

ACPF USE EXAMPLE: Beargrass Creek Watershed in Indiana

A Q&A with Herb Manifold with Ecosystems Connections Institute

How were the ACPF results used within the watershed?

The Beargrass Creek Watershed Approach Project started in 2014. However, thanks in part to Section 319 funds from the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM), water quality sampling was conducted monthly from 2008–2013, and two gauge sites were installed in the watershed from 2013–2015 that gathered 2,000–3,000 water samples a year.

In 2014, a team comprised of the Wabash County Soil and Water Conservation District, Manchester University and the Environmental Defense Fund received funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to use one of the first iterations of the ACPF in the watershed. These funds were supplemented by IDEM funds, which were used to provide cost-share to producers from 2015–2018.

How did the ACPF fit into the watershed planning process?

The ACPF maps were mainly used for getting our foot in the door, enabling us to talk about conservation practices other than just cover crops. The maps helped farmers see all the practices possible on their operation. It also impacted the producers we worked with because many ended up implementing practices in different locations than they would have otherwise— for example, implementing a buffer strip higher up on their land than they originally thought.

Who ran the ACPF? Who shared the results?

Mark Tomer and his team at the National Laboratory for Agriculture and the Environment (NLAE) of the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Ames, Iowa ran the ACPF. Staff from the University of Minnesota, NRCS, the Wabash County Soil and Water Conservation District, and I had individual meetings with producers where we would bring the maps and talk about the different options on their property.

How was ACPF used?



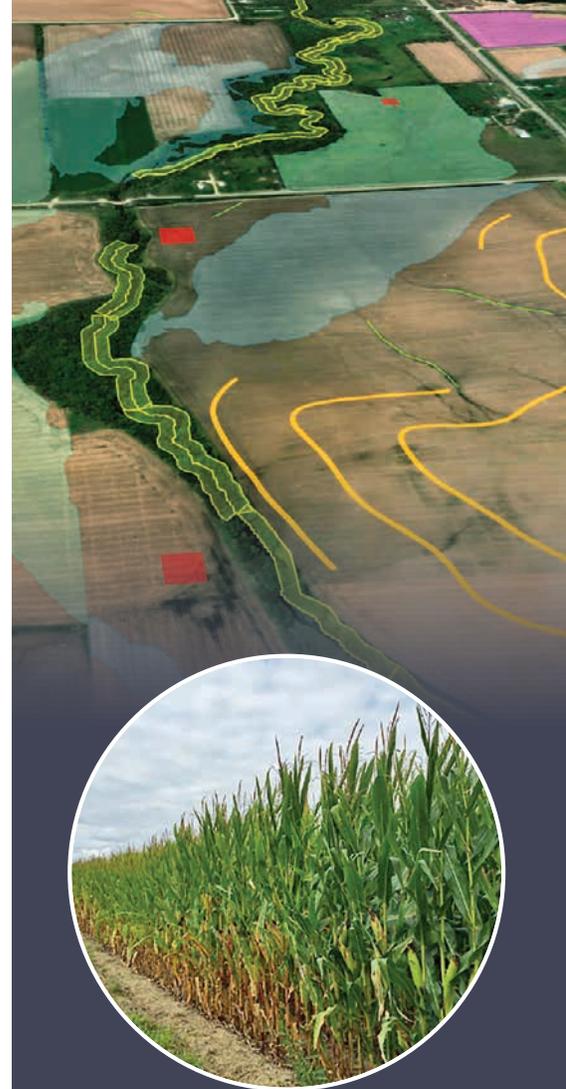
Support watershed planning and encourage watershed thinking

The ACPF maps helped producers picture the watershed as a whole and where their land fit into the landscape. It was a great visual for folks.



Promote stakeholder engagement

The ACPF maps served as a great educational tool for farmers about the different types of conservation practices and helped the team bridge the gap between the long-term monitoring data we had for the watershed and what that meant for their land.



