



NRCS Cooperative Soil Science Updates

On March 29th, two WAPAC members attended the NRCS annual update meeting at UW-Platteville. This annual meeting provides a snapshot of activity the Soil Science division of the agency has been engaged in over the past year as well as the projects slated for the upcoming year.

Presentations included the following updates or projects:

- Alison Duff and Kris Niemann with the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center introduced the FarmLab initiative. This project will explore the interactions of land cover and management on measures of soil health by establishing 90 sites across the 2200 acre site north of Prairie du Sac. The initial objectives include establishing baseline measurements of soil carbon and other baseline indicators across the landscape.
- Jim Gidleirano, Geographic Information Officer with the Wisconsin Department of Administration informed the group that we will have full LIDAR coverage for the state later this year. The DOA has been providing LIDAR training at various locations and will have a two day workshop this summer. WisconsinView, a free GIS data source, will be updated this coming summer with additional imagery and LIDAR coverages for much of the state.
- Aaron Marti, WDNR Wetland Researcher provided an update on the ongoing wetlands mapping and condition assessment project. An objective of this project is to establish benchmarks for every major wetland community type across ecoregions of the state. Soil data is rather sparse for wetlands, soil survey teams historically delineated the wetland and data collection was a fraction of other land uses such as forests and cropland. Many wetlands in our state have gone through multiple uses as cropland, pasture or natural wetlands. This project will provide a systematic ranking of wetland condition and function.
- MLRA updates by Chris Miller (Juneau office) and Kevin Traastad (Onalaska office) provided information on minor components, hydrologic soil groups and depth to bedrock across their respective regions. Mike Whited led a very informative discussion on digital soil mapping (DSM) and the ability to dramatically improve the resolution of the soil data. A pilot project in North Dakota highlighted the dramatic mapping productivity when combining manpower with DSM. The next generation of soil data looks very different from the current tool we are all familiar with.

The Cooperative Soil Science Highlights report can be viewed here:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/wi/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCEPRD1394011>

We appreciate the ongoing engagement by Jason Nemecek and NRCS with WAPAC members!