



**Where agriculture
impacts the environment,
Agren offers answers.**



Landowners & Operators Care About the Land (LOCAL)

Project Review & Recommendations

Jamie Ridgely, Agren

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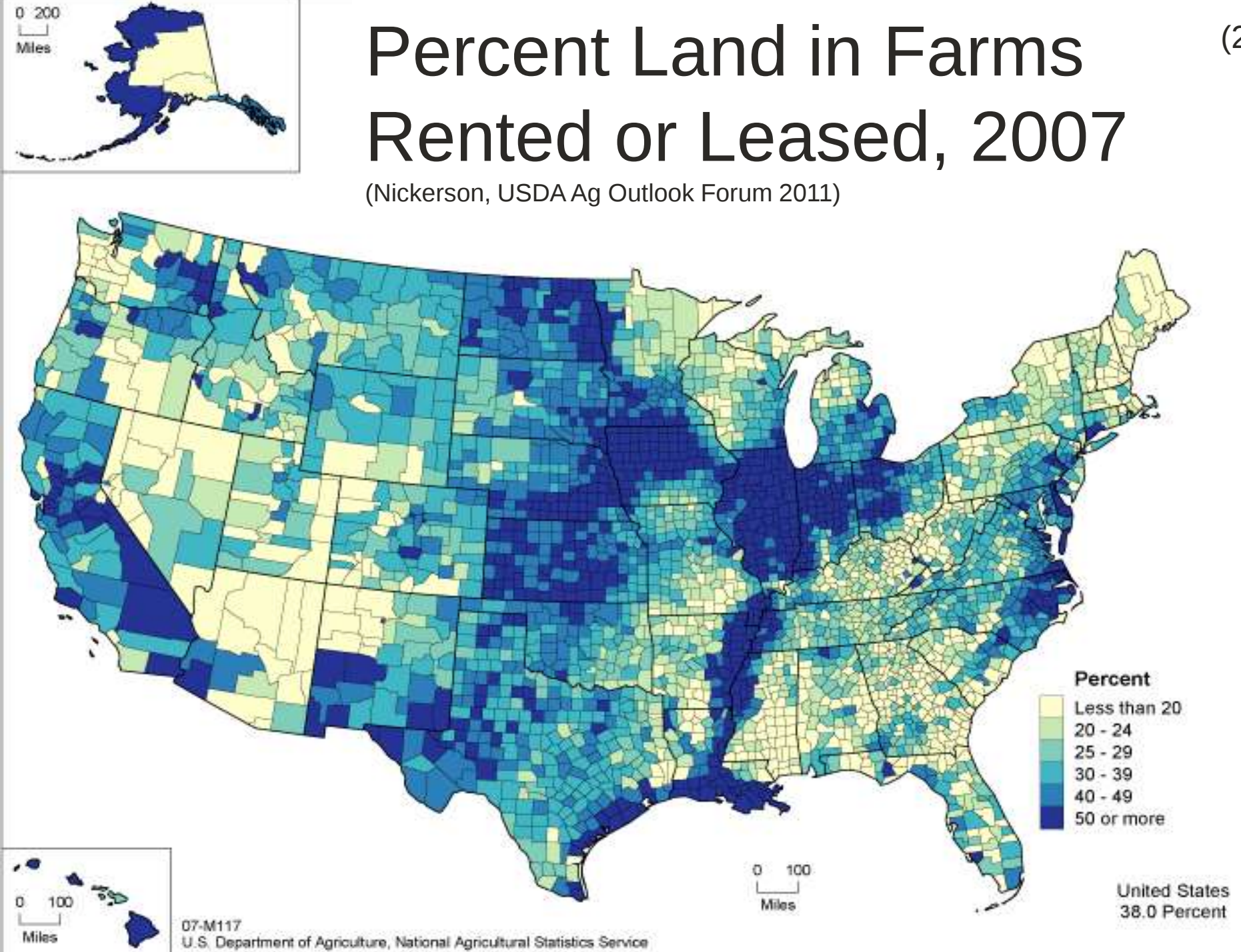
Today

1. Intro to issue
2. Brief project overview
3. Certified Conservation Farmer pilot
4. July Expert Panel
5. Recommendations for moving forward



