watershed. In 2021, **Macon CFB** will help support the efforts by hosting an education and outreach event.
- IFB continued to support **Springfield City Water, Light & Power (CWLP)** in their efforts to secure IEPA and USDA-NRCS funding in the Lake Springfield watershed. **Sangamon CFB** has been a longtime supporter of work in the watershed and is planning to host a field day focused on cover crops in 2021.





Wastewater Treatment Plants

IFB has continued to build and strengthen relationships with wastewater treatment plants as we aim to build a bridge between the point sources and nonpoint sources to address the issues of nutrient loss reduction. Our efforts have included a focus on continued collaborations with the **Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD)**. MWRD is a special-purpose district responsible for treating wastewater and providing stormwater management for the residents and businesses in its Chicagoland area. The service area of MWRD encompasses 882.1 square miles and services approximately 10.35 million people each day.

In previous years, MWRD has graciously hosted IFB farmer leadership for tours and discussions of their operations in the Chicagoland area and their research property in Fulton County. In 2020, IFB shifted our efforts and connected farmers to MWRD researchers by hosting a virtual workshop. This workshop provided an opportunity to connect farmers to work taking place at the **Fulton County** research site, as well as give them the opportunity to share valuable feedback with the MWRD research team. Looking forward, we plan to continue strengthening this partnership by involving **Fulton** and **Cook CFB** in additional education and outreach projects.

