



Cover Crops and Soil Health: One Retailer's Experience

Betsy Bower, Agronomist



Ceres Solutions Go to Market Strategy

- Lead with agronomic expertise
- Solve customer problems using experience, information and services
- Build lasting relationships
- Continue to investigate products and services that create positive ROI
- We did 5 main things...



Overview: Cover Crops on the Farm

- Help a customer determine the goal(s) for cover crops on the farm and cover crop selection
- Put in perspective cover crop logistics ideal planting time and method, planting rate, termination timing and method, BMPs for no-till corn planted into grass cover crop residue
- Help determine when to terminate cover crops in the spring





1. Commit to Crops Team Training

- Assembled a Cover Crops Resource Guide
- Developed a Cover Crops Early Order Program
- Provided cover crops basics training using a webinar
- Planted cover crops plots with customers
- Provided agronomic programming for local SWCD field days
- Using cover crops enters into our every day conversations with no-till customers but also at times with conventional till customers

2. Promoted Early Order Booking

**2017
Jan 1 to
Feb 28**

Order by contacting your local Cisco Representative

- Winter (Cereal) Rye
- Ground Hog Tillage Radish
- Crimson Clover
- Oats
- Brazil Mix
- Winterhawk Annual Rye
- Hairy Vetch (Regular and Vallana)
- Purple Top Turnips
- Dwarf Essex Rape

Program Details

Option 1- Order/Pay 25% down on your 2017 cover crop needs before February 28, 2017 and receive a **5%** Discount. Balance Due August 2017.

Option 2- Order/Pay 100% down on your 2017 cover crop needs before February 28, 2017 and receive an **8%** Discount.



3. Planned Logistics: Business/Retailers

- Early order program is wonderful for planning, but...when will we get to plant the cash crop and will our cover crop mix need to change
- Broadcast spreading logistics - Using blender to mix seed – need to consider what fields are to be applied following cover crops application
- Aerial application logistics – Size of plane, need to limit number of different mixes or have significant acres for each mix, need to devote manpower to load airplane and keep maps segregated
- Ag retail location logistics - How do you plan to move and mix cover crops – seed pro boxes, seed tenders, etc. have proven to be helpful
- Spring termination logistics - Will spring weather allow us to terminate cover crops timely? We need to be ready with a changeable plan that may end up being a termination product change depending on spring weather



4. Maximized the Other Benefits

- Yes, Cover Crops improve soil health. PLUS...
- We have improved our working relationship with our local SWCDs and NRCS DCs
- We now can work on conservation together instead of in separate camps
- It leads to identifying other resource concerns we can work together on



5. Chose to Be Cover Crops Champion

- It takes a champion or champions - at the retail location:
 - To be willing to work with the customer
 - To work with the seed company
 - To work with the applicator
 - To make it all happen
- Not every retailer wants to be a champion, but when you find one, help make working with cover crops easy – In Indiana, we have those practical resources that help us!!!



