

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Multi-Benefit Conservation Practice Workshop

October 3-4, 2023
Workshop Summary

Purpose

The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA) convened a series of two workshops in 2022 and 2023 focused on multi-benefit conservation practices. The purpose of the October 3-4, 2023 workshop was to explore leverage points of change that could increase implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices. The preceding workshop, held in November 2022, was designed to explore how organizations can accelerate the implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices that address nutrient reduction in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

Identifying leverage points of change to increase implementation requires a systems perspective on the implementation process. The workshop presenters and participants explored leverage points of change in policy, finance, technical information, leadership, and partnership that may enhance implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices. Examples of leverage points include improved and coordinated technical assistance, innovative and streamlined funding mechanisms, peer to peer networks, and new partnerships and collaborations.

UMRBA planned the agenda and facilitation method with direction from a small group of representatives from UMRBA's member states, as well as input from partnering federal agencies. This second workshop convened 58 participants, representing government (local, state, and federal), private sectors, as well as agricultural, industry, university, and conservation entities.

This workshop summary presents some of the key ideas from each of the presentations, discussions, and tabletop exercises conducted during the workshop. This summary follows the order of the workshop agenda and contains six appendices, as follows:

- Appendix A lists the names and affiliations of the 58 participants
- Appendix B presents the workbook that was used to guide participant activities
- Appendix C presents the verbatim notes produced by participants during several of the tabletop discussions
- Appendix D offers the initial feedback from participants at the end of the workshop
- Appendix E contains the summarized text responses for leverage points of change in an accessible format
- Appendix F contains the summarized text responses for bigger picture questions in an accessible format

Introduction

Opening Remarks

Commissioner of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MN PCA), Katrina Kessler, opened her remarks by acknowledging that the workshop location sits on the ancestral and current homelands of the Dakota nation. Kessler stated that Minnesota is a headwaters state and takes pride in being a part of the Red River, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River Basins. The MN PCA organizes its work at the watershed scale to monitor and assess 81 major watersheds in the state. The Minnesota Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendments are sources of funding for clean water projects in the state.

Commissioner Kessler said Minnesota is one of 12 Hypoxia Task Force (HTF) states working on nutrient reduction. Minnesota adopted its nutrient reduction strategy in 2014. There has been tremendous success in point source reduction, but Commissioner Kessler said Minnesota has further to go in reducing nitrogen from nonpoint sources. Minnesota is currently updating its nutrient reduction strategy. Minnesota shares many similar challenges in implementing the strategies with other HTF states. Collaborations, like this workshop, allow Minnesota to learn from others in the basin and better engage the public.

Commissioner Kessler is appreciative of UMRBA for focusing its interstate collaboration on nutrient reduction strategies. Minnesota is grateful for the Gulf Hypoxia Funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and USDA Climate Smart Commodities funding are reasons to be hopeful, and new financial mechanisms will help accelerate conservation.

The steering committee guiding Minnesota's revision of its nutrient reduction strategy is focused on climate change impacts, reducing nitrogen from wastewater, and developing new tools and information. Minnesota is using data to inform how local action can advance larger regional goals.

The MN PCA wants to make information on its website about nutrient reduction more accessible. Kessler encouraged the public to be invited into the work and get connected through stories and data that are meaningful to them.

Commissioner Kessler underscored that we (meeting participants) have a lot more in common than we think, and we should work together where there are mutual benefits. This workshop is a good example of a gathering that will help states in the basin talk with each other about commonalities and opportunities for developing shared goals and actions. UMRBA helps Minnesota and other states do that better. Commissioner Kessler hopes that participants have a successful workshop experience.

Host Remarks

Lauren Salvato, Policy and Programs Director, introduced UMRBA as the Governor-established association for land and water resources planning on the navigable portions of the Upper Mississippi River, representing its member states of Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. UMRBA serves as the Governor's interstate water quality entity, leading regional collaboration to assist the states in implementing the Clean Water Act and nutrient reduction strategies. UMRBA has long envisioned, and worked towards building, a layered and interwoven approach to water quality protection involving local, state, regional, and federal responsibilities. UMRBA serves as the Upper Mississippi River sub-basin committee to the Hypoxia Task Force.

Salvato shared the working definition of multi-benefit conservation practices: a singular conservation practice that provides more than one beneficial outcome. The beneficial outcomes may be any combination of agronomic, ecological, social, and financial. For example, a wetland has the potential to provide water quality improvement, flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat, and more.

Two pre-workshop webinars were organized on June 29, 2023 and September 13, 2023 to provide background information leading up to the workshop. Presenters on the June 29 webinar were the Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Partnership on its partnership initiatives and cover crop incentives directory, the American Farmland Trust on its guide to water quality, climate, social, and economic outcome estimation tools, and the University of Wisconsin Madison Division of Extension on tools and opportunities for cultivating watershed leadership. The September 13 webinar hosted speakers from USDA, NRCS, and USEPA on the Inflation Reduction Act and Climate Smart Commodities, the State Revolving Fund program, Section 604(b) funding, and the Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center.

Salvato thanked the planning committee of state and federal agency staff that guided the layout and priorities developed in the two-part workshop series. USEPA Office of Water is providing financial support and technical expertise for this workshop series.

Systems Mapping and Leverage Points

Brian Stenquist, Deputy Director of UMRBA and workshop emcee, prefaced his presentation by saying that the ideas offered here are based on the work of Donella Meadows, Peter Senge, and others who study systems thinking. The presentation also reflects Stenquist's experience using systems thinking in his work as a strategic planner, communicator, and manager.

Stenquist suggested that one way to think about systems mapping is that it is an attempt to visually depict forces that trigger actions within a bounded process. The bounded process and the dynamics within it can be referred to as a system.

In this workshop, participants will work collaboratively to depict the forces that trigger implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices. A draft system map was provided in the workshop workbook (see Appendix B) to illustrate the principles of systems mapping and to stimulate insights about system dynamics related to implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices.

The draft system map is built upon a "logic model" of nine steps that are part of a conservation practice implementation process. The logic model also offers ideas about the possible sources of information, leadership, and support at each of these steps. The nine steps are as follows:

- 1) A problem is observed
- 2) An intent to act arises in an actor
- 3) The problem observed in step one is more deeply diagnosed
- 4) A multi-benefit conservation practice is selected to address the problem
- 5) Funding for constructing the practice is acquired
- 6) The practice is constructed
- 7) The practice is put into operation

- 8) The impact of the practice is evaluated
- 9) The practice is maintained over time

In addition to systems mapping, Stenquist reviewed the concept of “leverage points.” Leverage points are places in a system where a small change can result in big changes, according to Donella Meadows. The draft system model presents leverage points as “arrows of energy” that can influence the speed, efficiency, or effectiveness of the individual action steps.

The system map illustrates that financial leverage points might influence the “funding for construction” (step 5), the “intent to act” (step 3), the “selection of a practice” (step 4), and the “evaluation of the practice” (step 8). Policy leverage points are also modeled on the map. Policy changes might influence the “diagnosis of the practice” (step 3), the “selection of a practice” (step 4), and the “construction of the practice” (step 5).

Other workshop presenters will explore more deeply the possible leverage points arising in policy, finance, technical information, leadership, and partnership. The workshop focus is to illuminate the changes for leverage points that may enhance implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices.

Stenquist also introduced the concept of “interventions in the system” as leverage points. The draft system map displays the possible influence of using goals and paradigms as leverage points. Changes in goals/paradigms could influence problems observed (step 1), diagnosis of the problem (step 3), construction of a practice (step 6), and evaluation of the practice (step 8).

Leverage Points

Presentations

1) Leveraging Financial and In-kind Resources for Multiple Outcomes

Raelynn Parmely discussed the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) Environmental Team’s priorities, as including education and outreach, supporting research, implementation of conservation practices, reporting and documentation, and using existing projects as catalysts.

IFB invests in conservation by providing financial support to partner organizations who advance IFB priorities or through in-kind staff or financial contributions employed through IFB programs and projects. The IFB’s Nutrient Stewardship Grant Program is an example of IFB providing external financial support. The Program offers grants ranging from \$50 to 150,000 per year to advance locally led projects that contribute to nutrient loss reduction.

IFB is also involved in edge of field practice partnership programs, research support, and watershed planning and implementation – e.g., USDA NRCA Regional Conservation Partnership Program and Section 319 projects. There are many opportunities within projects to add education and outreach into IFB’s existing infrastructure and extensive network of farmers and producers. In-kind commitments are valuable and may not require new funding to fulfill and leverage an organization’s unique value.

2) Nature-Based Solutions to Retain Water on the Landscape

Kim Lutz reflected that the need for nature-based solutions is continuously underscored by the increasing billion-dollar weather and climate disasters and, more locally, the increasing frequency of flooding across the Mississippi River Basin. Nature-based solutions can help increase resiliency to climate change. Implementing those solutions requires helpful policies and financial support or incentives.

With funding from the Midwest Climate Adaptation Science Center and Caterpillar, America's Watershed Initiative (AWI) is working on a project to conduct a gap analysis of current state and federal programs in the basin that address nature-based solutions. This includes analyzing the levers that limit and/or enhance usage of nature-based solutions, identifying the federal funding or private funding resources could support implementation of nature-based solutions, and documenting learned information from private and public implementation of nature-based solutions in priority areas. Goals for AWI are to develop consistent metrics across the Mississippi River Basin to use in evaluating the efficacy of nature-based solutions to climate resilience, potentially integrate into the Mississippi River Report Card, and advocate long-term funding for nature-based solutions.

AWI is still in the data collection phase of the project. Initial insights suggest that favorable policies including streamlining permits and establishing favorable ranking of grant funding promote nature-based solutions. Examples of disincentives or challenges to implementing nature-based solutions are:

- a) Undervaluing nature-based solutions in current federal policies and guidance on accounting and analysis
- b) Lack of workforce training
- c) Lack of nature-based solutions as considerations in permit guidelines
- d) Inconsistencies in the evaluations of the benefits of nature-based solutions

3) Increasing New Collaborations around Clean Water

Annie Felix-Gerth shared that the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's soil and water resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. BWSR provides grants for watershed and conservation planning and implementation. Historically, BWSR's clientele has included soil and water conservation districts, watershed districts, counties, and watershed management organizations.

Felix-Gerth shared a recent experience administering the Clean Water Legacy Partners grant, appropriated from the Clean Water Fund. In an effort to expand BWSR's clientele to non-governmental organizations, tribal governments, public water suppliers, and cities, BWSR staff prepared by learning how to work with tribes, talked to tribal liaisons in the state agencies, and had staff attend the Minnesota Department of Transportation's tribal relations course. BWSR solicited input into its grant process and received suggestions for simplifying requests for proposals (RFP), offering longer timeframes for completing RFPs, providing additional training, and dedicating staff for program administration.

The overall solicitation process was successful. The funding was fully utilized across a large applicant pool (three tribal governments and 19 nongovernmental organizations).

Felix-Gerth said BWSR is committed to continually improving its grants application process. BWSR is preparing to open requests for proposals for several grant programs that collectively will support \$79 million in FYs 2024 and 2025 for watershed-based implementation and tribes are now eligible. There will be \$1.7 million in competitive grant funding available in FY 2024 to improve drinking water. BWSR has expanded eligible recipients to include public water suppliers.

4) Fostering Conservation through Farmer Leadership: Wisconsin's Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program

Coreen Fallat described the Wisconsin Producer Led Watershed Grant Program's goal to improve water quality and soil health through the support of grassroots conservation – i.e., promoted through locally led, farmer-to-farmer outreach and education. Research has shown that farmers listen to other farmers (e.g., Prokopy et al., 2019). The Program leverages those farmers that will use their leadership to influence conversation adoption.

Launched in 2016, the Producer Led Program has a \$1 million annual budget to support farmer-led groups through small grants. The requirements for farmer-led groups are to have at least five producers in a watershed project area; work with a collaborator; and create a viable work plan, with anticipated outcomes towards water quality improvement, communications plan, and evidence of farmer commitment. There are 43 active groups across the state. Fallat said the most common incentive is for cover crops.

Fallat shared high-level results of the 2022 Analysis of Impact on Farmer Learning and Community Awareness, as follows:

What areas did the group contribute to success? The responses indicated that the most success was in learning about conservation issues and practices and building the network. The less selected options related to adoption or expansion of the use of the practices, the connection to non-farming community and the capacity for collective action.