To learn more about this partnership,
visit: www.ilfb.org/RuralUrban

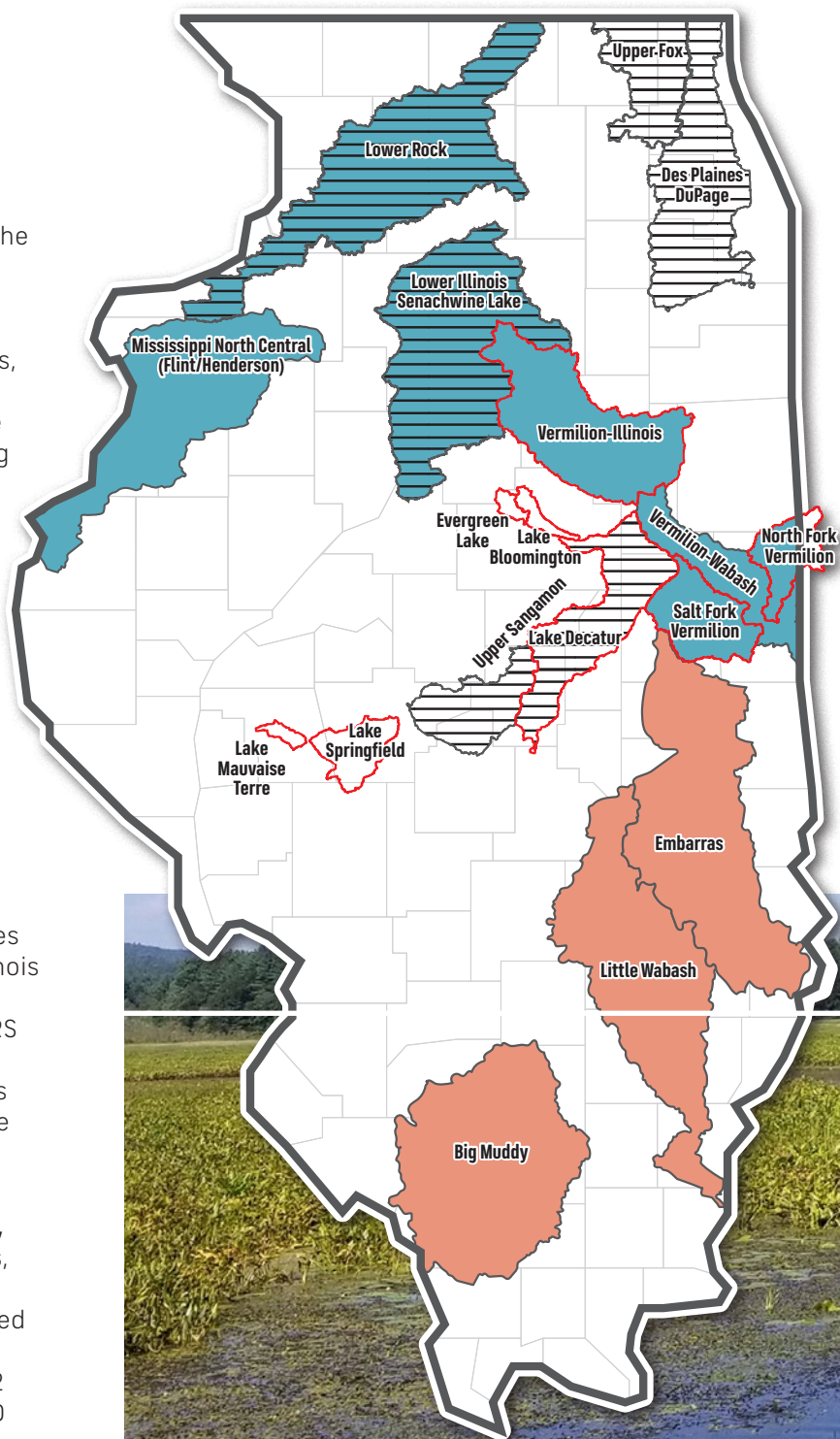
IFB NLRs Priority Watershed Work

Prior to releasing the NLRs in 2015, IEPA identified priority watersheds throughout the state, further indicating whether they were Nitrogen (N) or Phosphorus (P) priorities. IFB has a vested interest in supporting a variety of projects across these watersheds, regularly providing technical, financial and education and outreach resources to these often multi-county efforts. By collaborating with a variety of point source and nonpoint source stakeholders, IFB is able to implement actions that help to meet the goals of the NLRs in priority watersheds. In 2020, IFB worked primarily in the **Mississippi North Central (Flint/Henderson)** watershed and the **Embarras River Watershed (ERW)**, and look forward to extending this work into 2021 and beyond.

Mississippi North Central (Flint/Henderson)

The Mississippi North Central Watershed lies in parts of six counties in northwestern Illinois and covers approximately 1,546,232 acres. The watershed has been identified as a NLRs priority watershed, but currently does not have a watershed plan in place, making this a prime location for IFB and local CFBs to be involved in conservation efforts.

In order to help address issues within the watershed, IFB, along with **Hancock, Henry, Knox, Warren-Henderson and Mercer CFBs**, worked to raise support for an IEPA Section 319 grant application to develop a watershed plan, including specific proposals for implementing conservation practices in 1-2 high-priority sub-watersheds. Due to COVID restrictions in 2020, the partners shifted their focus from hosting in-person meetings to collecting letters of support for the grant application from CFBs, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), and state and federal lawmakers. A 319 grant application was submitted in August 2020, and the group plans to host meetings to raise awareness and gather feedback from the agricultural community in 2021.



Embarras River Watershed






The ERW, located in southeastern Illinois, covers approximately 1,558,063 acres across 12 counties. In Fall 2019, stakeholders within the watershed worked together to support and apply for 319 grant funding to update the ERW Management Plan, which would expire in 2021. Without a watershed plan in place, stakeholders within the watershed have a decreased chance of receiving funding from certain state and federal programs for implementing conservation practices.

Involving stakeholders in the planning and implementation processes are critical to the success of watershed plans. In order to ensure success in the ERW, IFB, alongside 11 CFBs, **(Crawford, Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, Douglas, Edgar, Effingham, Jasper, Lawrence, Richland)**, local SWCDs, and U of I Extension hosted nine watershed planning meetings in January 2020 (prior to COVID-19 meeting

restrictions). These meetings provided farmers and landowners an opportunity to share their concerns and interests across the entire watershed, as well as the tools they desire to help address those concerns. IFB staff were also able to work together to create a summary report of findings from the January 2020 planning meetings, which provided high-level takeaways from each meeting within the watershed, as well as background information on previous and current watershed update efforts. In addition, IFB along with their partners were also able to host a webinar in early April 2020 to share the report and an update on the next steps with stakeholders across the watershed.