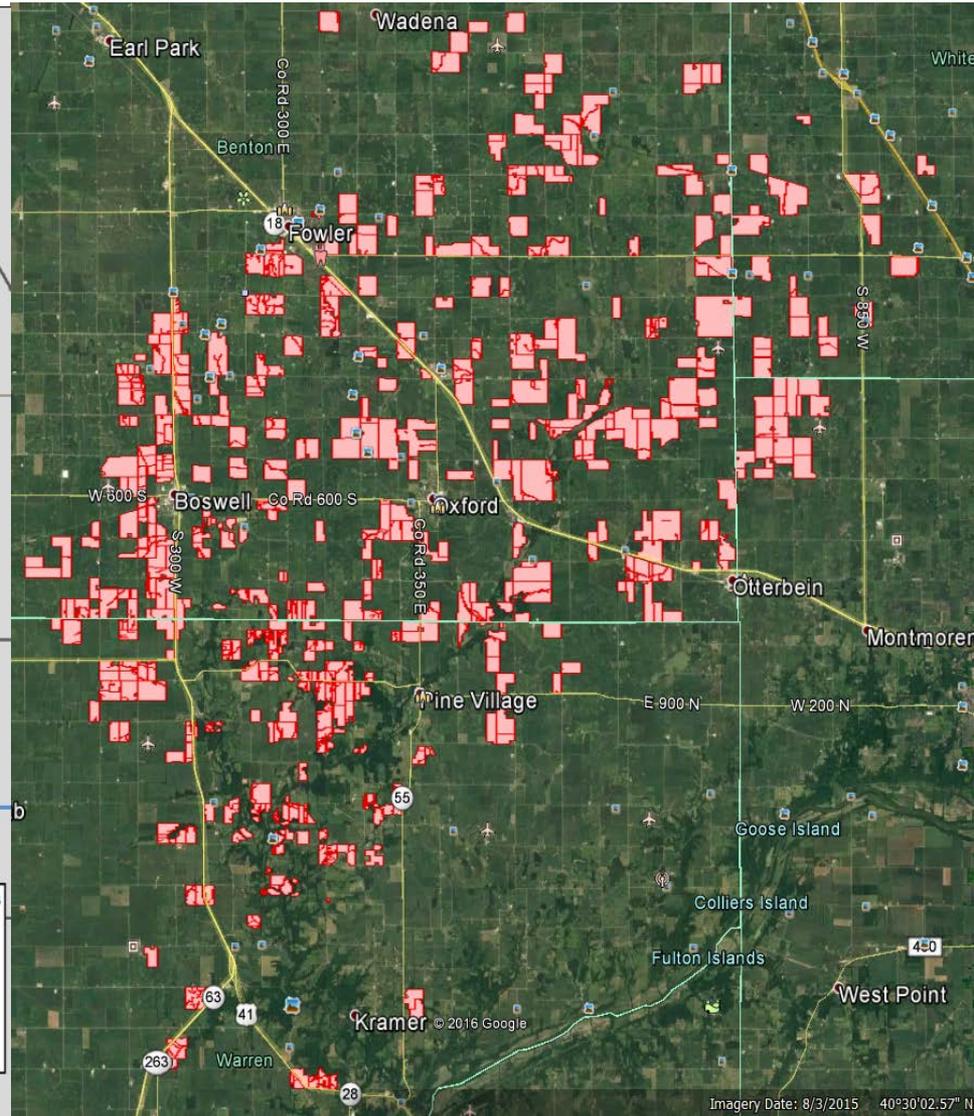
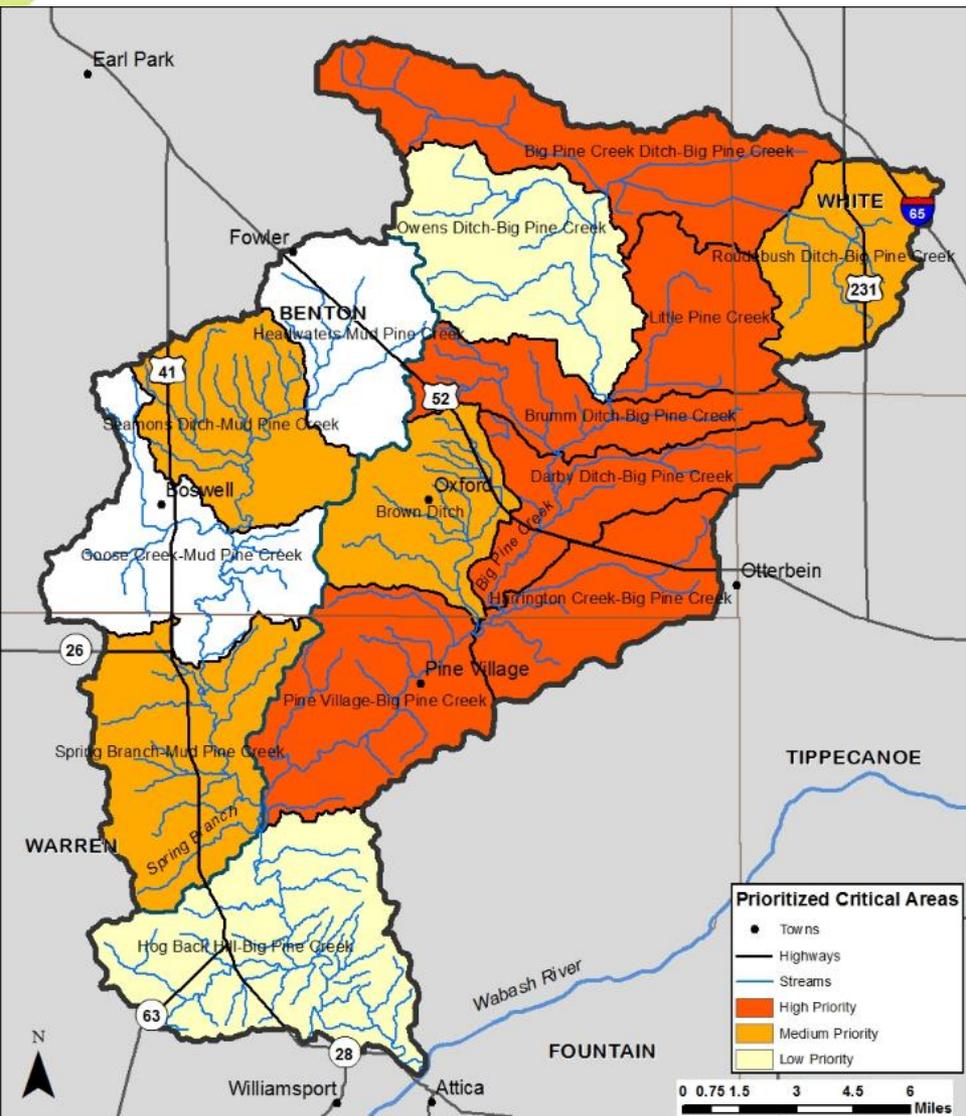
Ceres Solutions and Big Pine Watershed