“The ACPF maps were mainly used for getting our foot in the door, enabling us to talk about conservation practices other than just cover crops. The maps helped farmers see all the practices possible on their operation.”



What about ACPF made it helpful?

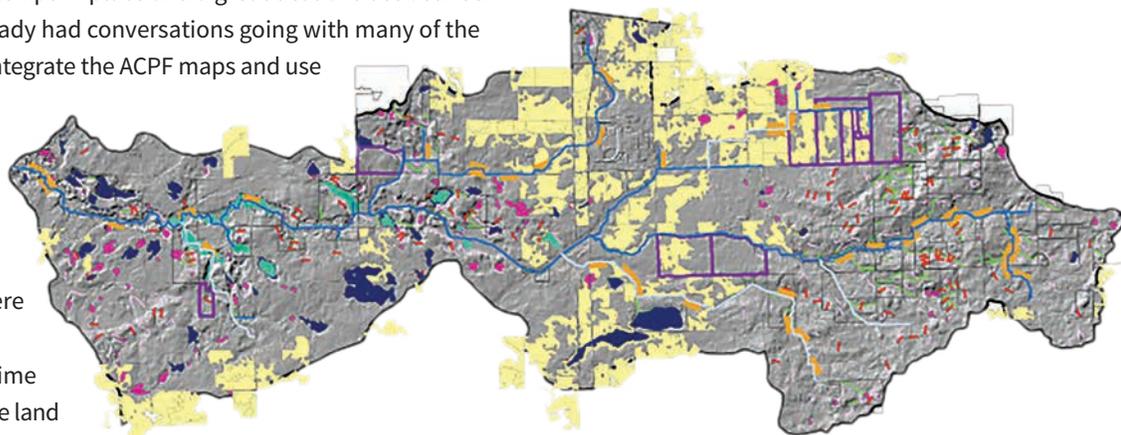
The ACPF is an incredibly visual tool that allowed us to sit down with producers and have a conversation about the landscape. It also enabled us to go out into the field with data and visuals in hand instead of just hearsay. It really allowed the doors to start opening, and we got additional interest in the project even if it wasn't the individual practices listed on the maps that were of interest.

What tips or advice would you give to others working with ACPF?

Trust and transparency are two key words in watershed planning. We had been working in the watersheds for quite some time before we started working with ACPF, so we had strong relationships in place and a great deal of trust between the stakeholders. Since we already had conversations going with many of the producers, it made it easier to integrate the ACPF maps and use them in an educational format.

Additionally, we strived to be as transparent as possible. Every time we showed an ACPF map to a producer, we would explain how these decisions were made and how the catchments were calculated. We used this time to talk about how the slope of the land and the proximity to the stream made certain areas a higher runoff risk.

To learn more about the Beargrass Creek Watershed, explore the article [“The Beargrass Story: Utilizing Social Science to Evaluate and Learn from ‘The Watershed Approach’”](#) in the *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education*.



Practice opportunities in the Beargrass Creek Watershed.

In Field Practices

Drainage Management Opportunities

In Field Surface Depressions

Depressions with likely tile intakes (classified by depth)

< 1 meter

> 1 meter

Runoff Control

Steeper Fields (> 25% of field is > 4% slope)

WASC OBS (Water and Sediment Control Basins)

Grass Waterways (> 5 acres drainage)

Contour Buffer Strips

Edge of Field Practices

Bioreactors

Riparian Practices

2-stage Ditch Possibilities

Depressions Along Stream (Divert & Treat)

Estimated Water Table Depth

Channel

0 - 50 cm

50 - 100 cm

100 - 150 cm

Riparian Function

Critical Zone / Multi Species Buffer

For more information and learning resources, visit acpf4watersheds.org

Image from “The Beargrass Story: Utilizing Social Science to Evaluate and Learn from ‘The Watershed Approach’” in the *Journal of Contemporary Water Research & Education*