In 2021, IFB will engage stakeholders in education and outreach opportunities within the watershed, including hosting events focused on cover crops and other concerns addressed during the January 2020 meetings.

Legend

-  Keep It for the Crop
-  Point sources
nitrate and phosphorus
-  Non-point sources
nitrate
-  Non-point sources
phosphorus
-  Counties



Woodchip Bioreactor and Saturated Buffer Partnerships

IFB is committed to supporting collaborative solutions that make big changes in nutrient loss reduction and best management practice (BMP) development. To help meet our goals, IFB is involved with two edge-of-field practice partnerships. These partnerships are examples of some of the relationships we have developed with diverse stakeholders in order to meet the priority of supporting research initiatives, as outlined in the NLRS.

The Woodchip Bioreactor Partnership is a five-year collaboration between IFB, the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association Inc. (ILICA), U of I, and Illinois NRCS. The purpose of this partnership is to install one woodchip bioreactor every year for five years and to support water quality research of the practice at each site for a number of years. The partners installed a

woodchip bioreactor in Henry County in 2020. In 2021, IFB looks forward to installing a woodchip bioreactor in McDonough County. In previous years, the partnership has installed other woodchip bioreactors in Bureau and Henry counties.

In 2019, IFB added a Saturated Buffer Partnership to its body of work. The Saturated Buffer Partnership is a five-year collaboration between IFB, ILICA, SIUC, and Illinois NRCS. The purpose of this partnership is to install a saturated buffer each year for five years and to support water quality research of the practice at each site for a number of years. The first saturated buffer was installed in the spring of 2019 in Moultrie county. Plans are in development for the second installation after COVID-related delays in 2020.



Farm Gate

In 2020, IFB continued to support livestock farmers by providing answers to their regulatory questions and sharing educational opportunities and resources to help meet industry regulations and protect the environment.

We continued to share our resource guides for swine, beef, and dairy operations in order to provide our members with their "first step" in understanding if and how environmental rules and regulations impact their operations. These resource guides have been distributed widely in order to help our members ensure compliance and increase their confidence in operating according to best practices.

This program brings an education opportunity to livestock farms of all sizes, with a special focus on small and medium-sized operations. More information about Farm Gate can be found at www.ilfb.org/FarmGate.



Pollinator and Monarch Work



IFB Monarch Conservation By the Numbers



\$110,000

IFB's Board of Directors has allocated over \$110,000 since 2014 toward research on pollinator and monarch butterfly habitat in agricultural landscapes.



270

Over 270 articles, resource guides, and posts about pollinators, monarchs, and habitat.



9.2 million

Over 9.2 million interactions on IFB platforms.



130,000

Over 130,000 in-person contacts through presentations or classroom curriculum.

In addition to our work in nutrient loss reduction and, other environmental priorities, IFB was active in several pollinator and monarch initiatives in 2020. Since 2016, IFB has been a leading member of the **Illinois Monarch Project (IMP)**. IMP was established with a mission to help monarch butterflies thrive throughout Illinois by collaborating on conservation activities and encouraging engagement by public and private landowners across diverse urban and rural landscapes.

Through active participation on many fronts, IFB has played a pivotal role in several key IMP initiatives.

Illinois Monarch Action Plan Signing

On September 24, 2020, as the super generation of monarchs continued their migration south to Mexico, Colleen Callahan (Director - Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)), Omer Osman (Director - Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)), Jerry Costello (Acting Director - Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA)), and John Kim (Director - IEPA) all joined in signing the **Illinois Monarch Action Plan** (Plan). The Plan provides extensive background information on monarch conservation efforts across all four sectors (agricultural, urban, rights-of-way, and natural lands), as well as tasks Illinois stakeholders to add **150 million stems of milkweed** and additional nectar sources to Illinois landscapes by 2038. IFB staff have been active contributors to developing the Plan, serving as a leader on the Technical Steering Committee since 2016. More information about the Plan can be found at www.illinoismonarchproject.org.