What knowledge, skills, or awareness are of interest? Technical skills e.g., practice implementation, on-farm demonstration, research project, or expert, leadership and speaking skills.

What are some of the areas that farmers and other community members changed their attitude and awareness about as result of participation in group? Financials/economics of conservation; Greater acceptance of conservation practices; and Community recognition and connections

What ideas, topics, or innovations are informing the future of your group? Technical e.g., practices, research, demos; partnerships; other grant programs; and community concerns

Fallat encouraged participants to read more of the survey results on the producer-led report on the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's (DATCP) website:

<https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents2/2020-21ProducerLedImpactReport.pdf>

Discussion

Participant question: Have states considered providing capacity support funding to tribes?

Melissa King, Minnesota BWSR Tribal Coordinator, said a group of federal and state agency tribal coordinators are learning from tribes about their individual needs. It is a continuous learning process. State agencies are in the early stages of learning and anticipate a long-term process of engagement with tribes to learn about their hopes, needs, concerns and how state funding could best support their respective priorities.

Participant question: Keeping the right folks in positions critical, especially in those careers that are considered starting positions. Networks and years of relationship take building and a lot of work. How do we take advantage of someone who cultivated those relationships?

Felix-Gerth started working at the local level prior to BWSR. She has observed that local boards are not always able to offer competitive wages commensurate with having a four-year degree. Post-COVID-19, people want to be in meaningful jobs and want better wages, benefits, continuing education, and training opportunities.

Participant question: How does Illinois Farm Bureau evaluate in-kind valuations?

Parmely provided an example of implementing IFB's pollinator program. IFB received a discount on seed from a company. Parmely found that reporting the savings on seeds was more meaningful than the measurement of pounds per seed purchased. Even if you put a dollar amount and personnel time associated with the in-kind valuation, there are many other indirect contributions that should be factored in.

Participant question: What does the end goal of producer-led watershed groups look like?

Fallat said Wisconsin DATCP continually wrestles with this question, even as the Producer-Led Program is in its seventh year. There are more requests for funding than funding available, and often groups are partially funded through the grant program. Wisconsin DATCP is questioning when should the department discontinue funding for previously funded groups and prioritize funding to new groups? Or, should successful groups continue to receive funding? Wisconsin DATCP staff have expressed a desire for watershed groups to become self-sustaining at a certain point and stop requesting grant money.

Participant question: How is funding allocated to education and outreach tracked in terms of conservation implementation and associated water quality benefits?

Fallat said producer-led watershed groups are required to submit annual reports. Fallat suggested reaching out to DATCP staff Dana Cristel for more specifics.

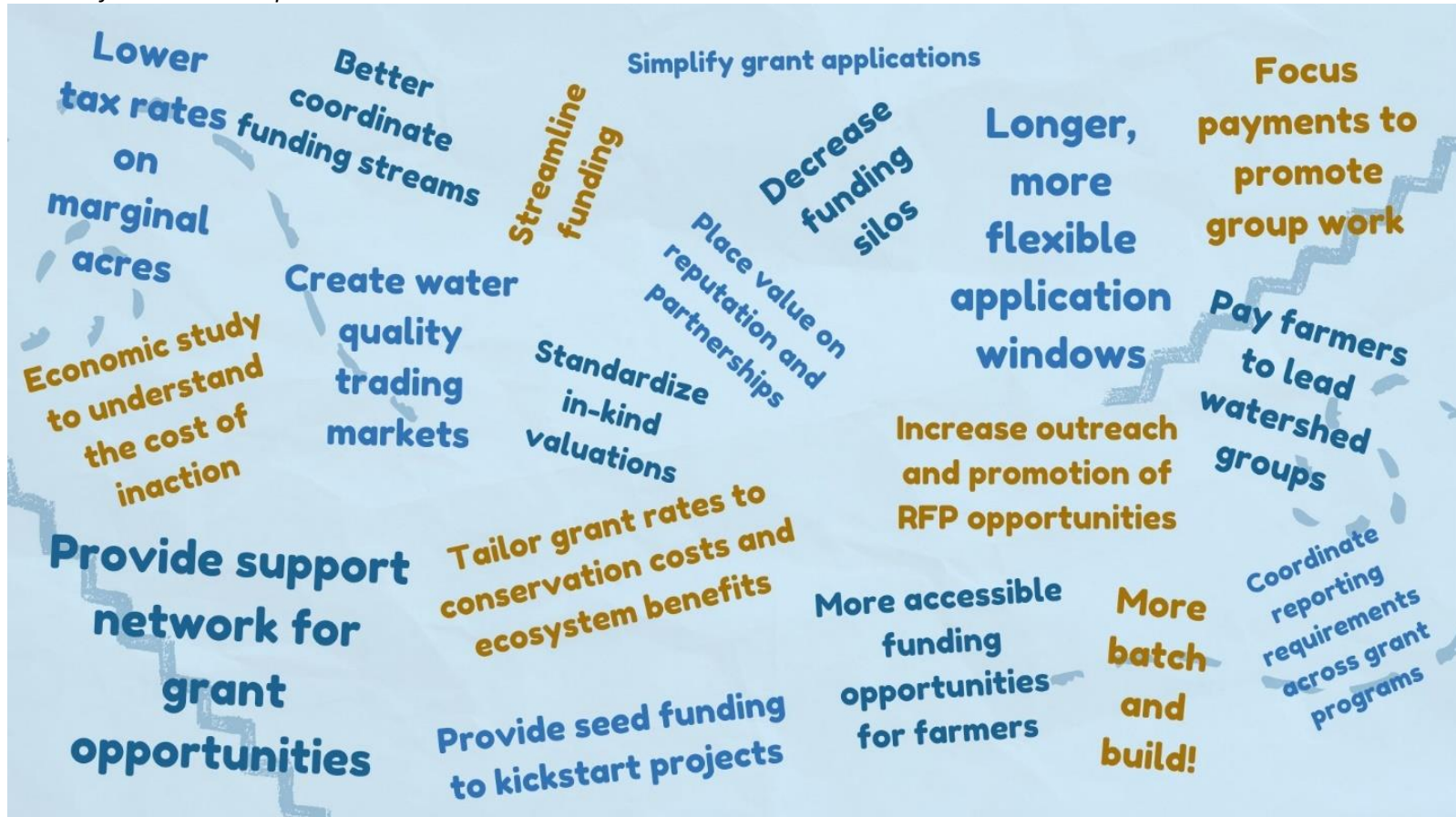
Parmely acknowledged that it is challenging to assess the benefits of helping a local community with outreach. Regardless, IFB maintains building local capacity as a priority.

Lutz suggested that education and outreach be considered as AWI's Report Card metric. AWI is interested in using existing datasets and finding a pathway to make it accessible through the Report Card.

Tabletop Exercises

The images below represent a consolidation of ideas provided by participants during tabletop discussions. Individual, verbatim participant answers are transcribed in Appendix C. Appendix E contains the text in this image in an accessible format.

Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “financial support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?



Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “policy support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

[Note: In this context, “policy” can include laws, rules, and administrative procedures].



Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “technical coordination support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

[Note: Technical coordination includes published information, technical guides and manuals, education and training sessions as well as individual technical consulting.]



Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “participation and leadership support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?



BIPOC and Tribal Panel

Panel Perspectives

The panel experts included:

- Melissa King, Tribal Coordinator, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Rodrigo Cala, Agricultural Trainer, Latino Economic Development Center
- Sara George, Renewing the Countryside, Conservation Connections Program Coordinator

The panel experts were provided with the following questions in advance of the workshops with the request to share their perspectives related to the questions during this panel session:

- How do you and your organization/agency think about engaging BIPOC and women farmers and landowners about multi-benefit conservation practices?
- What are the challenges experienced by these particular groups in doing conservation?
- What advice do you have for this workshop audience to diversify engagement with BIPOC and women farmers and landowners, as well as affiliation organizations and tribal nations?

Melissa King shared the importance of coordinating and consulting with the 11 federally recognized tribes in the State of Minnesota. Each tribe has its own inherent right to operate under its own governmental system and has its own unique structures, resources, and staffing of its government.

Rodrigo Cala grew up farming outside of Mexico City and shared his journey of migrating to Minnesota in 1996. Cala participated in the Minnesota Food Association training program and eventually purchased a 46-acre farm near Turtle Lake, Wisconsin with his brother. A portion of their farm is organically certified, and they primarily produce vegetables. Cala is passionate about teaching agriculture to others.

Sara George has many roles at Renewing the Countryside but spoke mainly with respect to the coordination work in the Conservation Connections program and mentor for Wisconsin Women in Conservation. Conservation Connections connects historically underserved farmers to “connectors” who help them better understand and utilize conservation programs and resources offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. George serves as the West Central Regional Coordinator for the Wisconsin Women in Conservation, a statewide collaborative effort to bring Wisconsin women landowners together to learn about conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities. George owns a farm in Pepin, Wisconsin that grows specialty crops like berries as well as vegetables.

Discussion

Participant question: How is Renewing the Countryside (RTC) funded?

George said RTC is funded primarily through collaborative agreements with FSA and NRCS. There are a number of grant opportunities that RTC applies for through the USDA cares portal.

Participant question: What's the intersection of producers doing organic farming and minimizing soil disturbance?

George said RTC encourages the use of cover crops, but many of the administrative forms (i.e., the application paperwork) do not make sense for specialty crop producers. The forms have been structured for commodity producers. Farmers of color are primarily working with specialty crops. George likes to use the analogy that she cannot translate radish production to bushels.

Participant question: What are the federal agency conversations like in making procedural changes to programs?

George responded that some changes are starting, but George recognized more progress needs to be made in opportunities for specialty versus commodity producers.

King sees issues of scale with conservation delivery. Commodity producers may have more access to programs because more farmland is tied up in commodity crop production. However, if the paradigm shift emphasizes a just and equitable food system, then specialty crops need to be prioritized. Climate smart agriculture practices need to better cater to specialty crop production.

George suggested reaching out to organizations like Renewing the Countryside to figure out who has collaborative agreements in your state.

Participant question: Referenced a comment from George about the need to reduce costs for conservation on leased lands, what might be the leverage points to bring about the desired change?

George emphasized explaining the benefits of cover crops. As an example, a benefit of cover crops is less weed management. Be mindful of the producer's or farmer's current knowledge of conservation practices.

George pointed to a program called Farm Buds, which pulls together pools of volunteers that provide assistance to individual farms. Sometimes farmers need labor to install a fence or build a high tunnel. George utilized the program herself on her own farm.

Participant question: How might we open ourselves up to tribal governments in nutrient reduction strategy work as the Gulf Hypoxia Program funding flows to tribal nations?

King suggested to pick up the phone and give tribal staff a call.

George emphasized that farmers are passionate and are not in this line of work to make millions.

Social Science in Conservation

Presentations

1) Leveraging Social Connections for Conservation: Strategies for Action

Social scientist, Dr. Adam Reimer, shared that the triad of effective communications for behavior change includes audience, message, and messenger.

When thinking about the audience it is important to start by answering what is the end goal and who is the audience? Understanding your audience means you understand that their attitudes, social norms, and self-efficacy all impact their behavioral intentions. This understanding feeds into being able to design an outreach campaign to affect behavior change.

When evaluating messages, Reimer shared the following strategies to overcome barriers:

- Provide the right motivation
- Speak your audience’s language
- Address key problems producers are facing
- Frame the conversation by putting change and risk in context
- Make it safe for change
- Identify clear steps for success

Social science research has revealed that the most resonating messages for producers in deciding to adopt conservation practices involve solving problems, risk management, supply chain sustainability, personal and industry reputation, stewardship, and legacy value of farming.

Messengers are incredibly important in the sphere of influencing a farmer’s decisions to adopt conservation. Many publications, including Prokopy et al., 2019, have revealed which relationships are in a farmer’s most trusted networks. The most trusted interpersonal source is neighbors or other farmers.

The National Wildlife Federation has a Conservation Champions program that leverages farmer leadership in peer-to-peer networks. Reimer highlighted state level partnerships including Wisconsin DATCP’s Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program and Illinois Sustainable Agricultural Partnership (ISAP). ISAP’s membership includes foundations, environmental and agricultural nonprofits, soil and water conservation districts, industry groups, and universities. One of ISAP’s program pillars includes cultivating a network of practitioners.

