Agricultural Conservation
PLANNING FRAMEWORK

ACPF USE EXAMPLE:
Wilson Creek Watershed in Western Wisconsin

A Q&A with Lindsay Olson, former Water Quality Specialist with Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Department

How were the ACPF results used within the watershed?

The Wilson and Annis Creek Watershed Partnership started when members of the community came together to protect several trout streams in the watershed. Due to strong landowner interest in the watershed, funding from the Wisconsin NRCS, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Division (LWCD), and Trout Unlimited was pooled together to provide producers with funds to implement conservation practices.

The Dunn County LWCD and partners set up a series of community meetings where producers could share the conservation practices they were already implementing, and the community could discuss watershed priorities. With the help of ACPF output maps, we put together a menu of conservation options for the watershed and collectively the group discussed what they felt the priorities were for the area and which practices would make the most sense based on land management preferences.

The ACPF was also used in conjunction with the Wisconsin DNR's Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Agricultural Lands tool or EVAAL to compare the results and better determine areas of high erosion vulnerability and concentrated flow.

How did the ACPF fit into the watershed planning process?

Ultimately, the Partnership identified protecting trout streams via riparian corridor conservation as their main priority. The ACPF's precision conservation siting and riparian assessment tools were used to identify ideal BMP locations and evaluate current riparian function in the watershed. Cover crops, grassed waterways, and other sediment loss reduction BMPs were also emphasized.

Who ran the ACPF? Who shared the results?

Dunn County LWCD staff performed an ACPF analysis of the watershed to identify which conservation practices were best suited within the watershed and generate targeted mailing lists.

We didn't bring the ACPF output maps to the meetings, but instead discussed what types of landscapes were most sensitive to runoff and erosion and discussed the types of conservation practices that could help address these issues. ACPF was used by LWCD staff to identify areas of the watershed with a concentrated need for BMPs and the types of BMPs recommended by the tool. This information was very helpful in facilitating the conversation with landowners and other members of the Partnership, who were asked to

"The ACPF's precision conservation siting and riparian assessment tools were used to identify ideal BMP locations and evaluate current riparian function in the watershed."

Photo: Dunn County Land and Water Conservation Department

rank their highest concerns and the types of practices they were most willing to adopt to resolve these problems.

How was ACPF used?

Facilitate targeted conservation

Using the ACPF results, stakeholders were able to identify best management practices or BMPs that would help meet water quality goals while complementing their own conservation and farming interests.

Promote stakeholder engagement

Results of the ACPF analysis were used to develop landowner mailing lists when forming the project and targeting potential project locations.

Provide scientific validity to funding proposals and conservation plans

We used ACPF in conjunction with other watershed planning tools such as Wisconsin DNR's EVAAL and the USDA's RUSLE2 to see which areas of the landscape were contributing the most sediment to the landscape. EVAAL provided the where, and ACPF provided the how in working to address erosion issues. RUSLE2 gave insight into measurable reductions in soil loss.

What about ACPF made it helpful?

We used the ACPF results to help create our project mailing list based on areas of greatest need. The mailers helped grow the Wilson and Annis Creek Watershed Partnership and helped make folks aware that there were funds available for conservation practices. Through the mailer, the Dunn County LWCD and the local NRCS district conservationist offered to do a farm walkover and an assessment to hear about the landowner's land management goals and concerns, bring up issues we noticed during the walkover to the landowner, and talk about solutions and funding to resolve the issues.

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

Take advantage of the ACPF resources! It is worth your time to explore the help tools available, read the case studies, and watch the video tutorials. I found attending an in-person training to be especially helpful.

I also suggest spending time upfront to plan how you are going to use the ACPF in your project. We learned a lot about using ACPF for producer engagement as this project progressed. If we were to do another similar project, I would first develop a plan for the different phases of the project and where ACPF fits into those to maximize the valuable resource it is.

For example, customized maps for individual landowners, especially those with large tracts of land, would have been especially helpful in demonstrating the conservation potential of a farmer's land. People love seeing maps of their land, so the ACPF output maps can be a great visual resource.

Together, this project led to over 1,000 meters of grassed waterways and roughly six kilometers of riparian corridor protection and trout stream restoration, among other BMPs. For more information on the Wilson and Annis Creek Watershed Partnership, visit the Dunn County project webpage at **tinyurl.com/wilsoncreekwatershed**.

For more information and learning resources, visit acpf4watersheds.org