

New Horizons

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MANAGING RISKS WHEN PROVIDING NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING SERVICES

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Recent regulatory developments have opened significant business opportunities for the agricultural input sector in the provision of Nutrient Management Planning (NMP) services. From Wisconsin's non-point pollution rulemaking - which as of January 1, 2005 requires cropland to be managed pursuant to NMPs - to revisions to regulations applicable to livestock operations, to the increased number of facilities whose by-product management is covered pursuant to Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) permits, these developments have blossomed an industry of nutrient management planners whose services have never been more in demand.

But, with every business opportunity comes a liability risk in these modern times. As agricultural input providers are being called upon more frequently to assist in preparation of NMPs, annual NMP updates and even overseeing NMP requirements for purposes of WPDES permit compliance, business owners have become increasingly concerned about liability concerns associated with the provision of this service.

For example, when a dairy farmer follows his NMP and manure runoff occurs in any event, exposing the farmer to enforcement action by WDNR and potential lawsuits from impacted property owners, who is at fault and who is to blame? Businesses that provide these services are advised to take the following steps as they expand the NMP functions within their business:

•Ensure that the company is adequately insured for the preparation of NMPs. Most business insurance policies contain pollution exclusions which may work to exclude coverage for third-party liabilities. However, specialized coverage for environmental damage is becoming more cost-available. Explore with your insurance agent what options may be available to cover this portion of your business.

•Review your NMP services agreement. Ensure that the language of your contract with the producer is adequate to protect you from claims that your company is responsible for how the NMP actually performs in the field. This is critical and as the regulatory environment becomes more and more complex and the security of NMPs increases, having contractual language that can be pointed to will be important if the NMP services are called into question later.

•Ensure there is an understanding with the producer as to what version of the nutrient management codes is being utilized and who is responsible for updating NMPs to meet evolving standards. The Wisconsin version of NRCS 590 has recently been proposed for significant revisions to incorporate a phosphorus-based nutrient management planning standard and to incorporate Wisconsin's new Phosphorus Index planning tool. Prior versions of NRCS 590 are nitrogen-based standards (1999 version). The proposed updated standard is being taken to public hearing in March 2005 as the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) seeks to upgrade its ATCP 50 code and adopt the livestock siting standards via new chapter ATCP 51. Understanding which standard will govern the preparation of the NMP is critical, as well as understanding the impact of other local conservation planning considerations as a way to deliver a quality product and limit any potential liability.

•Lastly, it is critical there be an understanding between producer and NMP preparer as to what services the NMP preparer is providing, and, perhaps more importantly, what

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Managing Risks, continued

services are not being provided. Producers must have a clear understanding of what roles and requirements are being satisfied via the contracted services and what obligations for NMP maintenance, updating and permit compliance are reserved for the nutrient input owner or producer. Avoid misunderstandings by clearly specifying the scope of the undertaking and ensuring you have a “meeting of the minds” with the producer as to what you are not undertaking.

Following these simple steps will allow you to maximize the business opportunity while minimizing risk of liability in providing NMP services that have never been more in demand and never before received as much attention.

To discuss these ideas further, contact David A. Crass at Michael Best & Friedrich LLP, 1 South Pinckney Street, Suite 700, Madison, WI 53703. Phone: (608) 283-2267. Email: dacrass@mbf-law.com

Annual Meeting Highlights

The WAPAC Annual Meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. on March 3, 2005 in Portage. Minutes of the 2004 Annual Meeting were approved. The Treasurer reported that the 2004 Treasurer’s books were audited and found correct.

Membership Chairman Paul Knutzen welcomed the new members received in 2004: Gary Vavrosky, Todd Owens, Tom Green, Paul Roden, Mick Holm, Tom Anderson, Dean Meyer, Terry Walsh and Jim Barmore. He also discussed the committee’s challenges with appropriate membership category placement for consultants who change occupations or wear multiple “hats” in their work.

Research Chairman Paul Sturgis reported that WAPAC Grain Trials will continue in 2005 at approximately 34 locations. New deadlines are being instituted to ensure timeliness of the final data.

Scholarship Committee member Steve Abrams announced the 2004 WAPAC Scholarship recipients. (See page 3 of newsletter.)