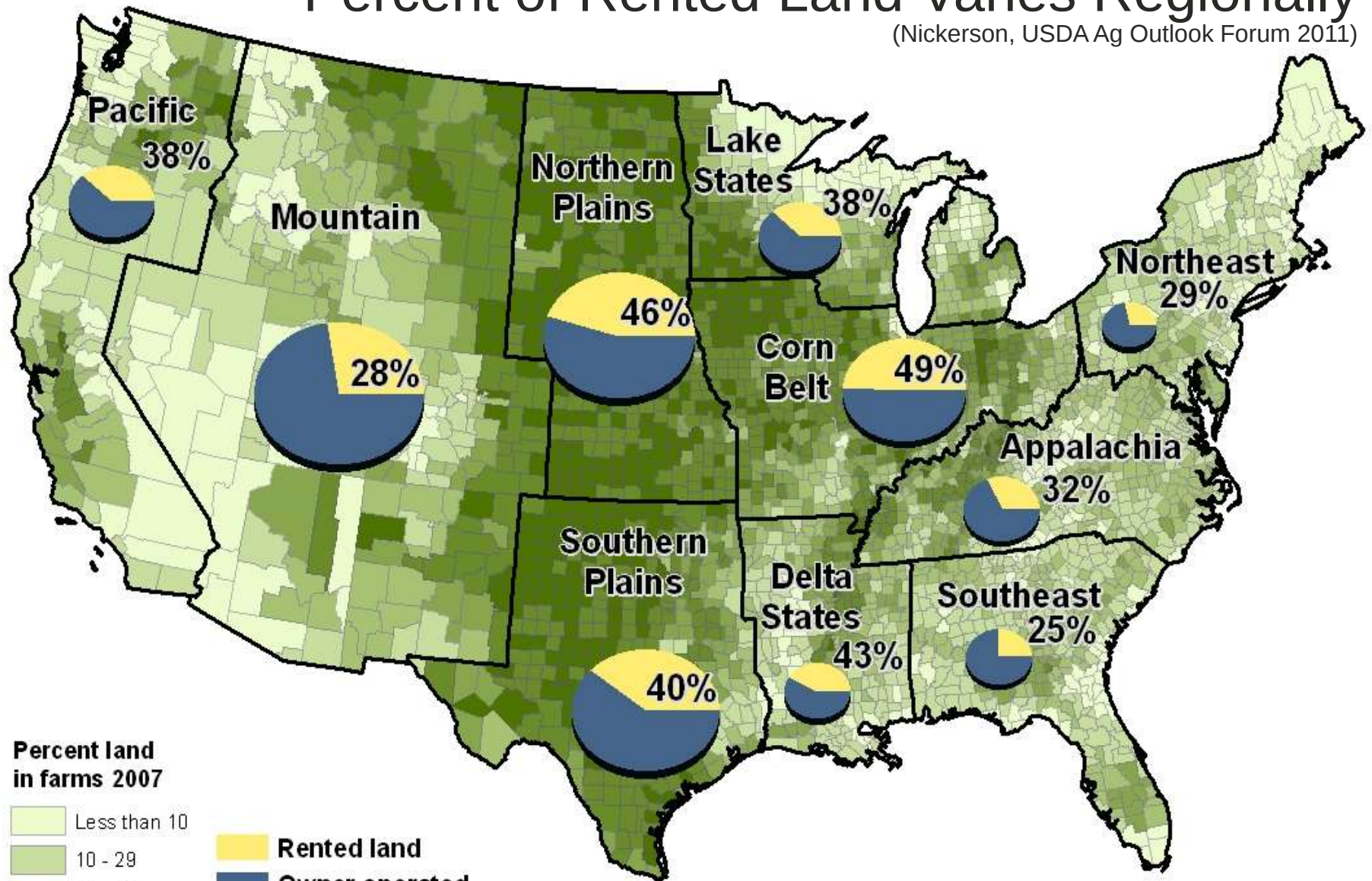
Percent Land in Farms Rented or Leased, 2007

(Nickerson, USDA Ag Outlook Forum 2011)

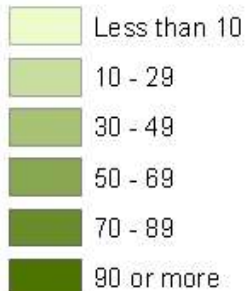


Percent of Rented Land Varies Regionally

(Nickerson, USDA Ag Outlook Forum 2011)