Reimer concluded by underscoring the importance of psychology, social science, and sociology training for conservation practitioners, citing a summary report from Morris et al., 2021 that emphasized the need for training in those disciplines.

Discussion

Participant question: Industrial agriculture is an international business. How could we utilize the systems mapping conversation in an even broader spatial context? Who are we as actors in this setting?

Reimer recognized that agriculture is an embedded system with many tiers and competing narratives, and therefore, a variety of approaches are needed. If the only dominant paradigm is financial, then something is missing.

Tabletop Exercise

The images below represent a consolidation of ideas provided by participants. Individual, verbatim participant answers are transcribed in Appendix C. Appendix F contains the text of these images in an accessible format.

Facilitated question: What three to five key ideas that arose during the workshop will you share with your supervisor and colleagues when you return to work?



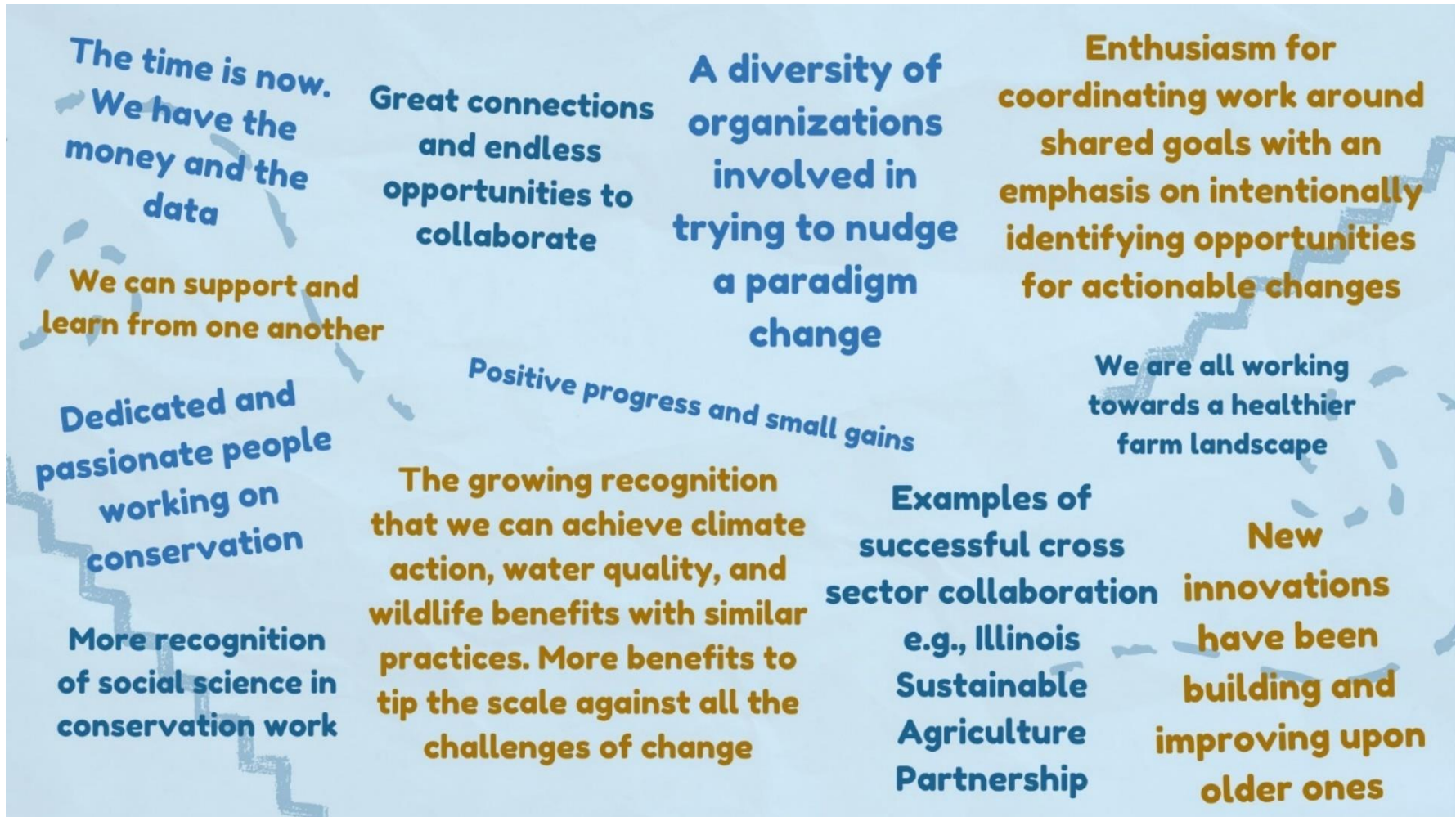
Facilitated question: What small changes in your organization's approach to multi-benefit conservation practices might you begin to advocate for based on the ideas and perspectives shared during the workshop?



Facilitated question: *What deeper questions do you walk away with from this workshop?*



Facilitated question: What brings you optimism and hope as you walk away from the workshop?



Conclusions

UMRBA's Multi-Benefit Conservation Practice Workshop held October 3-4, 2024 hosted 58 participants representing a variety of sectors – government (local, state, federal), private, agricultural, industry, universities, and nonprofits entities. Participants feedback on the workshop was positive, and they valued the format and topics (Appendix D). The purpose of the October 3-4, 2023 workshop was to explore leverage points of change that could increase implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices. The preceding workshop, held in November 2022, was designed to explore how organizations can accelerate the implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices that address nutrient reduction in the Upper Mississippi River Basin.

UMRBA offers the following conclusions reflecting on the two-part workshop series on multi-benefit conservation practices:

- 1) The acceleration of adopting multi-benefit conservation practices is important in the Upper Mississippi River basin to ensure farmland is healthy for continued production of crops and to protect and build resilience in those lands.
- 2) UMRBA's two-part workshop series focused on how to increase the adoption of multi-benefit conservation practices series. Held in November 2022 in St. Louis, Missouri and October 2023 in St. Paul, Minnesota, the workshops drew a wide-ranging audience of people working in agriculture related areas, from various educational backgrounds and organizations/agencies. The cross collaboration of public and private sector groups and the structure of workshops allowed for thoughtful and innovative idea sharing.
- 3) The first workshop was designed to balance information sharing and breakout group discussions around three topic areas: research, communication, and financial. The conversations highlighted the importance of multiple disciplines and multiple layers of organizations/agencies being involved to reduce nutrient loading in the Upper Mississippi River basin.
- 4) The systems map utilized in the second workshop helped workshop participants understand how to map and identify leverage points. The map can be applied to various levels of your organization/agencies' work. UMRBA encourages referencing the systems map linked here: <https://umrba.org/sites/default/files/documents/workshop-systems-map.pdf>.
- 5) Many presenters in the second workshop emphasized the power of peer-to-peer communication, education, and leadership as a leverage point for increasing multi-benefit conservation practice adoption by commodity and specialty crop producers. This was especially true for women, tribal, and BIPOC farmers. The power of peer-to-peer communications reinforces the insight that messages and messengers geared to specific and different audiences are keys to unlocking and leveraging change.
- 6) UMRBA will continue to work on behalf of its five member states to increase the collaboration and sharing of resources surrounding nutrient reduction strategies. As the Upper Mississippi River Sub-basin Committee to the Hypoxia Task Force, UMRBA will be utilizing funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law authorized Gulf Hypoxia Program to continue interstate collaboration with respect to the states' nutrient management.

Appendix A— Participant List

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association

Multi-Benefit Conservation Practices Workshop

October 3-4, 2023

Confirmed Attendees

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
American Farmland Trust	Helen VanBeck	Midwest Program Specialist
America's Watershed Initiative	Kim Lutz	Executive Director
Centra Sota Cooperative	Amy Robak	Lead Environmental Specialist
Clean Wisconsin	Sara Walling	Water Program Director
Ducks Unlimited	Casey Bergthold	Missouri Conservation Program Coordinator
Forever Green Initiative, UMN	Sienna Nesser	Continuous Living Cover Adoption Specialist
Heartland Co-op	Ruth McCabe	Senior Conservation Agronomist
Heartland Co-op	William Hoffman	Conservation Agronomist
Heartland Co-op	Emery Davis	Conservation Agronomist
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	Trevor Sample	Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy Coordinator
Illinois Farm Bureau	Raelynn Parmely	Program Manager
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship	Matt Lechtenberg	Water Quality Initiative Coordinator
Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Adam Schnieders	Water Quality Resource Coordinator
Iowa Farm Bureau	Shawn Richmond	Director of Environmental Services
Iowa Soybean Association	Todd Sutphin	Conservation Program Lead
Latino Economic Development Center	Rodrigo Cala	Agricultural Trainer
Local Choice Marketing	Bartlett Durand	Managing Member
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Jeff Berg	Water Policy Specialist
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Reid Christiansen	Supervisor, Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division
Minnesota Department of Agriculture	Clarissa Levi	Agronomy and Conservation Programs Coordinator

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Matt Drewitz	Research Scientist
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Katrina Kessler	Commissioner
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Corrie Layfield	Nutrient Reduction Strategy Coordinator
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Glenn Skuta	Watershed Division Director
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Dave Wall	Research Scientist
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Annie Felix-Gerth	Water Programs Coordinator
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Melissa King	Water Programs Coordinator
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Suzanne Rhees	Special Projects Coordinator
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Julie Westerlund	One Watershed, One Plan Coordinator
Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources	Udai Singh	Modeling and Outcomes Coordinator
Minnesota Department of Health	Dereck Richter	Surface Water Principal Planner
Missouri Department of Agriculture	Ken Henderson	Director, Grain Inspection Division
Missouri Department of Natural Resources	Victoria Bushan	Special Projects Coordinator
Missouri Department of Natural Resources	Mike Kruse	Section Chief, Watershed Protection Program
Missouri Department of Natural Resources	Josh Poynor	Soil and Water District Coordinator
Missouri Department of Natural Resources	Chris Wieberg	Deputy Director, Missouri Geological Survey
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality	Christy Prouty	Consultant
National Wildlife Federation	Jenny Berkowitz	Agricultural Outreach Fellow
National Wildlife Federation	Adam Reimer	Outreach and Evaluation Scientist
North Central Region Water Network/ University of Wisconsin Division of Extension	Jenny Seifert	Watershed Outreach Specialist
Mississippi River Network	Maisah Khan	Policy Director
Renewing the Countryside	Sara George	Conservation Connection Coordinator

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
Sand County Foundation	Heidi Peterson	Vice President, Agricultural Research and Conservation
Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources	Natalie Kerr	Illinois STAR Coordinator
The Land Institute	Kelsey Whiting	Perennial Grain Policy and Government Affairs, Postdoctoral Researcher
The Nature Conservancy	Andrea Eger	Regenerative Agriculture Project Manager
The Nature Conservancy	David Van Eeckhout	Associate Director of Agriculture
Trout Unlimited	Sara Strassman	Driftless Area Program Manager
Milwaukee Audubon Society	Janette Marsh	President
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Kirsten Wallace	Executive Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Lauren Salvato	Policy and Programs Director
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Erin Spry	Project Specialist
Upper Mississippi River Basin Association	Brian Stenquist	Assistant to the Executive Director
University of Illinois Extension	Amanda Christenson	Outreach Associate
University of Illinois Extension	Rachel Curry	Watershed Outreach Associate
University of Minnesota	Natalie Warren	Post Doc
University of Wisconsin Madison, Division of Extension	Anna James	Natural Resources Educator (Wood County Extension)
University of Wisconsin Madison, Discovery Farms	Amber Radatz	Agriculture and Water Quality Program Manager
Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection	Coreen Fallat	Agency Liaison, Bureau of Land and Water Resources
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Joe Bonnell	Nutrient Reduction Strategy Coordinator
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	Karl Gesch	Nonpoint Source Program Coordinator
Wisconsin Land and Water	Christina Anderson	Program Manager

Appendix B - Workshop Workbook

[Note the workshop format has been condensed to fit on fewer pages].

Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Multi-Benefit Conservation Practice Workshop Workbook

WORKSHOP EXERCISES

Welcoming Remarks

Katrina Kessler, MN PCA Commissioner

Process and Products

Brian Stenquist, Workshop Facilitator

Review of Pre-Workshop Webinars

Lauren Salvato, Workshop Host

INTRODUCTIONS

Please answer the following questions in writing below

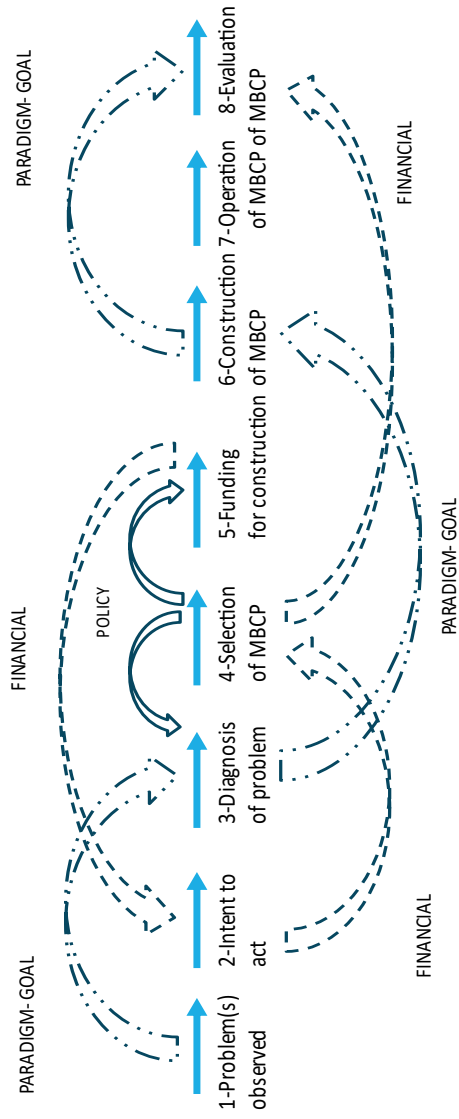
- 1. What is your name, your organization, and your work within your organization?*
- 2. How does your work intersect with the focus of this workshop?*
- 3. What three to four things do you hope to accomplish, learn, or gain through the workshop?*

After everyone has had a chance to respond to these questions, participants can begin sharing their answers in a round robin fashion at their table. (We may ask you to transcribe your answers on to a post it note later in the day.)

NOTES ON PRESENTATION

A WORKSHOP SYSTEMS MAP: IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTIBENEFIT CONSERVATION PRACTICES

A Logic Model Systems Map Steps in Implementing Multibenefit Conservation Practices

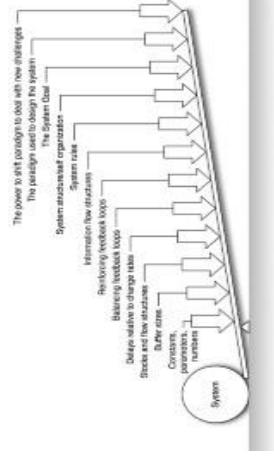


Possible sources of information, leadership, and support at each step:

1-Operation Issue	2-Govt Agent	3-Govt Agent	4-Govt Agent	5-Govt	6-Private Company	7-Land owner	8-Govt Agent
Runoff Issue	Crop Consultant	Crop Consultant	Crop Consultant	Product Purchaser	Do-it-yourself	Operator (if rented)	Crop Consultant
Regulatory Issue	Peer-to-Peer	Peer-to-Peer	Peer-to-Peer	Govt agent	Peer-to-peer	Peer-to-peer	Peer-to-peer
Aesthetic Issue	Personal Learning	Personal Learning	Personal Learning	Personal finance	Personal Learning	Personal Learning	Personal Learning
	Family Network	Family Network	Family Network	Bank	NGO	Product Purchaser	

Select References related to Systems Thinking

- [1. https://www.academvforchange.org/](https://www.academvforchange.org/)
- [2. https://donellameadows.org/archives/leveraging-intelligence-in-a-system/](https://donellameadows.org/archives/leveraging-intelligence-in-a-system/)
- Thinking in Systems: a primer by Donella Meadows
- <https://www.solonline.org/>
- Leadership and the New Science by Margaret Wheatley



APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY ABOUT THE WORKSHOP DRAFT SYSTEMS MAP

Please answer the following questions in writing below

- 1. What do you like about this workshop draft systems map? How does it help you see important aspects of implementation and possible leverage points more clearly?*
- 2. What are some key system elements or dynamics that are missing from this systems map? How would you add them into this systems map?*
- 3. How would you improve the workshop draft systems map if you were looking for important leverage points?*

After everyone is done answering the questions in the workbook, individuals share one of their answers with others at the table

NOTES ON PRESENTATIONS

Financial Leverage Points

County Farm Bureau Grant Program

Policy Leverage Points

Identifying Policy Incentives and Disincentives to Water Retention Strategies in Agricultural Settings in the Upper Mississippi River Basin

Participation and Leadership Leverage Points

Primer for Increasing New Collaborations around Clean Water

Fostering Conservation through Farmer Leadership: Wisconsin's Producer-Led Watershed Protection Program

IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SYSTEM

Please answer the following questions in writing below

Based on the presentations and on your own experiences:

- 1. What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the "financial support space" for multi-benefit conservation practices?*

2. *What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “technical coordination support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices? (Technical coordination includes published information, technical guides and manuals, education and training sessions, as well as individual technical consulting.)*

3. *What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “policy support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices? (In this context, “policy” can include laws, rules, and administrative procedures.)*

4. *What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “participation and leadership support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?*

When participants are done answering the questions in their workbook, they can break for lunch.

LUNCH BREAK

When participants return from lunch, they should transcribe one of their answers to each of the four “IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SYSTEM” questions on to post it notes (Put only one answer per post it. Please label the post-its by category: financial; technical; policy; leadership).

When everyone is done transcribing their answers, they should share their answers to each question with others at the table.

STRETCH BREAK

Tribal and BIPOC Perspectives

Panel: Tribal and BIPOC Perspectives on Multi-Benefit Conservation Practices

Sara George, Renewing the Countryside, Conservation Connections Program Coordinator

Melissa King, Water Programs Coordinator, Minnesota BWSR

Rodrigo Cala, Agricultural Tainer, Latino Economic Development Center

Notes:

STRETCH BREAK

When participants return from the stretch break, they should answer the following questions:

1. *What are two to three important ideas you heard from the panel?*

2. *How might one or more of those ideas influence your organization’s support for tribal and BIPOC implementation of multi-benefit conservation practices?*

3. *What questions or additional perspectives did the panel presentations stimulate for you?*

After everyone is done answering the questions, participants should share their answers with each other at the table, round robin style

Panel members are encouraged to join a tabletop discussion or wander around listening in on multiple conversations

At 4:10, we will stop the tabletop conversations and ask the panelists to reassemble as a group

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

Tabletop participants or panelists may ask follow-up questions or make observations about the conversation

Wrap Up Day One

Lauren Salvato, UMRBA

Notes:

Before they leave for the day, participants should put their "IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SYSTEM" post its on flipcharts around the room

EVENING SOCIAL MOMENTS

Get to know your fellow workshop attendees at a networking event. Drinks and dinner will be available with individual checks, at cost to the attendee.

Bar at Hyatt Place Downtown St. Paul
180 Kellogg Blvd. East
St. Paul, MN 55101

WELCOME TO DAY TWO

Lauren Salvato, UMRBA,
Matt Lechtenberg, IA DALIS

RECAP OF DAY 1

Brian Stenquist, UMRBA

TAKING ACTION – MAKING IT HAPPEN

Finding a “Match Maker” for Conservation Actions

Dr. Adam Reimer, National
Wildlife Federation

Notes:

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - MAKING A CHANGE

Participants answer the following questions:

1. *What 3-5 key ideas that arose during the workshop will you share with your supervisor and colleagues when you return to work?*
2. *What small changes in your organization’s approach to multi-benefit conservation practices might you begin to advocate for based on the ideas and perspectives shared during the workshop?*
3. *What deeper questions do you walk away with from this workshop?*
4. *What brings you optimism and hope as you walk away from the workshop?*

After everyone is done answering the questions in the workbook, individuals share their answers with others at the table

At 9:45, we will stop the tabletop conversations and ask individuals to transcribe onto post it notes their answers to these questions. Label the post its: ideas; changes; questions; optimism.

(Participants can leave the post its on the table – we will collect them at the end of the workshop)

BREAK

SUMMARY AND CLOSING THOUGHTS

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

When participants return from the break, we will pass the microphone around to everyone and ask all willing participants to share one of their answers (or an answer provided by someone else at your table) to Questions 1 in “Making a Difference – Making a Change” and share one highlight for them from the workshop experience (one answer – one highlight)

Notes:

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM WORKSHOP HOSTS

Lauren Salvato, UMRBA

Appendix C — Post-It Note Transcriptions

Participants in the “Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Multi-Benefit Conservation Practice Workshop” used a workbook to guide their activities. Participants shared answers to workbook questions in small group tabletop discussions.

For eight questions, participants also put their answers on post-it notes and hung them on flipcharts on the wall. This document presents transcriptions of those participant post-it notes. The transcriptions are presented in the order they were hung on the flipcharts. They have not been edited.

Improvements in the System

What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “financial support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

1. Streamline funding. Fiscal agent? Technical expertise. Reporting. Managing risk.
2. Create grant ranking that gives extra points to groups working with farmers. More grants for farmers. Where they can directly apply for money.
3. Make financial support easier to access and make the support more reflective of the costs associated with conservation. Streamline process as much as possible.
4. Seed funding opportunities to kickstart projects.
5. More grants for equipment and infrastructure.
6. Increase incentive payments for both farmers and districts who are helping with contracting /education, etc.
7. Think differently about matching requirements. Granters, think about why the match? What’s most important? Dollars or partners. Match requests lead to too many admin tracking. Grantees, tell the story of our match in terms of contributions to the project, e.g. partners and engagement vs dollars.
8. Coordination is needed between the programs. Layer the financial incentives and coordinate reporting requirements.
9. Lower tax rates on marginal acres.
10. Money available but support network not available. How to fill that void? Possible NGO roles to play.
11. Pool resources and not only financial ones but in-kind support.
12. Streamline the grant process.
13. Longer grant opportunities with more flexibility.
14. Shared awareness of funding opportunities and align goals across funding programs.
15. Broaden our reach into non-gov sectors for funding to leverage. Leverage knowledge about “other” non-environmental benefits that provide financial lift. Talk to producers more.
16. Focus payments to promote group work. Don’t force competition among programs but allow stacking /integration. Allow flexibility in implementation and easy applications/reporting.

17. Decrease number of funding silos. Make more companion /enabling practices eligible for \$. Streamline in-kind reporting requirements.
18. Create markets (e.g., water quality credits trading) to sustain funding long-term and not rely on government funding down the road.
19. Create “navigator” positions (public and/or private sector) to help landowners determine which suite of practice/programs are the best match for their farm/property.
20. Pay more from society when more ecosystem benefits for all.
21. Money alone is not enough to achieve lasting behavior change. Need to recognize and value the role of social norms, community narratives, trust, etc.
22. Streamline applications and simplify. Awareness of examples of prior uses.
23. Inventory financial assistance programs and build a matrix to help piggyback funds and not miss RFP openings.
24. Make application process easier for the applicant: streamline forms; make in-kind easier to report; provide “live” people to support applicants.
25. Better coordinate funding streams and goals.
26. Increase outreach and promotion for RFP opportunities to increase awareness and help support applicants through the application process to increase chances of success and high-quality projects.
27. Understand the cost of inaction.
28. Make funding accessible to farmers. Acknowledge risk associated with cost share.
29. How to “value” partners? More funding! Connecting dots between organizations, resources, funding, etc. University research and trusted advisors. How to bridge gaps?
30. Standardize in-kind values. Be specific as to who is eligible and why. Feds/state/local all might have different funding sources.
31. Ease of application. Affordability to the landowner. Availability to the landowner.
32. Value of stacked ecosystem benefits.
33. What’s the value of in-kind? How can we lower burden for entry? How do you incentivize practices the “fit”? build local infrastructure -> training, \$, etc.
34. Paying farmers to lead watershed/conservation farmer groups with established practice implementation goals to measure “success.”
35. We might benefit from a study on the cost of inaction. Economic study. Those numbers along with quantified benefits could be very compelling to representatives and stakeholders.
36. Tailor rates/incentives commensurate with costs and where benefits accrue. Streamline/remove barriers to implement/adopt. Batch or construct on behalf of landowners/farmers.
37. Put \$ up front. Less strings (reporting) attached.
38. Find a better way to put a value on in-kind support and support.
39. Batch and build to remove complicated and burdensome grant process and leverage resources.
40. More experts on economics; cost/benefit comparisons; risk management; efficiencies.

