



**Iowa Learning Farm Field Day
Follow-Up Evaluations
March 2009**

Compiled and Submitted by Jacqueline Comito

Iowa Learning Farm sponsored five field days from June to August and one stakeholder field day. We sent an initial evaluation a few weeks after the event. In February, we sent a second evaluation to see if they had acted on anything as a result of attending an ILF event.

Field Days Evaluations

We have asked participants to share their experience in three ways: **comment cards** (filled out at the event, one per household), **evaluation questionnaires** (sent via mail two weeks after the field day to all those who filled out a comment card) and **follow-up evaluation questionnaires** (sent via mail, February 2009, to all those who filled out a comment card at the field days).

ILF Field Day Audience Participation

	#Attendees	#Comment Cards	#Returned Evaluations	#Returned Follow-up Evaluations
Nolte Farm	30	12	6	6
C. Jensen Farm	45	21	6	11
Wagner Farm	62	38	25	22
Juchems Farm#	35	n/a	n/a	n/a
Smeltzer Trust	135	71	26	30
Total	286	142	63*	69+

#This field day was primarily for SWCD Commissioners and agency staff so we did not evaluate it.

*This is a 44% response rate to mailed questionnaire: a good rate of response for only one mailing.

+This is a 49% response rate to mailed questionnaire, that is higher than the original evaluation.



Summary of Comment Cards (filled out by those who attended field day)

<i>Which statement best describes you?</i>	
Farmer	51%
Landowner	6%
Government employee	8%
Other	12%
Farmer/Landowner	22%
Farmer/Government employee	1%

<i>How did you hear about the field day?</i>	
Neighbor	15%
ISU Extension Staff	22%
DNR/NRCS Staff	13%
Website	2%
Radio	12%
Newspaper	12%
Other*	24%

*Most of these marked several different means of hearing about field day. All of them heard both through word of mouth and local media.

<i>Write in your reason for attending (summary of comments)</i>	
Looking for specific information being presented	28%
Looking for information in general	60%
Learn about new directions	4%
Free food	1%
Involved in program	3%
Family or sponsor	4%



Summary of Follow-up Evaluation Questionnaires (sent by mail in February 2009 to all those who filled out comment cards)

Please describe at least one way you will integrate what you learned at this meeting into your farming (n=69):

	Feb 2009 Follow-up	Two-week evaluation
Increased use of surface residue management (no-till or strip-till) on some of my acres in 2009	32%	49%
List # of acres	10,546*	n/a
Average # of acres per respondent who said they were putting more acres into no-till or strip-till for 2008	586	n/a
Sought additional information via web, state agencies or ISU employees	42%	n/a
I discussed +/- of using no-till or strip-till with my landowners	39%	32%
I discussed conservation ideas with other farmers in my area	70%	29%
I purchased strip-till equipment, made a joint purchase of strip-till equipment with my neighbors, or leased equipment from a local ag supplier or co-op	14%	37%
I did not make any changes	18%	20%

*This is doubled over the number last year.

The final three questions were only asked on the follow-up questionnaire:

In general, plowing, mixing and tilling soil contributes to an overall decrease in soil quality?

77% I AGREE

23% I DISAGREE

Do you think, in general, we are moving toward increased or decreased implementation of soil conservation practices (check best answer)?

88% INCREASED

12% DECREASED

Are greater conservation practices needed in your area (check best answer)?

95% YES

5% NO



Although we did not ask for further comments, 23% of the respondents sent us additional ideas.

Smeltzer Trust Farm

- I am a retired landowner, farmer. Our son and I started ridge-till 25 yrs ago, have gone to no-till since chemicals. Was 100% no-till. It rained too much to attend Operation Strip-Till. I am a conservation missionary. My renter purchased a sixteen row strip-till equipment. Very slow increase in conservation practices, farmers enjoy driving that big tractor.
- In a situation of non tillage before attending.
- I am an agronomist, growers ground spc county recommend. Not sure what was meant about participation in Operation No-Till following harvest. Slowly increase conservation practices, needs long term transition to make sure growers can financially convert to such practices. Greater conservation is needed – most growers are doing a great job but there is always room for more advancement and we walk before we run.
- I am a trustee of the Ann Smeltzer Charitable Trust. We will be doing some strip-till on our learning farm and also another farm that Gary Nelson farms and we will be doing some yield comparison for the 2009 year crop for strip-till vs. other tillage methods.
- Already do no-till
- Not sure of plowing, tilling affect on soil quality. Greater conservation practices are needed in some areas.
- Not the mixing, but the erosion. Larger operations don't use conservation practices.
- Thanks for the opportunity. I am not a farmer, I am a member of the Ann Smeltzer Trust Board, a sponsor of this activity. Please remove my name from this list. Thanks, John (Jack) Christensen, Jr.

Wagner Field Day

- Used C-S Agrow for advice and parts. Replaced cast iron manifolds & mowl knives.
- Learned I am losing less N than a lot of other people for 1 bu of corn raised.
- Tried to hire AgPartners, but they sold their rig-said it wasn't viable.
- I attended with my tenant who no-tills &/or strip-tills. I do not farm (age 75).
- Am going to add a coulter in front of trash whippers, but I'm nervous with all the trash out there. Keep me updated for the next strip-till mtg.



Northeast Iowa Field Day (Collin Jensen)

- Prior 100% no-till. I look for better ideas. I need more scouting time. The land needs more tile to use no-till/strip-till. The better soil structure idea is very good, low percentage believe it. Implementation of conservation practices are increasing at a very slow unacceptable rate. Larger farmers are mostly not adopting less tillage. I need your help to make my no-till "look" better. Mainly less tillage is needed.
- I have been strip-tilling all of my acres for 20 years.
- My land is all rented out. CRP strips and the rest of the crop land is no-till. For over 50 years I have dedicated my best efforts toward conservation and encouraging others to go the same. Your presentation that field day was informative and well executed. I was pleased with everything. But as you know not well attended. Some of us are instilled with loftier goals than those folks who exist by personal satisfaction through consumption and terminal digestion of the earth's resources. Mankind's purpose should be greater than simply converting living and non-living material into trinkets that increase our comfort and wealth. The challenge is instilled in the hearts and minds of earthlings that a self-satisfying appetite with no concern for the condition of the earth passed on to the next generation is unacceptable. What else can we do but keep trying. Just accepting an easy existence, comfort, luxury, and gluttony is a pitiful poor price for each person's journey through life.