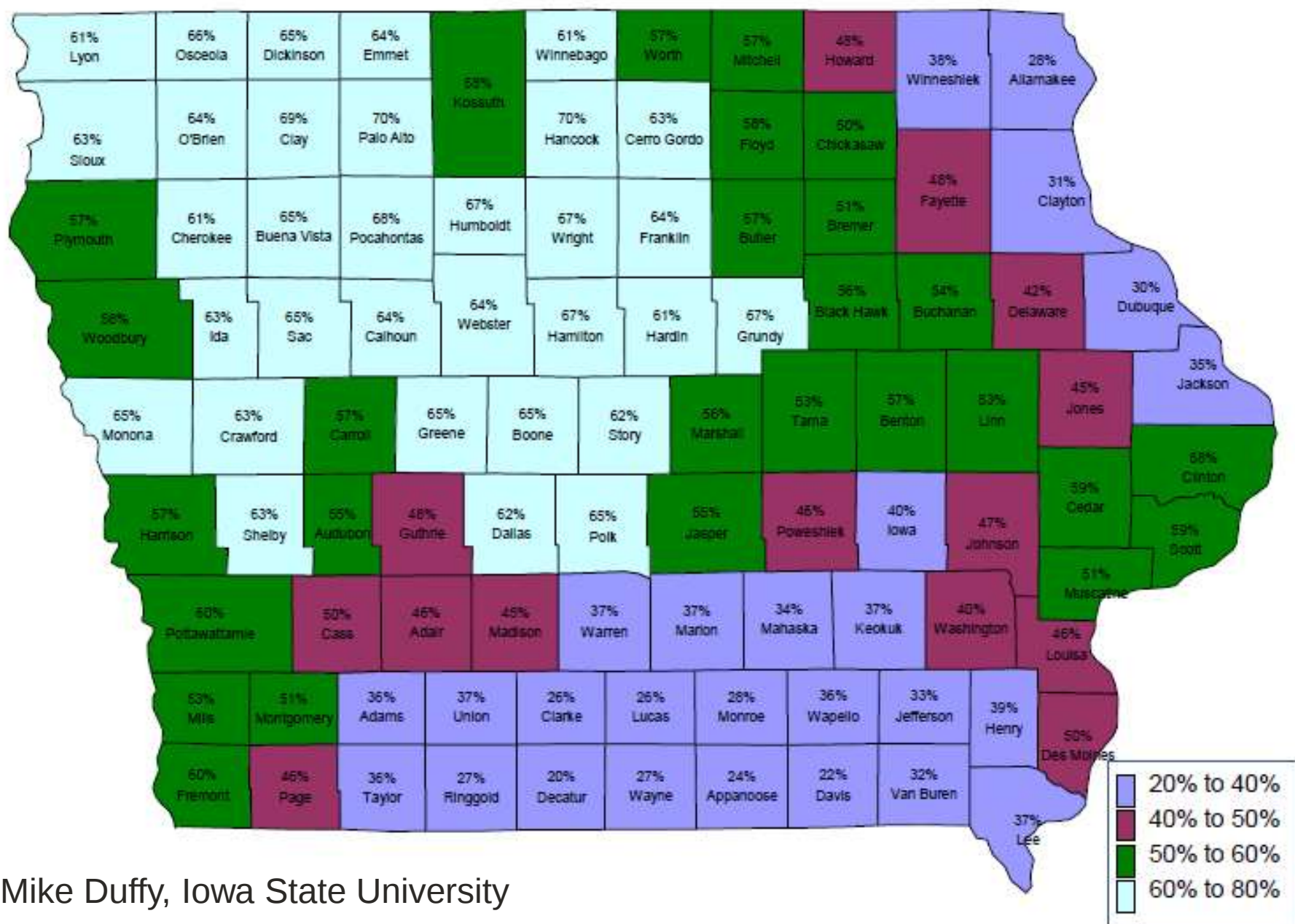
Percent land
in farms 2007



 Rented land
 Owner operated

U.S. Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service

Percent of Farmland Rented, 2007



Mike Duffy, Iowa State University

Why do we care?

- Nationwide, owner-operators enrolled about 1.7 times more land than absentee landowners in CRP and WRP
- 85% of AL/non-operator not actively engaged in decision making on the farm
- Landowner & tenant inherently have conflicting management objectives...short-term profitability vs. long-term value
- Now more than ever, ag landowners have money to invest, but public sector assistance very limited



LOCAL

- **Title**: Landowners and Operators Care About the Land (LOCAL): A market-driven operator certification and conservation incentive program
- **Funders**: USDA NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant, McKnight Foundation
- **Project Period**: August 2009 - August 2013

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Project Goal

- To create a market-based incentive for operators to implement conservation-friendly management on land owned by absentee (non-operator) landowners



Objectives

- Socio-economic analysis of absentee landowners and operators
- Direct marketing and conservation outreach to absentee landowners
- Development and demonstration of a conservation certification program for farm operators



Certified Conservation Operator

The most efficient and economic way to get more conservation on the ground is to get more ground farmed by conservation farmers.

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How?

- Match non-operator landowners who want more conservation on their farm with conservation-minded farmers
 - Like Match.com

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Steps to Farmer Certification

- Recruit applicants
- Application/Interview
- Phase I – classroom instruction
- Phase II – develop conservation plan
- Phase III – continuing education



Pilot Program

- Calhoun, Carroll, Sac, & Greene
- Not all applicants accepted
- 2 rounds of certification
- 20 farmers completed

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Expert Panel

- High-level of support & interest in pilot
 - Positive promotion of conservation
- What's best way to carry forward and scale-up in Iowa?



Recommendations

1. Continue pilot effort in Raccoon River basin
 - Is there merit to match concept?
 - Need more time
 - McKnight Foundation possible funder



Recommendations

2. Form committee of commissioners

- Should effort be scaled-up?
- What's best model for CDI?
- Survey questionnaire
- Expert panel findings

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