What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “technical coordination support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices? (Technical coordination includes published information, technical guides and manuals, education and training sessions, as well as individual technical consulting.)

1. Collaborate to create low-cost, tangible tools that offer hands on demos for farmers i.e., soil health.
2. Training for smaller groups on how much they could ask for to help boost scale of projects.
3. Scale up farmer led groups and find ways to incentivize them/give them stable funding source like WI example.
4. Rethink and refine training for agronomists to focus on some of the most important practices.
5. Directory creation for technical service providers so farmers can get recommendations of what companies to hire.
6. Build out information and educational materials around return on investments for regenerative agriculture practices.
7. Increase funding for conservation staff.
8. Increase capacity for on-the-ground support and technical assistance.
9. More conservation agronomists.
10. One stop shop for peer-to-peer resources (testimonials, contacts, success stories).
11. Build technical capacity that is more comprehensive. Don't separate agronomy from conservation and vice versa.
12. Make “watershed coordinator” a profession (better pay, better benefits, elevated existing credentials, training/ certification). Increase participation and retention. More skills training: mentorship; selling conservation; people-skills and technical skills. Better pay! Starting salary is not viable.
13. Related to staff capacity: help certify staff and continue to train to assist with new and innovative practices.
14. Mentorship for farmers seeking peer support in conservation.
15. Training in outreach and extension skills.
16. Bring the science community together on benefits (metrics) – good for practitioners. Conservation agronomists – understand technical and economic components; this might also work with all agronomists.
17. Improve collaboration between agencies and the private sector. Incentivize capacity increases. Improve consistency of guidance.
18. Need to recognize that the same science and information are not going to be perceived the same way for all audiences. need more targeted communications and technical assistance.
19. Whole farm planning is not just management practices on edge of field. Peer-to-peer work. Rental/lease language to reduce impetus to farm marginal land.

20. Fund technical support at all. So much funding is going towards projects but less for staff capacity. Fund staff = retention. Strengthen training programs for transformations changes needed to make progress.
21. Creating general/understandable language. Increase real world examples.
22. Translated technical materials for immigrant farm workers.
23. Utilize expertise and encourage long term planning to achieve goals. Utilize stakeholders to educate the professionals as well. Make educational sources more available and easier to understand/interpret for farmers and conservation professionals. Communicate reasonable expectations and realistic outcomes.
24. Work with universities to train the next generation of employees who can fill dozens of NRCS/Farm Bureau jobs. Engineer training in multi-benefit solutions.
25. Socialize conservation concepts within/among farmer support “actors” (e.g., coop dealer staff, private agronomists, ag industry groups) through voluntary systems like 4R certification and/or by tying current program \$ to those actors with a conservation ag education requirement (e.g., \$ for building secondary containment – must go through “x” educational platform).
26. Improved relationships with technical service providers – Wikipedia sites, list-serves. Improved presence at standard / ongoing meetings.
27. Podcasts to improve reachability esp. among interested or targeted populations and to go “deep” on issues and opportunities.
28. Become more transparent about the motivations of institutions to gain trust.
29. Streamline planning, design, permitting, construction processes. Less layers of permitting. Less layers of review and red tape. Leverage partners/trusted advisors to deploy practices. Allow for partners to engage and assist with fewer layers of review/approvals.
30. Determine better metrics for measuring BMP performance: water quality; economic benefit; environmental benefits such as GHG reduction. Need feedback mechanism to improve adaptive management.
31. Academic and agency and private agronomists converge on what science is saying.
32. Marketing to farmers needs to be more effective. Recognize names, labels, culture.
33. May be missing things by missing avenues and people who don’t speak English or are not fluent.
34. Expanding our audience beyond traditional conservation professionals, including retailers, seed dealers, equipment dealers.
35. More coordination across agencies/extension/NGOs in terms of a shared conservation message, joint programming.
36. Work closely with linking science -> conservation coop agronomists -> farmers.
37. Producer to producer education. Embrace technology a bit more in the non-traditional education. Experience increase advertising budget.
38. Share simple condensed information on how action or inaction impacts the individual. Local field days. Incentivize being a leader in BP adoption. Peer-to-peer advocacy.

39. Agency needs to understand the position the landowner is coming from. Need to be able to explain how the practice aligns with the producer's goals. Example: profitability.
40. Coordination with various "end users" -> cover different technical guidance needs.
41. Resources to communities. Streamlining. Translation of administrative rules, hoops, etc. to communities/recipients. Supporting real person to real person connections.

What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the "policy support space" for multi-benefit conservation practices? (In this context, "policy" can include laws, rules, and administrative procedures.)

1. Address the barrier: length/timing of fed \$ process (NRCS fed: local). Streamline, simplify. Federal farm bill and policies programs. Alternative funding mechanisms.
2. Adaptive management concepts (culture) vs tracking (compliance). Allow stacking. Use SRF and 319 funds to support loans (grants) for equipment and management change.
3. Avoid prescribing "how" and instead allow for innovation and adaptation.
4. Required sustainability standards for food companies (as opposed to regulating farmers directly)
5. Shared language. Shared metrics.
6. Advance the adoption of new technical standards and revise existing standards at a faster rate.
7. Increased engagement with stakeholders for policy creation.
8. Diversifying job approval authority – in more than one agency. Access to federal conservation funding in more than one agency. Different interpretations cause confusion and unrest with stakeholders and professionals causing reduced conservation practices.
9. Regulate cooperatives to require nutrient management.
10. Change farm bill to support conservation practices.
11. Who agencies can pay. Who can be paid.
12. Streamline permitting. Create incentives for MBCP projects. Review existing policies for outdated requirements and eliminate.
13. Ensure science-based. Ensure market-based and incentive-driven. Ensure flexibility to choose what works best and where.
14. Permit flexibility when outcomes are beneficial for wetlands and waterways.
15. Use data and individual experiences from successful projects or programs to drive and generate more participation and/or policy and programming.
16. Broader eligibility for urban-rural partnerships.
17. Create flexible policies and standards (e.g., GAPS evaluation, NRCS standards).
18. Improve markets for commodity crops grown with conservation practices.
19. Bottom up instead of top down. Encourage and equip local farm leaders.
20. Non-ask contacts. Relationship development. Support innovation e.g., relay cropping. More boots on the ground.

21. Understand legislative barriers. Don't be limited by tradition. Build partner trust which will be less need for restrictive policy.
22. Don't wait for perfection before rolling with it. Have flexible policies that can be adjusted quickly when needed.
23. Streamline permitting: 404/401; floodplain; cultural resources. Flexible rules to tailor for implementation needs. Adapt with new tech, learn from traditional ways but don't stay stuck in the way we've always done it.
24. Streamlined permitting. More flexible options for permitting compliance (e.g., WQ credit training)
25. Support bottom-up policy options rather than always being top down.
26. Underscoring and appreciating risk to farmers while also addressing perceived and real risks.
27. Consistency => invaluable. Comprehensive arguments. Engineering - quicker plan turnaround. More of them.
28. Policy. Need capacity! Financial, human.
29. Making processes like grant applications more streamlined. Ensuring participants and involvement of all parties benefiting from a given practice.
30. Replicate programs that have shown success (implementation of practices on new acres) in other states/regions.
31. Recognize policy development impacts at multiple scales. Organize to support good examples and why they are working (i.e., defining the problem).
32. Reduce red tape associated with participation in conservation programs!

What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the "participation and leadership support space" for multi-benefit conservation practices?

1. Coordination – who takes the lead/responsibility to educate/implement opportunities.
2. Diversifying stakeholder education: downstream city folk; non-farming folk. Support multiple leaders in the same space to avoid burnout. Increase opportunities for partnerships for different organizations (Federal, state, county, NGO, industry).
3. Need more info about what interventions work vs which don't. Are you reaching intended audience?
4. Invest in youth conservation careers: 4H, conservation training, etc.
5. Let farmers speak for themselves/share their experience.
6. Cultivate more farmer leaders (e.g., similar to WI's program).
7. Understand the social network that present in the community (who are local leaders?) Local champions driving projects and initiative. Be present in the partnership opportunities. Recognition for farmers. Build and support peer networks. Provide info that's useful and timely. Incorporate farmer led councils into LGU-led watershed planning implementation.
8. Agency leadership needs to be more engaged with seeking solutions as opposed to just focusing on spending money.

9. Financial training, what are the economics of farming? (goal -> focus on profit not yield) Develop peer leadership networks and training.
10. Better support incentives for staff retention in conservation: compensation; benefits; peer networks; capacity building and training.
11. Leadership training for community leaders and non-farming landowners.
12. Training and support to landowners regarding long term maintenance of conservation practices.
13. Showcase examples and participants to locals.
14. Tracking of social indicators of behavior change to capture changes in individual and community conditions is essential if we are going to invest in human and social capital, leadership, and outreach.
15. Secure funding to support (pay) farmer leadership.
16. Better work with BIPOC community and address land access issues.
17. Peer to peer leadership. Incentivize future participation. Maintain consistent contacts. Create a solid network locally and across agencies.
18. Continuity of professionals to support programs. Make sure to spread things out and not always rely on the same individuals. Mentorship.
19. Be a willing advocate within our orgs/agency. Take opportunities to be present in places we might not traditionally go. Take time to network with folks you meet (like after this meeting).
20. Prioritize message for audience – who's the right communicator? Cultivate and compensate developing leaders -> recognize and reward. Start early (e.g., A LOT, FFA, etc).
21. Value cross-sector collaborations.
22. Podcasts with and among community leaders (e.g., central MN – DU, tribe, municipality, farmer, or more involved in particular projects like Iowa HUD grant, and batch and build).
23. Encourage and support more success/adoption/partners vs restrict/additional barriers/require more. Share successes/challenges to learn and evolve systems. Promote through peer leaders vs govt employees.
24. Work with renters/landlords: education, incentives, renter advisors.
25. Culturally competent training with increased languages used and presentations with visual/audio formats to reach broader audiences from a broader range of communities. Use common language (storytelling) for communicating.
26. Reduce reporting burden: only critical information; funding org to provide synthesis/background/metrics. Mental health in a changing rural landscape.
27. Build capacity within farm community to promote conservation (e.g., farmer-led watershed groups).
28. Advocate for approaches of change. Innovate. Trust. Don't forget the people are our products! Be supportive of the Ag Industry.
29. Make it fun. Make it light-hearted. Competition.
30. More conference and training opportunities for farmers. Leadership training for farmers.

31. Connect leadership from private ag business with C suite leadership in supply chains, ag purchasers and businesses to share ideas and foster understanding.
32. Explore giving tribes funding to create something like an SWCD to support staff.

Making a Difference – Making a Change

What three to five key ideas that arose during the workshop will you share with your supervisor and colleagues when you return to work?

1. Nitrogen overlap with rented land.
2. Tax incentives (and disincentives). Lease defaults with opt-out provisions so conservation is baseline. Promotion and support of small farmer groups.
3. Farmer led watershed groups to influence conservation implementation. Cooperator survey idea. Training conservation implementers on social or people aspects of “selling” conservation.
4. The value and need for more social sciences. Also, the need to recognize it as a hard science with data that can promote actual change.
5. Improving social science and behavioral metrics. Sub-focus of NRS to address and serve more groups: small or urban producers; women producers/landowners; absent landowners. Include indigenous and non-western knowledge in NRS.
6. Peer of farmer led partnerships and connectors for emerging/non traditional farmers. Messenger as a leverage point! Incentives for nature-based solutions via scoring and ranking of grant proposals.
7. There is not a one size fits all approach.
8. The systems map. Importance of problem definition and message about practices. Good to know all 5 states working hard on it.
9. Metrics/scale: Investigate tradeoff between access to resources (\$, loans) and impact to environment (nutrient, sediment pollution). Specialty crop: small, low scale; high \$ per crop; low env. Impact. Row crop: large scale; large env impact; low \$ per crop.
10. (Policy-ish) Reconsider paradigm of “monitoring” only being for water quality but also extending to social science metrics.
11. Farmer led groups. Rented land conflict. Non-operating landowner education.
12. Conservation incentives in agreements. Knowledge is not innovation. How do we begin to frame adoption through regulation in a palatable way.
13. Systems based structuring of programs that leads to change. Options/flexibility vs rigid structure/perfect process. Everyone has different priorities/perspectives. Meeting individuals where they are vs moving/forcing them to your level.
14. The connections made here were great. Learned about diversity of issues in the basin, and how to better collaborate.
15. Need to simplify RFP process and grant apps for smaller groups. Inventory of farmer led groups in MN and how to grow/support them.