Communications Chairman Randy Shaver noted that WAPAC members will be participating in a presentation about consultant teams at the PDPW Annual Conference in March. Randy has made newspaper contacts to initiate a series of articles about ag consultants. Several WAPAC members were interviewed on Pam Jahnke’s radio program during 2004.

Constitution Committee: Dan Peterson reported that the committee endorses the addition of a new membership category, “Professional Industry Consultant.”

Past Presidents’ Committee met prior to the annual meeting and reported that some crop consultant groups from other states are interested in WAPAC’s structure because it allows membership by all ag consulting specialties, not just crops.

President Dan Peterson reported that the Council’s work in 2004 included:

1. A review of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses, goals and objectives.
2. An emphasis on new member recruitment.
3. Passage of a resolution not to officially participate in any funded research.
4. A decision not to incorporate WAPAC at the present time.
5. Planning and carrying out a field day at Algoma Energy and the New Horizons Seminar and Spring Seminar.

It was moved and seconded to amend the constitution to include a new category of membership – “Professional Industry Consultant”, and to amend the definition of an Associate Member to include the words: “or is directly involved in the sale of commercial products to farmers.” Following discussion, the motion did not pass. It was moved, seconded and passed to take the proposed membership changes back to the Council for review and re-wording.

New Council members were elected: Jim Barmore, Steve Hoffman and Mike Rankin. The “retiring” Council members, Steve Abrams, Sue Bellman and Fred Ehle were thanked for their service. Outgoing President Dan Peterson was presented with a plaque by incoming President Paul Knutzen. The meeting adjourned at 10 a.m.

Goals of WAPAC

- Promote agricultural consulting as a profession and encourage increased use of professional consultants by Wisconsin farm operations.
- Promote and maintain high ethical standards.
- Promote and foster technical competence and continuing professional development of members in all agricultural consulting disciplines.

- Provide a public policy voice in agricultural consulting issues.
- Provide access to association and membership information to promote networking among consultants and to facilitate consultant/client referrals.
- Unify the membership by seeking common ground among all agricultural consulting specialties.

WAPAC Internship Scholarships Awarded

The WAPAC Scholarship Committee met in December 2004 to select the two winners of the 2004 WAPAC Internship Scholarship. Each student was awarded \$500. With pleasure we congratulate these scholars and introduce them to you.



Leah M. Viesselman is a senior majoring in Agronomy at the University of Wisconsin – River Falls. Leah interned in Summer 2004 as a crop scout at Kettle Lakes Cooperative in Random Lake, Wisconsin.

Originally from Grafton, Wisconsin, Leah grew up on a small Angus hobby farm. Leah enjoyed showing beef cattle with her brother Chad during her eleven years as a 4-H member.

At UW-River Falls, Leah is president of the Crops and Soils Club and vice president of Alpha Zeta, an honorary agricultural fraternity. A newly named McNair Scholar, she plans to perform sweet corn research at UW-Madison in Summer 2005. Leah will graduate in December 2005 and is considering plans for graduate study, possibly in plant genetics and breeding. Her internship underscored her interest in working directly with producers.

Leah writes, “I am greatly appreciative of the generous scholarship that WAPAC granted me. It helped me to travel to Mexico for three weeks in January to complete a class on Mexican culture and history and to improve my speaking skills for my Spanish minor. I cannot thank WAPAC enough for the gift of the scholarship and the opportunities it has provided me.”



Peter J. Rindal is a senior majoring in Dairy Science at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Peter interned with Clark and Joy Vilter at their Four Winds Guernsey Farm in Hartland in Summer 2004.

Having grown up on a 45-cow commercial Holstein farm in Fall Creek, Wisconsin, Peter has always had an intense interest in the art of breeding and raising purebred dairy cattle. His internship reaffirmed his career aspirations to build and maintain a herd of registered cattle and to market genetics to other cattle breeders and the artificial insemination industry.

Peter is a member of the UW-Madison’s Badger Dairy Club, Dairy Judging Team and the Academic Quadrathlon. He will graduate in December 2005.

Peter writes, “Thank you for the generous WAPAC scholarship. Your support enables me to pursue my educational and professional goals with great enthusiasm.....The most important thing that I took away from this internship was the new way I look at dairy farming as a potential career path....Having grown up on a farm, I am no stranger to the work regimen that accompanies dairy cows. As

I got older, I started to appreciate the cows more for what they offered instead of what they demanded. I was concerned that the satisfaction and enjoyment I extracted from working with cows would not balance out the financial risks and the rigorous physical demands that dairy farming involved. After this summer internship, I can confidently say that the contentment I get from working with cows is definitely worth the risks. Watching my efforts translate into higher producing cows and bigger, healthier heifers, or animals that look fantastic in the show ring is an extremely fulfilling feeling.”