Route 66 Monarch Flyway

IFB has also worked with members of the IMP to develop an effort called the Route 66 Monarch Flyway. This collaboration aims to establish milkweed and nectar sources on landscapes within 33 miles of Illinois Historic Route 66, as well as education and outreach opportunities.

Monarch Conservation Database

In May 2020, the IMP Agriculture Sector, led by IFB, took advantage of an opportunity to report organizational-wide monarch conservation metrics to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The database aims to collect information on monarch conservation efforts, which are defined by USFWS as "on-the-ground actions designed to improve the population status of monarchs." This information, along with population surveys played a role in the Endangered Species Act listing decision.

The uploaded information included a wide variety of efforts from multiple stakeholders in the Agriculture Sector of the IMP, primarily concerning education and conservation of the monarch butterfly in Illinois. Agriculture Sector Submission Efforts included **over 200 individual efforts submitted to the database**, representative of the impressive efforts agriculture has made in monarch conservation.



IFB Climate Work

After IFB's approval of a more robust global climate policy in December 2019, IFB increasingly engaged in the area of climate change. This work encompasses several areas including corporate sustainability, regenerative agriculture, weather, carbon sequestration in soils, and ecosystem service market trading platforms. Our work focuses primarily on exploring and shaping federal legislative and regulatory efforts, scientific research, and industry initiatives.

Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance

IFB played an important role in reviewing and passing our updated global climate change policy in December 2019, which was later proposed to American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), and largely accepted by the AFBF delegate body in January 2020. This work set the stage for AFBF to engage in climate change policy discussions in a variety of avenues. This work represents one example of IFB engaging in grassroots development and implementation of policy that is relevant and impactful for our members.

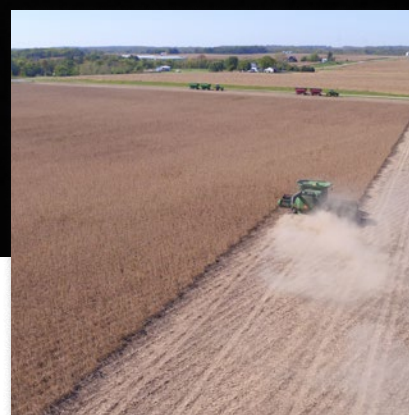
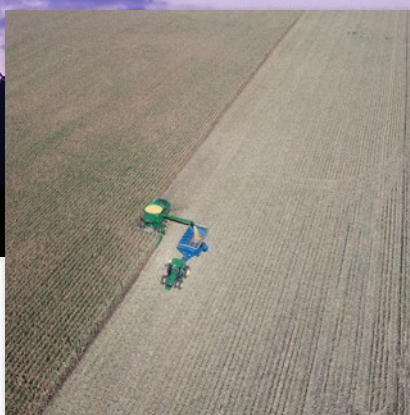
In November 2020, AFBF was part of a joint announcement of the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA). The FACA consists of organizations representing a cross-section of farmers, ranchers,

forest owners, the food sector, state governments and environmental advocates that are working together to develop and promote shared climate policy priorities. Momentum for climate action is growing across the public and the private sectors. The recommendations put forth by FACA will help ensure farmers and ranchers are part of relevant discussions as society pushes for climate-smart practices.

Climate Science Support

IFB's partnerships with scientists are a critical part of our work in climate science and carbon sequestration in soils.

- In 2020, IFB initiated a collaboration with **Dr. Trent Ford, Illinois State Climatologist**. The Illinois State Climatologist provides weather and climate data, maps, and information for Illinois farmers, government agencies and policymakers, and all citizens. In his role, Dr. Ford also conducts research on past climate events, monitors current conditions, and studies possible future climate change and acts as the state's authoritative spokesperson on climate science. His collaboration with IFB includes a focus on studying historical and future seasonable precipitation variability, as well as assessing climate change impact reduction as a result of mitigation.