16. Illinois NCRS action plan discussion. Identify who is doing what to streamline efforts and increase efficiency. Illinois farmer led watershed groups! Building “how to” kit for non-operating landowners to support conservation transition.
17. Advocacy approaches in the farm bill for rented land and marginalized land issues. Need to tie insurance to conservation.
18. Need to continue focusing on a systems approach to the work we do. We follow a simple management cycle of plan – do – check – act. Need to continue identifying/pursuing leverage points to make change (e.g., use of our conservation agronomy network).
19. Intentionality in communications. Ideally understanding your audience and target messengers and messages accordingly.
20. There is value in meeting in person – both regional service providers and local outreach.
21. Large scale adoption of MBCPs requires massive amounts of financial and technical resources.
22. Increase funding to farmer led groups as informal social groups with a lot of influence. “Scoping out” local talents as local staff is chronically underfunded and leads to talented people leaving and a talent gap at local level. Reduce contract wait times and process to increase participation.
23. Conservation champions. How to reach absentee landowners.
24. Importance of farmer led networks/mentors. Training for conservation professionals should include sales, marketing, rural sociology.
25. Tailor Grow More training to include best practices to work with BIPOC farmers.
26. I agree that reaching the nonoperating landowners is key. This is something we need to think more about.
27. Capacity building. Troops on the ground. Empowering LGUs.
28. Training and outreach to conservation professionals around tracking social indicators.
29. Need to understand specific needs, learning styles, barriers for specific audiences, especially new and BIPOC farmers.
30. Simplifying processes. Combining/supporting similar efforts with similar goals.
31. Review of NLRs should include social factor process. More attention to leases and absentee owners. Increase farmer led networks.
32. Different states, landscapes, and agencies experience many of the same issues slowing conservation adoption. Many tools exist that could be implemented across state lines. Farmer led conservation groups are a key avenue for change.
33. Financial impact analysis “the cost of doing nothing.” Systems map: conceptualize the process; identify decisionmakers at each step; what is the overlap? Crosstrain and hand off. Clarify and simplify the grant and RFP process: the easier the process and the more widely communicated the more diverse the applicant – we want innovators!
34. Look at different approaches to reaching our “traditional” audiences and how can we reach new audiences. Publish documents in multiple languages to reach all audiences.
35. More need for farmer led groups. Share systems mapping with management teams. Capacity building in conservation space.

36. Know your audience and focus on their key leverage points.
37. We need the following: streamlined, simple processes for farmers wanting to use multiple resources for MB conservation; conservation agronomists working with families, academics, and traditional coop agronomists; better marketing of multiple benefits – motivation through accurate and clever marketing.
38. Renewing for county side opportunity.
39. The importance of providing material/kits to conservation professionals and farmers – as an organization pushing a tool to further conservation practices. We need to do more heavy lifting and provide more in-kind support, proactively including providing materials to non-operating landowners and maintaining a community-level lender.
40. Key role of conservation “navigators” (e.g., conservation agronomists) to reduce burden of participation for landowner/farmer to adopt MBCP’s.
41. Frame shared work and partnerships around actionable leverage points with clearly identified roles for each partner. Coordinated and shared messaging can be tailored by messenger and/or audience.
42. Good programs are accessible programs. It is not enough to pass a policy of construct an incentive if it is not easy for landowners or renters to implement. Ex: there’s a great program to deliver hoop houses to farmers but this isn’t helpful if the building doesn’t get built.
43. More support for social data gathering in our programs.
44. How can we make new crops affordable and profitable on leased land?
45. Farm bill is the paradigm shift needed – otherwise just shuffling deck chairs on the titanic. Incent all aspects of conservation not just production.
46. Funding flexibility. Silo reduction.
47. Ecosystem dynamics connection to land? State resources – important! Supporting farmer networks.

What small changes in your organization’s approach to multi-benefit conservation practices might you begin to advocate for based on the ideas and perspectives shared during the workshop?

1. Engage partners that can influence/reach those that are being asked to change. Allow for partners to engage in the process.
2. Continue tribal outreach and connections. Looking into MO Ag wetland initiative and AFTs Buy Protect Sell Program.
3. Identify the “money points” where in we can move to inject \$ for local groups.
4. We could consider funding strategies other than reimbursement. Remove the barriers to have \$ to do conservation and then must wait to get reimbursed.
5. More consultation with organizations that understand barriers in BIPOC communities. More consideration for social science in development of initiatives.
6. Finding ways to reach absentee landowners.
7. Identify the most appropriate approach for engaging nonoperating landowners.
8. Bring in MBCP into nutrient strategy revision.

9. Re-establish our farmer networks; focus on place-based projects with these networks. Pair our conservation agronomist and regional agronomist with farmer champions on locally led efforts.
10. Increase focus on growing social connections with producers.
11. Communication considerations. Training needs.
12. Help LGUs and make them feel supported.
13. Better understanding of the “other” benefits that come from conservation practice implementation.
14. Target women landowners for conservation practice adoption through access to legal assistance, and other technical assistance to make them lease makers, not lease takers. Lift up support for farmer led groups.
15. Prioritize funding for MBCPs in priority watersheds.
16. Collecting multiple benefit information – additional models. Re-evaluate messaging – tailor to specific groups. Story development surrounding conservation adoption -> messaging to make a “norm.”
17. Become better at quantifying each of the multiple benefits from each of the conservation practices.
18. Research tax structure and outcomes and legal underpinning of default leases. Work on embedding conservation agronomists into farmer groups. Social connections between farmers and non-farmer neighbors.
19. Instead of general outreach – messaging needs to be targeted and tailored to audiences – evoking values, identities and logic.
20. How can we incorporate social/behavioral indicators into our Miss River report card?
21. Make sure funding from variable sources is prioritized and used in the best way. Systems map. Some financial sources limit how/when/who. Identify the agency with the most leverage to accomplish a task. Just because it was our idea doesn’t mean we would have the best delivery.
22. 319 state management plan revisions could be reviewed to include these fresh ideas presented throughout the workshop. Be more deliberate in messages to target audiences.
23. Developing more targeted and community-oriented materials. Individual outreach and network facilitation.
24. Need to better integrate/support smaller nontraditional farmers.
25. Expanding our audience: nonoperating landowners; specialty producers.
26. More work to support smaller farmers, BIPOC, women farmers on conservation, as well as other aspects of farm sustainability.
27. Creating fact sheets for distribution in multiple languages. Expand collaborative activities to improve education and outreach.
28. Reducing barriers to change – even small barriers (such as language translation) are effective leverage points to target system-wide.
29. NRS revision needs to address needed farm bill paradigm shift.
30. New (MN) soil funding should prioritize multi-benefit practices/build practice networks.

31. Reducing red tape/barriers to entry in conservation programs for farmers. Increasing flexibility to focus on outcome (e.g., nutrient loss reduction) rather than how the reduction is accomplished.
32. Capacity building on a local level. We need to properly compensate these people to make them have a “career” at the local levels.
33. Working with nonoperating landowners.
34. Structuring collaborative, multi organizational efforts around leverage points, i.e., where each partner can make impactful interventions.
35. Provide state support for farmer led networks through partnerships with nonprofits. Incentivize NBS with scoring and ranking proposals for grants.
36. Being aware of different approaches. Working continually to make things easier internally/externally.
37. Reducing permitting burden streamlining funding: breaking down barriers; universal grant applications; grant clearinghouse/guide.
38. Empower farmer leaders and compensate them. More farmer led communities. Info sharing for trusted advisors.
39. We need a more organized strategy for recruiting growers of new FG crops. Who are we trying to reach and what partners should we work with to reach a diverse group of farmers? What sustained support can we offer?
40. Explore new collaborations with other partners.

What deeper questions do you walk away with from this workshop?

1. Lot of work that needs to be done.
2. How are we going to measure progress? Will each state and group create their own benchmarks?
3. I think my team needs more knowledge and social science on behavior change.
4. Given what we’ve heard, “How are we going to make conservation more accessible and easier to implement for farmers in the Midwest?”
5. How can we better foster communication and lease agreements between renters and leases – to promote long term soil health?
6. Blocks of time for major change in large systems take 25-40 years and how as humans can we accept and be okay with that.
7. Needed to go deeper. Too high level/concepts/subjective.
8. Better focus on farmer belief systems for engagement and outreach.
9. We came up with a lot of answers that require more practitioners. Who is going to do this work?
10. How do we find the time and resources? Capacity?
11. It all seems so similar as far as issues. But I don’t see the solution to be some major policy shift either. Maybe just continued persistence.
12. How to adjust structural disincentives for conservation (i.e., how to make conservation the baseline?)

13. When do we know we're done? Do we have a shared vision of what types of conservation we are all marketing? Are we competing with each other? Is there a negative connotation to conservation?
14. How to convey realistic expectations for reducing nutrient loss amid minimal funding and changing weather patterns?
15. Leasing/absent landowner issue: betting conservation into agreement; longer leases so trees and perennials make sense for farmers; land access foe new BIPOC farmers.
16. How can I develop my team to work more effectively in communicating with agricultural producers and receive more participation?
17. What is our role making with nonoperating landowners? How can we get more creative with in-kind match?
18. It will be important to consider a systems map as we contemplate how to build a broader partnership network. Will be helpful with future NRS work.
19. How can the farm bill be upended? What are the most impactful actions to take at the UMRB level to increase ag conservation practice adoption?
20. Why is everyone afraid of systems? Why does it make us feel so vulnerable? Why is everyone a little underfunded/staffed for their scale of work? Why don't we fund local actors of conservation when we know how big their impacts are?
21. How to effectively grow or engage networks of producers?
22. How do we engage non-operating landowners?
23. What sacrifice is the agency employee making to make a difference? Then are just writing a check.
24. How do we reach actual landowners in a lease situation? How will we connect all the dots in program process and implementation that we identified? How do we not get overwhelmed?
25. National and global levers that create the ag ecosystem. Specifically prospects for the farm bill.
26. How do we make progress in the current regime/paradigm? How do we push for regime change at the same time?
27. How to chase/make space for new ideas/projects while continuing existing work? Is the existing work worth continuing? Is it working?
28. Is there a way to represent complex embedded systems that address connections across conceptual scales? How does individual-level outreach interact with local networks, state policy, global market conditions, etc.?
29. How are we going to change paradigms within our own organizations? We have a lot of these conversations, but how are we going to put action to discussion?
30. How can we engage with ag retailers in conservation?
31. How do we provide financial incentive for adopting conservation practices without commoditizing conservation such that there is an expectation that farmers should always get paid for doing conservation practices?
32. Idea of exploring conservation leases to help move our goals forward.
33. Impact of working with large farms or commodity crops vs help/focus but reduced landscape impact working with smaller farms.

34. How can we foster shared ownership of not only collaborative goals, but also and especially mutual understanding of clear roles and contributions of each partner?
35. Who wins under current farm bill, while most lose?
36. How do we change hearts and minds at scale and effect change? It's all overwhelming.
37. How do we reach the top of the supply chain and address overproduction, market demand, and purchaser contracts limiting change? How do we streamline/aggregate data to decrease farmer burden? What is our sacrifice?
38. How do we balance for everything going?

What brings you optimism and hope as you walk away from the workshop?