WAPAC members, as you hire interns for Summer 2005, keep the WAPAC Internship Scholarship in mind! Applications for the 2005 scholarships will be available on the WAPAC website in late September.

Thank you to the Scholarship Committee for their work in selecting the winning scholars. (Bryan Jensen, Chair; Jon Baldock, Steve Abrams and Terry Howard.)

Member Profiles

Steve Abrams and Sue Bellman completed three-year terms on the WAPAC Council in early March. Steve served as Treasurer during that time, and Sue served as Secretary. Both were very involved in program planning for the WAPAC New Horizons and Spring Seminars. Thank you, Steve and Sue, for your devoted service!



Steve Abrams

I grew up on the East Coast. I received my BS degree from Cornell (1967), and MS and PhD degrees from the University of Florida. Before entering grad school I spent three years in the Peace Corps in a village in Sierra Leone, in a

program to improve both rice and peanut production. I also supervised a bridge construction project during my last year there.

I've been married almost 34 years (!!!) to Lillian Mordes Abrams, whom I met in Sierra Leone where she also was a Peace Corps volunteer. She currently is an aide at Orchard Ridge Elementary School in Madison. We have three children – Michael, a free-lance science writer in New York City; Joshua, presently in nursing school in Minneapolis; and Sara, who lives in New York and is currently applying to graduate schools in the area of comparative religion.

From 1980 to 1990 I was a research scientist with USDA at Penn State, working in the area of fiber utilization. I have been with Nutrition Professionals since 1990, and I work with clients in southern Wisconsin, northern Illinois and northeast Iowa, providing nutritional and management consulting services. While working as an ag consultant, I have observed some major changes:

- The almost complete adoption of TMR as a method of feeding.
- The movement away from tie-stall barns to free stall barns.
- The use of BST and increased milking frequency to increase production.
- A better understanding of the benefit of a variety of byproduct feeds.
- A better understanding of protein metabolism in dairy cows.
- Considerable consolidation in the dairy industry.

I am a member of the American Dairy Science Association, as well as WAPAC. I feel that only WAPAC gives voice to the independent consultant in Wisconsin, and provides a place where consultants can share ideas about the consulting business. I feel it is important to maintain an independent voice in both the crop and animal areas.



Sue Bellman

I grew up on the farm that I now live on in Walworth County. My Dad raised cash grains and alfalfa, and had a 40-head cow/calf operation. I continue these operations and run a contract agricultural research company as well. I

have a BS degree in Agronomy from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and a Masters Degree in Weed Science from Colorado State University.

I have two children. Kristina is a sophomore at UW-Madison and Michael is a freshman in high school. My parents live in their retirement home on the farm and are still very active. My dad is especially helpful during calving season.

In 1987 I started Great Lakes Ag-Resarch Service, Inc. We conduct efficacy and GLP residue trials on our 330-acre farm. Crops tested are corn, soybeans, alfalfa, small grains and vegetables. We also conduct trials off-site on fruit crops and berries. When I started this business, the GLP residue trials were a major part of my business. Now the efficacy trials, biotech, and agronomic research are expanding.

I am a member of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants, Wisconsin Fertilizer and Chemical Association, and North Central Weed Science Society. I am also an advisor for the Walworth County FSA County Office Committee.

WAPAC has provided a great opportunity for me to network with crop consultants from across Wisconsin. I really enjoy listening to how crops are grown in other parts of the state. WAPAC has also increased my list of prospective research sites. For example, somebody always knows where there is a really good site for a common ragweed trial or a low phosphorus fertility trial.

I would like to see WAPAC encourage consultants from “non-traditional” agriculture to become involved in our organization. It is a real challenge to set up seminars that include a wide range of agricultural topics, and I have tried to do that during my time on the council. As most council members know, one of my pet projects is rotational grazing. I would like to continue to see this topic included in our WAPAC seminars.

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Member Profile...**Dan Peterson**

Dan completed a year as WAPAC President in March and continues to serve on the WAPAC Council. Thank you, Dan, for your leadership.