- IFB continues to support **Dr. Kaiyu Guan (U of I)** in a variety of capacities. Dr. Guan's research involves the use of satellites, modeling and machine learning to help farmers. IFB staff have previously connected farmer members to Dr. Guan to serve as a research focus group to share ideas about his research and how to share it with farmers across Illinois. Dr. Guan is also the lead researcher on a **NASA Carbon Monitoring System (CMS)** project where he investigates the Midwestern Corn Belt carbon budget and soil health with remote sensing. As a part of this work, Lauren Lurkins, Director of Environmental Policy (IFB), presented as the primary stakeholder of the research during the Virtual Stakeholder Series Presentation in August 2020. In addition, IFB supports Dr. Guan's research by serving on the **Advanced Research Projects Agency—Energy (APRA-E) SMARTFARM** Advisory Board. This advisory board includes representatives from academics, NGOs, and industries that help guide and support research that seeks to gather field-level emissions data from commercial bioenergy crops.
- IFB has also participated in a **Climate-induced Extremes on Food, Energy, Water Nexus (C-FEWS)** stakeholder working group, led by Dr. Amy Ando (U of I) in 2020. C-FEWS seeks to investigate the effects of climate change on food, energy, and water systems, and identify and evaluate response options to these changes. By participating in a virtual forum, IFB was able to hear various stakeholder viewpoints on various climate change policies, as well as advocate for the opportunity that agriculture can play in meeting climate goals.
- Lauren Lurkins also serves on the Advisory Board of the **Integrated Pennycress Research Enabling Farm and Energy Resilience (IPREFER)** project, on which **Illinois State University (ISU)** and **Western Illinois University** collaborate. This project includes implementing pennycress as an overwintering cash cover crop, as well as exploring the potential of pennycress in lowering carbon emissions and sequestering carbon.

General Science Support



In 2020, IFB continued to play an active role in supporting researchers and scientists across the state. To date, we have utilized several methods to develop and maintain our relationships with researchers, especially those in Illinois. These methods include:

- Participating in continued networking and relationship building with various researchers, institutions, and other research entities
- Connecting farmer members with researchers to develop on-farm research trials
- Offering farmer focus groups for researchers
- Offering researchers the opportunity to present their work and findings to our farmer members
- Assisting in the coordination and promotion of field days and events featuring researchers, including facilitating field day communications support
- Providing financial gifts when appropriate

In 2020 alone, IFB has supported over **22 research projects** across the state, involving over **75 researchers across 22 organizations** that are conducting research that benefits farmers. Additionally, **\$210,000** of IFB funding was used to leverage support for successfully-funded projects – bringing in over **\$30 million in funding opportunities for research in Illinois**.

Environmental Advisory Team

One way that IFB has worked to connect farmer members and researchers is by developing and engaging the Environmental Advisory Team (the Team). The vision for the Team is to develop a cohort of farmer members who are interested in taking a deep dive in environmental topics in order to create more knowledge within IFB membership on complicated environmental issues and to advise the staff on general direction. In previous years, the Team (formerly Conservation and Natural Resources SWAT) has covered topics such as



Waters of the US, Swampbuster, and multiple aspects of the NLRs. The Team has met with researchers at U of I, SIUC, Purdue, ISU, and the state scientific surveys, as well as administration and staff at USEPA Region 5, Illinois NRCS, IDOA, IEPA, IDNR, IDOT, and AFBF. The Team was also the inspiration – and many times the content – of the Farming for the Future social media campaign to tell the story of IFB members’ work on environmental issues and conservation to the general public (www.ilfarmersconserve.com).

In spring 2020 (prior to COVID-19 restrictions), the team was able to meet in-person with researchers from Illinois State Water Survey, U of I, and SIUC to discuss their research in various areas of water quality, climate science, remote sensing technology, and phosphorus management. This meeting provided researchers with the opportunity to ask farmers general questions about the research as well as gather feedback about research direction moving forward.

During late spring, the Team and members of the Fulton CFB Board of Directors were gathered virtually to participate in a focus group to discuss the current research of agricultural best management practices to address nutrient loss as well as plans for future work within the partnership. Specifically, the research team at MWRD heard from farmers across the state as MWRD looks to strengthen their research and collaboration with IFB at the Cuba, Illinois research site. Using a virtual meeting platform, over 30 individuals gathered in the discussion, including Commissioners on the Board of MWRD who also learned about the farmer perspectives.

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