1. Positive progress in a positive direction. Small gains.
2. Absentee landowners' outreach is a resource that is untouched.
3. The collective wisdom and passion for solving this wicked problem gives me hope.
4. Lots of great work developing unique approaches to tackle same issues
5. There are so many innovative ideas, so much expertise to make change.
6. Influx of funding, though there are staffing capacity issues in all sectors.
7. We are all different but going through similar situations. Opportunity on horizon. Need to position projects to be successful/access or they will go elsewhere.
8. There is interest, effort, care, and good ideas in the room! My org has potential to support conservation that we can expand on.
9. Growing awareness and frustration with the problem is forcing the issue.
10. The people working on these issues give me hope.
11. The time is now for big swings. We have the \$. We have the data. We just need the fortitude!
12. Fact like groups like this exist and we are able to communicate and challenge each other freely.
13. Workshop helps focus thoughts on leverage points, systems approaches, and belief systems.
14. We are all in this together.
15. Collective efforts from many people with a common goal.
16. There are rooms full of passionate people (like this one) doing great work and excited to work together.
17. All of the organizations working on this issue.
18. The growing recognition that we can achieve climate action, water quality and wildlife with similar practices. More benefits to tip the scale against all the challenges of change.
19. More recognition of social science and aa in conservation work.
20. Many organizations trying to nudge along paradigm change.
21. Lots of networks and groups to learn from, share ideas with, and partner with.

22. It seems that most people want to do no harm and it is a privilege to work in the conservation space to help people realize how to protect our water, land and quality of life.
23. Previous success stories: tillage reduction; nutrient stewardship; erosion reduction efforts. Persistent pressure on the conservation topic moving from erosions to nutrient loss.
24. Opportunity of less ethanol acres due to ram up of EVs.
25. Statewide networks that are working effectively, esp. ISAP.
26. Good-hearted, intelligent people openly exploring options for change and working in existing systems and organizations to improve conservation adoption.
27. Dedicated people in other states facing similar challenges and sharing learnings.
28. The new innovations that have been building/improving on old innovations. Exciting stuff (e.g., conservation agronomists, batch and build). What will come next?
29. More diverse NGOs are involved with spreading information on BMPs that I expected. Targeting diverse audiences.
30. Career security – so much good work yet to be done. Perhaps we are a tipping point.
31. Seems like all environmental stressors are coming to a head. More landowners coming to the table. Potential climate change/adaptation can move faster.
32. That public and private sectors are finally working together on a common goal. We are listening to each other's perspectives and finding common ground with solutions.
33. Enthusiasm for coordinating work around shared goals with an emphasis on intentionally identifying opportunities for actionable changes.
34. Collaborative efforts toward same goals crossing state lines. We can learn from each other and support each other's efforts.
35. Energy, creativity, passion for making changes.
36. Enthusiasm and honesty of participants.
37. I made great connections at the workshop that I can follow up with for continued brainstorming.
38. Such a wealth of ideas/ information and endless opportunities to collaborate.
39. Everyone here – there are people focused on multi-benefit conservation at many levels of power – lots of good people working for a healthier farm landscape.
40. I am optimistic that we are doing deeper divers into what "other" aspects can affect change.
41. Different states and organizations are making progress on all fronts of conservation and are looking for opportunities to collaborate.

Appendix D – Workshop Feedback

Immediate Feedback on the Workshop

Below are participants answers to a series of prepared questions submitted to UMRBA at the end of the workshop. The answers below are verbatim.

What worked well for you during the workshop?

1. Workbook and tabletop conversations.
2. I enjoyed the tabletop discussions and frequent breaks for more free-flowing conversations.
3. Guided discussion leading to tabletop leading to focused takeaways; not having to move to a breakout room but would immediately start conversation at the table was great.
4. Workbook; tabletop discussions; starting workshop with systems thinking perspective.
5. Format of workshop; lots of interaction and information sharing.
6. The diversity of expertise and organizations in the room was great; the mix of table talk, presentation, and large group discussion was energizing.
7. Lots of opportunities to share ideas with other participants.
8. Short presentations with small group discussion were very engaging.
9. The workbook! And discussion.
10. Writing prompts allowed for time to think, process, and reflect; and discussion time created opportunities to find shared experiences and her potential solutions.
11. I like how you've structured the last few workshops; personal reflection -> small group discussions -> share out; helps better connect with each other.
12. Really enjoyed discussion/brainstorming at the tables; lots of great ideas; very respectful and additive to the discussion.
13. The format of workbook and table top exercises was good and I think fostered good convos.
14. Networking with others who share similar work.
15. Tabletop conversations.
16. Tabletop talks.
17. Workbook! Kept tabletop conversation focused.
18. Forcing table talks.
19. The packet really helped me keep a focus on the topic and the ?'s themselves "forced" me to think and apply what I've heard.
20. Good balance of presentation, reflection, and dialogue.
21. Kept on time. Networked with a number of people. Got a lot of good ideas to apply to my work.
22. Table exercises (mostly) and discussions. Systems mapping approach.
23. Always appreciate time to write answers before talking – think it allows for richer conversations that follow.

24. The tabletop exercises created a wonderful space for open and honest conversation.
25. Tabletop discussions.
26. Time length. Intense 1 ½ day workshop with lots of information and discussion. Not sure I could do 2 days.
27. The tabletop discussions. I liked the final thoughts – could hear from everyone.
28. All of the opportunities to talk with fellow participants.
29. Lots of conversation time to process the info shared by speakers.
30. The table discussions were great. The presentations were good, but I got most out of the discussion.
31. Table engagement -> however, I would recommend having report out from the tables to hear more about what others discussed.
32. Starting with systems map to set the stage. Table discussions.
33. I really enjoyed the open discussion; that was the most powerful aspect of the workshop.
34. Tabletop.
35. Lots of time for discussion at tables.
36. The format with table discussion was fruitful and made time go by fast. Location was great.
37. Timing/schedule.
38. Networking opportunities and chances to learn what other agencies are doing.
39. Set the stage with systems but no “middle” ideas of solutions to address issues and targets to scale but no strategies/ideas/etc. other than “change the Farm Bill,” taxes, etc.
40. I enjoyed the time networking and learning about what other groups are doing to make change.
41. Not sure what you mean, I guess the tabletop discussions.
42. Great group and facilitation. Nice meeting space. I liked the time to reflect and write things down.
43. In-person communication and networking are always beneficial. The opportunities for small group discussion allow ideas to be refined and better understood.

What are two or three insights you will take away from the workshop?

1. More people/entities engaged in this work than imagined; need to be more thoughtful about the work on my plate.
2. I have a wider range of NGOs to contact and include in my work; I liked the “leverage point” discussion, but I feel like the participants still included “non-traditional” partners; this led to great discussions and opportunities during the table conversations.
3. Need to keep challenging existing paradigms; focus on levers; bring farmers (Farm Bureaus) to the table to let them be messengers and allies.
4. Systems lens can help focus collaborative work by clearly identifying opportunities for how such shared efforts can make positive impacts.
5. Collaboration; paradigm shift; capacity building; we are all in this together.

6. See page 14 sticky note answer.
7. Leverage points; key aspects of engaging BIPOC communities.
8. Networks are important; multiple approaches important to achieve goals,
9. Absentee landowner outreach is important; community, education, and collaboration are nuanced; there is room for us all to work together more efficiently.
10. More discussion and comparing experiences help improve our work; there is too much to do! All exciting ideas/opportunities but feel restricted by time and capacity.
11. Ricardo's work was inspiring; we need to fix this absentee landowner/leasing challenge issue.
12. Being fairly new to this work, I will take away the knowledge of the other agencies and organizations engaged in similar work across the region.
13. People and their biases can't drive action inaction.
14. There are multiple factors to consider when promoting multi-benefit practices; success hinges on funding and people.
15. Need to take a step back and evaluate my audience and try to think of how to also reach new audiences and messaging to all groups.
16. Things are complicated. We need to work together.
17. Comms strategies; significance of networks.
18. Collaboration is key for success. Listen to stakeholders.
19. ISAP! Star programs and how I can initiate that in my state.
20. Lots of different groups are working towards same goals – how can we leverage each other's talents, resources, and abilities.
21. Need to continue to have connections with folks with divergent views.
22. Social science. Building public-private-NGO partnerships (co-op initiatives are valuable and needed).
23. How can we adopt more inclusive communications practices. What are interventions a small NGO can do to shift the paradigm and how is that manifest across the whole basin in different ways.
24. The value of social sciences and the need for more social indicator studies. We need more cohesion within messaging and terminology.
25. BIPOC best practices. New additions to my network.
26. Focus on audience. Need to build relationships.
27. Focus on non-operating landowners.
28. There is a lot of alignment in how people are thinking about these issues. There is a lot of opportunity for more collaboration within and between states.
29. Average age of farm workers: 31 years old. Interest in targeting non-operating landowners.
30. There's lots of good work going on and good examples of innovation and success. Need better ways to share and elevate these.
31. Value and power of leverage points. Continue to involve systems thinking. Farmer belief and value systems for better targeted engagement.

32. Things that need to change in the Farm Bill to emphasize conservation.
33. 1. No matter what sector of agriculture you are in, we are all starting to come together; 2. How do we engage the non-traditional farmer in this space.
34. Need to challenge the status quo on funding and delivery of conservation – balance need for reporting with lowering barriers (e.g., required reports).
35. Understand the system and look for leverage points. Rented land as an opportunity. Streamline! Power of farmer led networks. Need for connectors for emerging producers.
36. Consider relating edge of field to landscape view. Conservation on rented land is expensive. Messaging is not “one right message” but more so several strategies to make impact.
37. New ideas for program delivery. Different ways to communicate with I/O. Systems mapping.
38. Barriers to conservation adoptions seem to transcend minority/identity status. Rented land /absentee land ownership is a big issue. Sales/customer service skillsets are missing in the public sector.
39. Engage with partners to deploy practices. Help in process. Not just field days/newsletter (or) engagement and assistance through process.
40. We need to do a better job of sharing the conservation story with the world.
41. All states are working on similar things. Importance of messaging use in different situations. All the new faces in this space.
42. Different states have different challenges and motivations for conservation. Conservation needs to be more streamlined, and organizations need to better align their goals to work together.

How would you score the workshop on a scale of 1-7? (circle the score)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
 Poor Okay Excellent

Briefly, why did you give it this score?

1. 7 – Highly engaged and thoughtful participants – showed up on time, started and ended on time.
2. 7 – I enjoyed the hotel, venue, and organization; I also appreciated the participants that were included, and the diversity of topics covered; the conversations and topics flowed well.
3. 7 – Quality of attendees - expertise at the “right level” of position; size – big enough to have energy but still intimate; lots of room for discussion, peer learning and connecting.
4. 7 – Sharing of ideas; excellent, thoughtful, and thought-provoking facilitation (thank you!)
5. 7 – Well organized; facilitator kept things on time and moving.
6. 7 – Well organized; 1.5 days was a good length; good list of participants who were all very engaged
7. 7 – See answer to #1 above, and discussion questions were broad enough, yet focused enough to generate good conversation.
8. 7 – I got several ideas on real action my org can take to nudge the paradigm.
9. 7 – I learned a lot from the presentations and discussion; I’m coming away with ideas and plans for my daily work, longer term projects, and continuing education needs.

10. 7 – I learned a lot and built many valuable connections; I'm leaving with a long list of new ideas I'm excited about.
11. 6 – Great discussions; think there were some shared understanding/table setting needed with systems thinking and equity.
12. 6 – Very good workshop; only thought is I would like to hear from more farm folks about what's working now in their community.
13. 6 – I thought it was a great workshop, very good info and interesting.
14. 6 – Well planned; good mix of attendees.
15. 6 – Overall, it was great – a lot of information over a short period of time; I appreciated the time to be able to digest the information and to discuss it with others.
16. 6 – I feel hopeful and informed.
17. 6 – Great, but always room for improvement.
18. 6 – It was excellent, but I would have liked more table time to discuss ideas.
19. 6 – Great facilitation. Great diversity among attendees (geographic, professional, etc.)
20. 6 – Excellent facilitation, agenda, and presenters.
21. 6
22. 6 – Very high-quality group of participants and fruitful discussions; ability to step out of established roles and silos.
23. 6 – Excellent facilitation and planning evident. A little too much time on some sessions. Like the all voices in the room final exercise and yet always a bit awkward/long – how can we do this part differently while still allow for all voices
24. 6 – Well run. Good topics. Good conversation. Good diversity in audience. Crowd nice.
25. 6 – I enjoyed the content and discussion questions. I would have liked more opportunities for people to share their insights to the whole room.
26. 6
27. 6 – The people/discussion was great.
28. 6 – Great way to connect with this community, lots of opportunity to have discussions. Maybe a little too much independent work – I found myself drained of ideas by the end.
29. 6 – Importance to have a focused time for this specific group of professionals to collaborate, brainstorm, network.
30. 6 – A lot of great engagement and energy. Could maybe have used a bit more time for group discussion and general networking.
31. 6 – Good material, good speakers, discussion time.
32. 5 – Would have been even better if focused on high leverage items.
33. 5 – The workshop was ok, but it needs to be more large group discussion – maybe down to even state breakouts because we are all different.
34. 5 – Good to see folks.