Tom Stein and **Betsy Bower**, Ceres Solutions
RCPP (Regional Conservation Partner Program)



Current Winfield Solutions R7 Tool Mapping in Big Pine Area



Why?



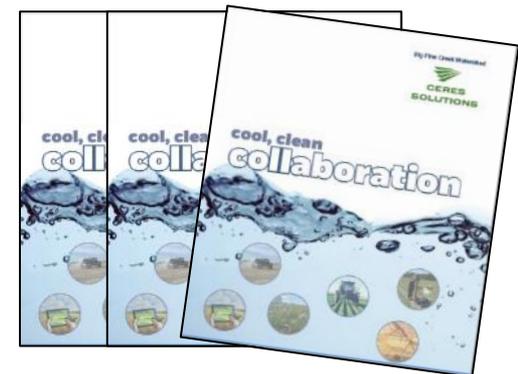
*Templeton Manager
Tom Stein*

“It is the right thing to do for the watershed, for our customers, and for Ceres Solutions.”

- 2014 Templeton staff already engaged
- Nov 2014 hosted tour: Big Pine Creek Watershed Best Management Practices
- Summer 2015 – TNC sought RCPP partners; found CTIC, Ceres Solutions, Winfield United and Land O Lakes
- Spring 2016 – NRCS awarded the Big Pine RCPP over \$1.5 million in EQIP funding; Ceres support - \$1.37 million payment-in-kind services
- Improve perception of Indiana’s influence on hypoxia severity in the Gulf of Mexico. Indiana, Iowa and Illinois are considered bad actors.