A fourth generation Swede, I grew up in a northern Illinois community where members of my extended family - grandparents, aunts and uncles - were all involved in farming. I attended Illinois State University at Normal, IL in the mid-1970's, majoring in Production Agriculture.

Following graduation I managed a 300 sow confinement hog farm near Farmer City, IL for two years and then took a position as manager of a 550 sow hog farm close to my hometown. I went on to manage a larger, more diversified farm with hogs, beef, and grain. Finally, after several years as a crops, feed, and farm automation salesman for a co-op in the early 1980's, I went out on my own in 1984. I was consulting in an area that was changing fast, with rapid urbanization. With the confluence of several family and personal factors I came to West Bend to establish Hilltop Agronomics in 1994.

My wife and I just celebrated our 27th anniversary. We are blessed with three children – Carl (16), John (12) and Kerstin (11). Youth group activities, soccer, volleyball, and basketball games require a creative approach to the family calendar! Personally I am actively involved in an inner city men's ministry program two Saturdays per month in Milwaukee and serve in several other areas at church. We love bicycling as a family, and have been on many bike trails in Wisconsin and Michigan. Our three children and I play wind instruments, and we frequently accompany worship at our church. I also play with the local college band (UWWC). The boys and I enjoy target shooting rifles and handguns and reloading our cartridges (Carl and I like the big calibers, John is an excellent shot with a .38 and .22). John and I enjoy model railroading and spend many winter evening hours working on the train layout and building models. Oh, and then there's photography, and visits to extended family in Illinois - I guess the upshot is that I don't watch much TV.

Mark Gundrum and I founded Hilltop Agronomics in 1994. It's an operating division of Gundrum Bros. Farm Supply, in an arrangement similar to the original Centrol. Hilltop is self-sufficient and operates independently (clients of Hilltop pay the same fee and get the same service from us regardless of where they buy products). We have grown substantially. Currently Terry Walsh, Dean Meyer, Todd Orłowski and I offer full service crop consulting on about 10,000 acres each in an area of small

fields where that acreage about maxes us out. We also do WPDES and 590 plans, calibrate insecticide boxes, rebuild planter units, have a "Meter-Max" planter service, and scout for the Crop Improvement Association. I also directly manage several grain farms.

I have been a professional crop consultant for 22 years. Changes have been many, while over-arching constants have been low grain and milk prices, low margins for ag retailers, and the rapid consolidation of farms. Two major changes stand out for me. One, the onset of biotechnology in the mid '90's and the historically large jump in corn yields it has engendered. Two, the rapid escalation in regulatory pressure on farmers and ag retailers. The switch from voluntary conservation programs with attractive cost sharing (prevalent in the 1970's) to actual regulation with iffy cost sharing has been enabled by a society increasingly disconnected from farming coupled with a general deterioration of private property rights.

I believe in the value of networking with people in my chosen field.

WAPAC does that for me. As consultants, we are in a challenging environment – "on the hot seat" with farm clients who expect us to improve their crop and livestock production. It is so helpful to discuss these issues with other consultants. I think WAPAC's seminars have been outstanding. We've had interesting and valuable topics that we're not likely to encounter elsewhere. I appreciate the fact that WAPAC includes consultants in all aspects of production agriculture – crops, livestock nutrition, and financial. And by including seed and chemical reps, we are able to stay more effectively updated with the products we recommend.

Long term I think a key challenge is the decline in people involved in production agriculture. The pool of graduates to divide among chemical, seed, and feed companies and ag retailers is getting quite small. A related issue is the retention of people within our industry. Many ag retailers are having trouble finding and keeping quality people. This overall shortage of people is impacting WAPAC and the consulting field in general. We're faced with a smaller and smaller pool of potential members. That said, WAPAC actually had a good upswing in new members in 2004, thanks to Paul Knutzen and the membership committee (Randy Shaver, Mark Vanden Plas, Eric Birschbach). There is still a contingent of consultants out there that are not members of WAPAC. Let's keep striving to make WAPAC the most professional, intentional, and valuable association it can be. As we do, WAPAC membership will become increasingly attractive to those who are currently not members.

Let's keep striving to make WAPAC the most professional, intentional, and valuable association it can be.

Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN)

By Zen Miller, UW-Extension, Dairy/Livestock, Outagamie County
 Randy Shaver, UW-Madison, Dairy Nutrition Specialist
 Michel Wattiaux, UW-Madison, Dairy Systems Management

What is it? What does it measure?