35. 5 – I feel a little overwhelmed when looking at “the system” and wish we would have had more time to come back to the systems map with better “agreement” for how to move forward.
36. 5 – Some of the content is more for state agencies instead of practical work with famer audiences (my primary audience) but it was helpful to hear and understand so I can be a better collaborator.
37. 5 – Would like to hear more about practices or methods different states/agencies are using for conservation.
38. 4 – I was disappointed in the lack of real workshop-level discussions. There was really no room for larger group synthesis.
39. 4 – Good start to set the base but examples/specifics to help guide discussion would have been great.
40. 4 – We spent a lot of time talking about BIPOC and historically underserved farmers – which is an important topic. But this group isn’t a major contributor to water quality issues. I would have liked to focus more on multi-purpose conservation practices and how to greatly scale up adoption.
41. 4 – It was useful, but veered away from multi-benefit conservation practice trouble shooting, implementation, etc.
42. 3 – I didn’t like that we had to wait for questions after presentations. It didn’t flow well and was easy to forget questions. Not enough time for group discussion. Wish we could have moved around to different tables the first day. Why did we put all those post its on the wall the first day and then not discuss them?
43. 2 – I feel the workshop lost focus of the topic at hand. Many presentations and most of the discussion questions didn’t lend to expanding and understanding ideas on conservation.

Any other thoughts on the workshop?

1. Should use this email list and recheck in with folks at 6 months and one year.
2. I loved the unique lunch option from a local restaurant; I would have preferred more beverage options.
3. Big picture focus with specific tactical implementation.
4. The systems mapping was excellent – and could have used even more time (but given workshop duration, the balance was good). Possible opportunity for follow-on work in the systems thinking space?
5. Organize a workshop like this with farmers; get their perspective and convey that to this kind of group.
6. I would have spent/brought more \$ for better/healthier snacks – or – would’ve brought my own with more info on the food situation; I get hungry when I am thinking!
7. Good length, good balance of presentations and group discussion.
8. Lunch was awesome yesterday.
9. It was really well organized, led, and facilitated.
10. How will we continue to be in conversation and ensure some of these ideas are implemented before reconvening.
11. Great to get together in person.

12. Might weave in some proactive stuff in future events.
13. I would have preferred less tabletop discussions and more presentations.
14. Day and half is a great length.
15. "Heart Symbol" drawn.
16. Would be interested to hear more science – maybe USGS?
17. Very good presentations.
18. Looking forward to seeing the outcomes of our brainstorming be captured and distributed.
19. Some of the table sessions dragged on a bit too long, while whole-group discussions felt more productive.
20. It would be nice to stick to the agenda a little more firmly. I would like to see presentations that aren't so heavy on agency action or programming.
21. We may need to consider how to engage farmers in this discussion more – future workshop?
22. Fantastic work by the organizers. It's not easy to plan, execute, and get such great engagement from a group this size.
23. More time spent on the systems approach/concept would have been helpful.
24. Change people on tabletop discussion groups multi-times to see new points of view.
25. Would maybe be nice to have some consensus on top messages (generic) so we can be telling stories that don't conflict.
26. Thanks for the work you did to pull it together and for the opportunity to connect with each other!
27. Thank you. I really enjoyed the information and the people I interacted with.
28. 1. Rotate tables. 2. Rotate rooms? 3. Allow for discussion after each presentation. 4. Not sure that the BIPOC panel was relevant to the discussion around multi-benefit conservation adoption.
29. More details/specifics/actionable steps.
30. Great to see the growth in partners in this space. The BIPOC concept is important, it seemed like it was shoe-horned in there and took away from the main objectives.
31. It would have been helpful for new people to learn about what UMRBA does.

What is a final thought you would share with other workshop participants?

1. Keep at it.
2. Support others trying new things, new ideas and allow room for "failure" – just keep going and pushing!
3. Our work is very collaborative and challenging yet inspiring, and it has been so helpful to learn and understand experiences and perspectives.
4. "Team Work" – Together Everyone Achieves More.
5. Thanks for everyone's time and energy!
6. Let's keep sharing ideas across states.

7. Really appreciate open conversations about work.
8. Stay In touch! Keep up the good fight!
9. Thank you for organizing!
10. Keep up the good work.
11. Keep innovating and evaluate your programs thoughtfully and adapt.
12. Keep going!
13. Thank you for sharing!
14. Social time is so valuable.
15. We can't tackle all issues alone – do your job well, and bring others in when you can. It's a marathon, not a race.
16. Also hoping we can get slides from all the talks.
17. Well worth the time.
18. Need to keep working together and continually have faith and hope for our environment in the Upper Mississippi for the future.
19. Thanks for a very well-run workshop.
20. How can you share what you are doing with others and other parts of the basin.
21. Thank you! loved seeing local restaurants promoted.
22. Be ready for thought provoking sessions.
23. Thanks for bringing your enthusiasm and openness to connecting.
24. Keep your eyes peeled for perennial and sister annual cash crops coming out from University of Minnesota Forever Green Initiative.
25. We need broader partnerships, especially across sectors (public, private, NGO, farmer-led, community).
26. Great networking.
27. How will everything that was discussed at tabletop discussions be utilized to impact conservation in Minnesota? Will it truly influence changes – who is getting the ideas (CEOs/governor/legislators/directors/etc.) that can influence policy changes. Seems like we have been doing this for years with no changes.
28. I think large efforts, like the statewide nutrient reduction strategies, provide a great opportunity to come together around a narrowed conservation topic.
29. Thanks for the work you do!
30. Went well. Appreciate the in-person meetings and networking.
31. Consider partners outside the public/NGO sector.
32. Looking forward to seeing what will happen in a few years.
33. Cool to the new innovations that have been built on now “old” innovations.

34. Too much time going around the room to give reflections – a discussion would have been more useful.

Appendix E – Accessible Text Summaries of Word Cloud Images

The facilitated questions below were summarized in a word cloud image in the report body. The responses below are the same responses in a more accessible format.

Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “financial support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

- Lower tax rates on marginal acres
- Better coordinate funding streams
- Streamline funding
- Simplify grant applications
- Decrease funding silos
- Longer, more flexible application windows
- Focus payments to promote group work
- Economic study to understand the costs of inaction
- Create water quality trading markets
- Standardize in-kind valuations
- Place value on reputation and partnerships
- Increase outreach and promotion of RFP opportunities
- Pay farmers to lead watershed groups
- Provide support network for grant opportunities
- Tailor grant rates to conservation costs and ecosystem benefits
- More accessible funding opportunities for farmers
- More batch and build
- Coordinate reporting requirements across grant programs

Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “policy support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

[Note: In this context, “policy” can include laws, rules, and administrative procedures].

- Support bottom-up policies (as opposed to top-down)
- Streamline Federal Farm Bill policies and programs
- Streamline permitting
- Create incentives and improve markets for multi-benefit conservation practices
- Increase engagement with stakeholders for policy creation

- Avoid prescribing “how” to allow for innovation and adoption
- Understand legislative barriers
- Ensure flexibility and adaptability of policies
- Change the Farm Bill to support conservation practices
- Replicate programs that have shown successes
- Advance the adoption of new technical standards and revise existing standards at a faster rate
- Ensure policies are science-based, market-based, and incentive-driven
- Broaden eligibility for urban-rural partnerships
- Require sustainability standards for food companies (as opposed to regulating farmers)
- Recognize policy development impacts as multiple scales

Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “technical coordination support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

[Note: Technical coordination includes published information, technical guides and manuals, education and training sessions as well as individual technical consulting.]

- Better pay, benefits, and training for conservation careers
- Work with educational institutions to train the next generation of conservation careers
- Translate technical materials for those with limited English proficiency
- Consistent scientific messaging across sectors
- Train more conservation agronomists
- Build a clearinghouse of peer to peer resources for producers
- Increase technical support capacity
- Create conservation marketing in more plain language
- Better understand landowner perspectives based on goals for their land
- Streamline planning, permitting, design, and construction processes
- Create a technical service provider directory
- Mentorship for farmers seeking peer support in conservation
- Expand audience to include retailers, seed and equipment dealers
- Develop better metrics for BMP performance

Facilitated question: What are two to three important improvements we, as a community of practice, could make in the “participation and leadership support space” for multi-benefit conservation practices?

- Diversify stakeholder education and outreach

- Invest in youth conservation careers
- Understand social networks in local communities
- Track interventions and social indicators. Are you reaching your intended audience?
- Value and develop cross-sector collaboration
- Find the matchmaker to take the lead
- Cultivate farmer leadership
- Build capacity within farm community with training and financial resources
- Work with renters and landlords to provide resources e.g., education, incentives and renter advisors
- Provide culturally competent training to engage with broader audiences
- Support mental health initiatives for farmers
- Support multiple leaders in groups to avoid burnout
- Be willing to advocate within your workplace
- Work with the BIPOC community to address land access
- Advocate for resources for tribes e.g., conservation support staff

Appendix F – Accessible Text Summaries of Word Cloud Images

The facilitated questions below were summarized in a word cloud image in the report body. The responses below are the same responses in a more accessible format.

Facilitated question: What three to five key ideas that arose during the workshop will you share with your supervisor and colleagues when you return to work?

- Reaching nonoperating landowners is key
- Simplify processes for RFPs and grant applications
- The Farm Bill should address rented land and marginalized land issues
- Make conservation a default in lease agreements
- Systems map is a useful tool to find leverage points
- Large scale adoption of conservation requires a lot of financial and technical resources
- Build the capacity of farmer leaders
- There is not a one-size fits all approach
- Improve social science and behavioral metrics
- Collaborate around shared work and actionable leverage points
- Coordinate and share messaging among organizations
- Importance of social science in conservation
- Conduct a financial impact analysis of “the cost of doing nothing”
- Diversify approaches to reach different audiences
- Many existing tools and resources can be implemented across state lines

Facilitated question: What small changes in your organization’s approach to multi-benefit conservation practices might you begin to advocate for based on the ideas and perspectives shared during the workshop?

- Structure multi organizational efforts around where each entity can be impactful
- Empower farmer leaders
- Create factsheets in multiple languages
- Pair conservation agronomists with farmer leaders
- Consider alternative funding strategies beyond reimbursement
- Targeted and community-oriented materials
- Better support smaller and non traditional farmers
- Prioritize funding for multi benefit conservation practices in priority watersheds

- Improved outreach and education for nonoperating landowners
- Coordinate and share messaging among organizations
- Support and help LGUs
- Better quantify multiple benefits from each conservation practice
- Reduce barriers to entry for farmers in conservation programs
- Consult with organizations that understand barriers in BIPOC communities
- Streamline funding – e.g., universal grant application

Facilitated question: What deeper questions do you walk away with from this workshop?

- How to engage with the top of the supply chain on conservation?
- How are we going to make conservation more accessible and easier to implement for farmers in the Midwest?
- How do we change hearts and minds at a scale to effect change?
- How can we convey realistic expectations for addressing nutrient loss amidst climate change?
- How can we effectively grow or engage networks of producers?
- How can the Farm Bill better emphasize conservation?
- How do we make space for new ideas and projects?
- How do we provide financial incentives for conservation without providing an expectation that conservation should always be paid for?
- How do we change paradigms within our own organizations?
- How do we find more resources, time, and capacity?
- How will we measure progress? Can we create shared benchmarks?
- Why don't we fund local actors when we know their impacts are significant?

Facilitated question: What brings you optimism and hope as you walk away from the workshop?

- The time is now. We have the money and the data
- We can support and learn from one another
- Dedicated and passionate people working on conservation
- More recognition of social science in conservation work
- Great connections and endless opportunities to collaborate
- Positive progress and small gains
- The growing recognition that we can achieve climate action, water quality, and wildlife benefits with similar practices. More benefits to tip the scale against all the challenges of climate change

- A diversity of organizations involved in trying to nudge a paradigm change
- Examples of successful cross collaboration e.g., Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Partnership
- Enthusiasm for coordinating work around shared goals with an emphasis on intentionally identifying opportunities for actionable changes
- We are working towards a healthier farm landscape
- New innovations have been build and improving upon older ones