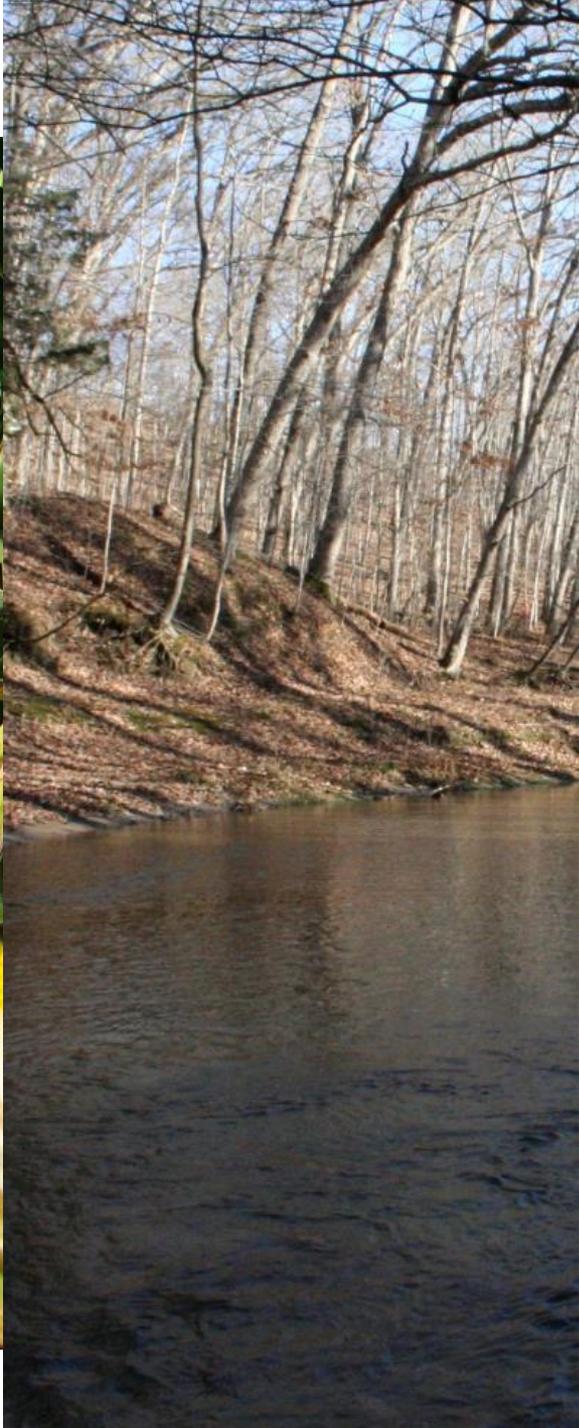
Focus: Cover Crops and Nutrient Management

- Ceres Solutions offers time and resources to promote and help:
 - Select cover crop(s) – including species, seeding dates and rates, termination timing and product
 - Discuss and document nutrient management strategies for the farm
- Ceres Solutions helps customers with a pre-application by documenting fields, a cover crop plan, and potential interest in a nutrient management plan
- This project is very unique. We are the **first Ag Retailer in Indiana** to support such an effort; Indiana USDA-NRCS is extremely excited about this project



2017 Big Pine RCPP

- 22 applications were submitted
- 13 applications have funds obligated – 1 application yet to obligate
- Remaining 8 of 22 contracts will remain in the system for the next application round
- Roughly 20% of the funding for the RCPP proposal has been obligated.
- FUNDING **STILL AVAILABLE** FOR THE BIG PINE RCPP PROPOSAL



Ceres Solutions' Conservation Agronomy Initiatives

- **Betsy Bower**, Ceres Solutions Agronomist

Sustainability is a journey,
not a destination.



**CERES
SOLUTIONS**

Centered on you.





Why...?