Milk Urea Nitrogen (MUN), the concentration of urea nitrogen in milk, gives a look at how cows utilize the crude protein (CP) they consumed. MUN is expressed in milligrams per deciliter (mg/dl) with 95% of all values ranging from 5.0 to 20.0 mg/dl for Holstein cows. A well-balanced diet results in MUN in the range of 10 to 12 mg/dl, but values become elevated when (a) excess Rumen Degradable Protein (RDP) is fed, or (b) excess Rumen Undegradable Protein (RUP) is fed, or (c) RDP is not balanced with dietary Non-fiber Carbohydrates (NFC). In these cases, the unutilized portion of dietary CP is converted to urea (by the liver), which ends up in the blood, urine, and milk. Interpretation must be done carefully, however, because in addition to diet composition, MUN is influenced also by season, breed, parity, milking frequency, days in milk (DIM), level of production, and sample type (a.m. -vs- p.m.).

How is it measured? How do we use it?

MUN can be measured on individual cows (DHI testing), on a group of cows (milk line drip sampler), or by bulk tank samples taken when the milk is picked up on the farm. The cost of monthly individual samples ranges from 10 to 25 cents per cow. Many processing plants now provide bulk tank MUN tests free of charge at the producer's request, or at a modest charge of \$1.25 per sample. Individual cow samples can be summarized to give producers and their consultants the opportunity to monitor MUN averages and ranges by and within pens or groups of cows that exist within the herd associated with parity, DIM, diet, breeding, etc. Bulk tank samples have their best application in one-group TMR herds, while a drip sampler or flowmeter could be used to evaluate multiple groups within a herd. Bulk tank or drip sampler MUN test results provide information about herd or group average MUN, but do not provide information about cow variation that exists within a herd or group. Knowing cow-to-cow variation might be useful because a "normal" average MUN with high variability could suggest problems with feed mixing or delivery by the feeder and/or sorting in the feed bunk by the cows.

What are the numbers telling you?

In research conducted at the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center by Glen Broderick, cows receiving 16.7% CP diet optimized milk, fat and protein yields, however lower CP concentrations showed more efficient use of nitrogen. This and other work suggest that the most desirable MUN values range from 10 to 12 mg/dl for Holstein cows, but may be somewhat higher for other breeds (Table 1). Concentrations that are high (>14 mg/dl) may come from feeding high levels of immature alfalfa silage as the sole forage in the diet,

feeding too large an amount of raw beans, or feeding excess urea, for example. Concentrations that are low (<10 mg/dl) suggest that protein-limited diets are being fed or that the forage has changed (e.g., lower protein haylage).

Why do you care?

Overfeeding protein is expensive, may reduce reproductive performance, and increases nitrogen excretion into the environment. Underfeeding protein may reduce milk income. Current guidelines recommend 17% CP diets for most lactating dairy cows. Besides being costly, excess protein is excreted as urinary nitrogen that is highly unstable, thus creating an environmental concern. Using MUN in combination with TMR analysis can help fine tune rations by looking for changes in the MUN levels before we notice changes in silage or other feedstuffs. Many nutritionists have become more sophisticated with their formulations for RDP, RUP, and NFC. Yet, measuring and using MUN is a way to let the cow tell you how you are doing with diet formulation and the feeding program.

Table 1: Interpretation of MUN for Group-Fed Holstein Herds¹

Stage of Lactation	MUN (mg/dl)			
	< 10	10-12	13-14	> 14
Early (0-30 days)	Lack Dietary Protein	OK		Excess Dietary Protein
Peak & Post-peak (31-150 d)		Intake & milk yield may be sub-optimal	Most desirable	
Mid to Late (>151 d)				RDP, RUP and / or adjust NFC

¹ For Jerseys and Brown Swiss herds, add 1.5 units to all MUN value

Time for CCA Changes

Commentary by Daniel R. Peterson, CCA, Hilltop Agronomics

Today is Friday, January 21, 2005, the day after the Wisconsin Fertilizer, Aglime, and Pest Management Conference - the 12th year of my attendance. As always, the logistics of successfully putting on this show are the result of an impressive effort by a lot of people. I personally know several people who labor very hard “behind the scenes” to make this show what it is. However, after sitting through three days of sessions to make my CCA category minimums, I have decided to put to paper some thoughts that come to mind every year during this conference. In my opinion changes in the CCA program’s CEU requirements need to be made. I recognize there will be differing views and I welcome you to voice these to me. It is true, however, that nearly all of the CCAs I have personally spoken to about this do want changes. Here is a summary of the reasons for wanting changes:

1. Conference topics include much repeat information and recycling of old data that many of us “silvertips” have known for years. But I’m forced to attend to get the required minimum CEUs in certain categories. Current CEU requirements put those with years of experience at the same level as “rookies”, an intrinsically unfair system. Even though I have been a crop consultant for 22 years, I am given no credit for experience.
2. There are significant costs associated with obtaining these 40 CEU credits. Travel, motel, meal, and salary add up to substantial direct costs. Time “out of the field” adds lost opportunity costs associated with not doing otherwise productive work.
3. Much research data is presented that has no practical application on the farm. Those of us in the field look for practical information that we can use to enhance our farm client’s profitability – that’s the only reason we exist. We are not paid researchers.
4. 40 minimum hours per cycle with 5-credit minimums in four separate categories is arbitrary, offers no flexibility, dramatically penalizes those of us who have many years of experience, and *does nothing to ensure competency*.
5. Many who attend this conference to obtain credits have different learning styles and are forced to sit through these sessions absorbing very little.

Let’s take a fresh look at the CCA program, recognizing its value and striving to improve it. Let’s acknowledge that the real purpose of the CCA program is to ensure competency, and that forcing people to sit through arbitrarily determined CEU credit minimums and subject categories does not automatically foster competency. Then let’s resolve to make the program more meaningful for more people – both new *and* experienced CCAs.

My own personal suggestions to make the CCA program more meaningful:

1. Tell me about nutrient management and other regulatory changes, and the results of *new* research, *new* pests and *new* treatment methods. Update me on changes in things like the TSP program; tell me *something I don’t currently know*. Please hear this - helping me stay current and updated *does not require a mandatory 20 CEU credits per year with category minimums*.
2. Eliminate the category minimums entirely. Allow me the flexibility to choose areas I need more information in, and please give me credit for having enough intelligence to know in what areas I need more information.
3. Eliminating the category minimums could allow more time for useful things like, for example, viewing the trade show Tuesday afternoon.
4. Offer some alternatives, like “focus group” sessions where those interested in particular topics can spend “quality time” with the presenter going more in-depth on the topic and having more time for questions and sharing ideas and experiences with each other.
5. Offer a “sliding scale” of CEU credits that recognizes experience. There is much more value in 40 cycle credits for a rookie than there is for those of us who have many years of field experience.
6. Offer a periodic test option in lieu of credit hours. I would do that in a heartbeat. If the real goal of the CCA program is to ensure competency, then a periodic test actually does that better than forcing people to sit through boring sessions with their brains switched off.

The lecture format is not for everyone. To help those with more hands-on learning styles, try these:

- Small group sessions with experienced “mentors” leading active conversations about hot agronomy topics.
- Bring in a greenhouse grown weed and crop garden showing herbicide efficacy and injury symptoms, and walk a small group through it with a “hands-on” discussion of various weed control strategies.
- Walk a small group around one of the sprayers at the trade show and discuss calibration, mixing, and safe handling issues.
- Take a small group step by step through a 590 plan.
- Do a physical demonstration of available personal protective gear.
- Demonstrate the proper use and interpretation of a soil compaction probe.

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CCA Changes, continued

•Set up a real dirt soil conservation display with various percentages of crop residue placed on it and do a hands-on small group exercise calculating % residue cover.

•Have an equipment dealer bring in a display of various styles of deep till shanks and points and have a mentor discuss advantages/disadvantages of each style.

Sign me up as a volunteer mentor to help with any of these. In other words, let's jump outside the rut the CCA program is currently in and get creative to make it truly meaningful.

In a nutshell, then, my suggestions are:

1. Eliminate category minimums.
2. Institute a sliding scale of credits for experience.
3. Provide a periodic "test out" option.
4. Provide credits through formats that acknowledge different learning styles.

I have been asked to join the CCA board. Your views on this subject, whether you agree with this column or see it differently, would be helpful to me. Don't be shy. (You can reach Dan Peterson at 262-629-5564. E-mail: hilltopagronomics@hotmail.com)

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