**Agriculture Target Group**

By: Jennifer Wunsh

Interview 1: Farmer who has installed a riparian buffer along stream’s edge in Jasper County Indiana

1. How long have you been farming?

22 years.

1. Who taught you how to farm?

My father.

1. What crops do you farm for?

Corn & Beans.

1. Do you have children?

Yes, 3.

1. Will any of them take over farming your land some day?

I hope so, I am teaching my oldest already.

1. Have you noticed a problem with erosion on your fields?

Yes, in particular along the creek edge, which is why I installed a buffer.

1. How did you first learn about this practice of installing a riparian buffer?

The government has been hosting teaching workshops down here now and then. Also, my neighbor told me about how this worked for him.

1. Are you familiar with other practices such as; cover crops, no tilling, filter strips, etc.?

Yes I’ve heard of some of those things but I haven’t tried any of them.

1. Why did you decide to install a riparian buffer along your creek’s edge?

I was losing a bunch of dirt into that creek and could see the difference over time that the creek was getting wider.

1. Have you seen a reduction in erosion due to the riparian buffer?

Yes, definitely.

1. What do you think might motivate you to try other practices in the future?

Well, I guess if I could see the benefit in my crop yield that would interest me.

Interview 2: Farmer who is not currently utilizing any best management practices (BMPs) in Jasper County Indiana.

1. How long have you been farming?

About 37 years.

1. Who taught you how to farm?

My dad and granddad

1. What crops do you farm for?

Corn & beans.

1. Do you have children?

Yep, 5

1. Do any of your children work on farming the land with you?

Yes, my two oldest sons also work the farm

1. Have you noticed a problem with erosion or nutrient deficiencies on your fields?

Well, that’s to be expected, we do lose some soil seems every year. I haven’t noticed a big problem with the nutrients though. That is why we rotate the crop between corn and beans.

1. Have you ever heard of best management practices such as; cover crops, riparian buffers, no tilling, filter strips, etc.?

Yes, I’ve seen some of that done in a few places around the county.

1. How have you heard about some of these practices?

People at the SWCD have come by dropping off literature, and I’ve talked about it with a couple people around here.

1. Why have you not started using some of these practices to help with erosion on your fields?

I don't believe they have perfected the process yet. I don’t want to risk my crop on something that I’m not sure is going to work. (speaking about cover crops)

1. What do you think would make you want to try installing some of these practices?

Well, if I was guaranteed that they would work and could increase my yield.

## Conclusion

Based on these two (2) interviews, the conclusions drawn are that financial motivation is the most prevalent. Farmers are typically interested in the bottom line. Will a BMP increase their crop yield, thus earning them a greater profit margin? Also, I determined that people learn how to farm within their own families. Therefore, if we want to teach the next generation these things, we need to focus on who is farming now so they can pass down the knowledge to their family. Finally, a very important point to mention is that each of these farmers interviewed learned of the BMPs from other farmers and local government entities.

# General Project Conclusions

Approaching homeowners through the subject of gardening is a great way to promote water conservation. Promoting the use of native plants and rain barrels is an easy and well-received method of introducing homeowners to water conservation and concepts of sustainability. Homeowners can easily see the benefit of native plants and perennials in terms of easing the stress of maintenance and cost. In addition, they all understood that these plants were better adapted to climate variability in the area. The rain barrels just made sense in terms of harvesting the resource that falls on their property and retaining it for their personal use. All homeowners expressed surprise at how enjoyable it was to see the increase in the number of birds and bees visiting the native plants. In addition, after the initial planting the natives were viewed as self-sustaining. The issue of water conservation was secondary to the interest in native species and healthy gardening for the first two individuals.

All individuals felt that abundant and useful resources were available to them online, however they had to go looking for them. Specifically one individual said “it was not like a flyer arrived in my mailbox”. But once they developed an interest in native plants, rain barrels, or rain gardens they were able to find many resources available through their towns or neighboring towns.

All individuals felt that support from their municipality for BMPs was critical, and both the scale of the homeowner and for the town. Specifically the resident of Chicago was concerned that the rain barrel would be viewed as unsightly or an impact on the neighbor’s water. The fact that the city promoted the use of rain barrels and explained that no permits were required, made her feel it was a viable option to be the first on her block to take this step. The fact that financial incentives were offered through the city or town was also a key factor in the decision to implement a BMP. In the case of the rain garden, the individual utilized a cost share program with Save the Dunes that made the installation possible.

All individuals raised cost as a factor in implementing BMPs.

General Conclusions for Homeowners Target Group:

* Interviews allowed more flexibility to understand the audience.
* Money matters (financial gain versus loss)
* Protection of property
* Inherent responsibility to manage water as a resource
* Word of mouth is the best way to disseminate information and motivate people
* The more it becomes an acceptable practice, the more people are likely to implement a BMP. It is rare for people to want to be first to implement.
* There are many sources of motivation, even within each interest group. Find out what motivates people within your group.
* Ignorance of cost-share opportunities
* Information is available but must be sought.
* General need to identify relevant and good educational materials – reduce redundancy
* Incentives are key.
* Give people a “how to” resource.

### Future Goals:

* Identify and target people that are not already aware of water issues.
* Determine if a more formalized questionnaire would be appropriate.
* Develop audience specific questionnaires and educational information with the appropriate framework and context, including vocabulary (e.g. BMP vs. LID).
* Face-to-face meetings to increase response rate and utilize the interview process.
* Widen the survey to include more individuals from each interest and identify other potential interest groups (e.g. developers).
* Better evaluate barriers to action.
* Figure out the resources that would help promote the action.
* Develop a “helpful information” tool for targeted interest groups.
* Understand how to better target municipalities to reach our educational goals – i.e. figure out what approaches work.