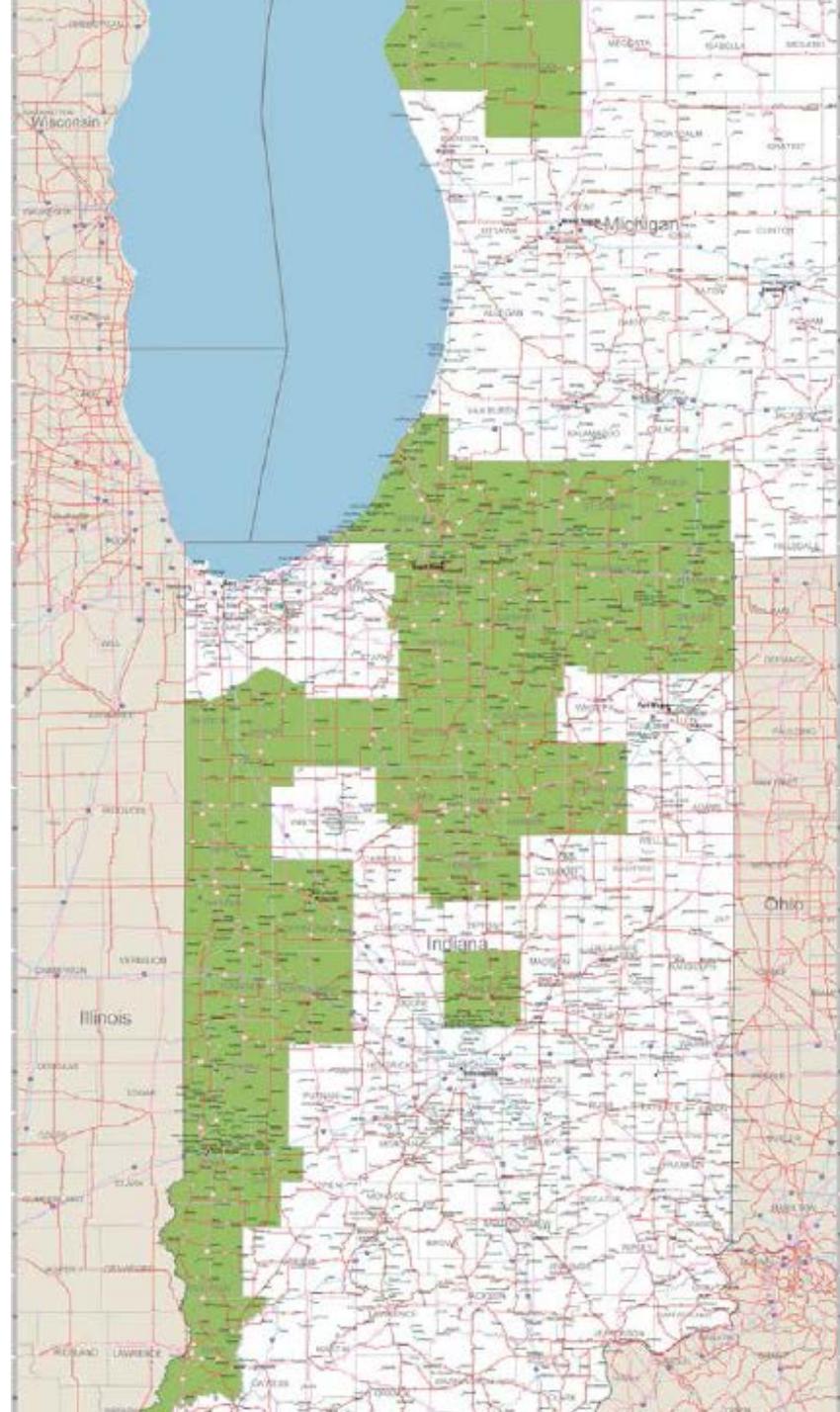
LAND O' LAKES
SUSTAIN™

Why Ceres, Why Sustain, Why Now?

- **Relationships:** Ceres Solutions tapped because we serve customers with conservation mindset
- **Commitment:** to **reduce waste, improve soil health, and increase opportunities** for our customers
- **Experience:** team has conservation agronomy expertise and can shepherd this journey
- **Backing:** Land O Lakes and Winfield United are trusted resource partners for us all

Why You as a Customer?

- Sustainable production can offer opportunities
- CPG companies want sources
- Ceres Solutions Co-op (and you) are well equipped to lead
- Watershed locations... Wabash drainage heavily influences hypoxia severity in the Gulf of Mexico (IN, IA, IL in the news)
- As a customer you have a **positive story to tell.**
- So do we. Let's document it. Let's tell it.



Continuous Improvement

- All successful producers
- All good stewards of the land
- All want to improve their operation year over year

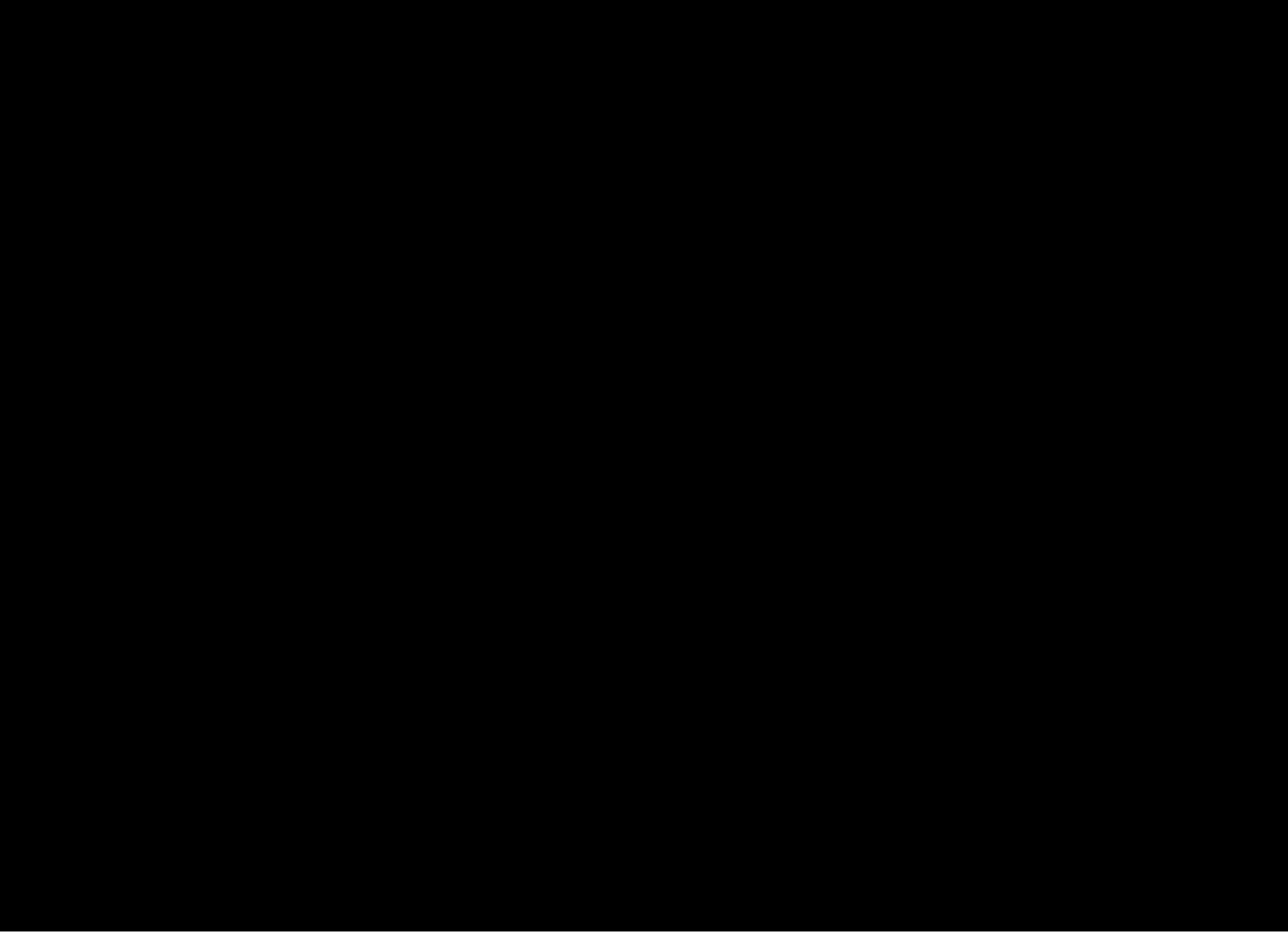


Ceres Solutions SUSTAIN is promoting and documenting conservation agronomy improvement year over year.

WIIFM: “What’s In It For Me as a Customer?”

Today:

- Many are already doing something. Sustain starts ability to prove it.
- Join like-minded producers with a wide range of expertise
- Access to a suite of a conservation tools. Better understand your resources.
- Increased visibility **telling your story** of conservation stewardship
 - Ceres Solutions SUSTAIN Farm sign
 - News feed to local papers, websites, power of video
- Collective voices engaged in more pointed discussions and potential conservation agronomy focused seminars and meetings
- Partners: Land O Lakes is a national food company. **Ceres Solutions is local.**





What questions do you have?

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