



2014 Evaluation Report

Compiled and submitted by Jacqueline Comito & Nathan Stevenson

INTRODUCTION

Iowa Learning Farms continues to build a Culture of Conservation by utilizing sound research from Iowa State University and ILF partner agencies, in-field demonstrations, and outreach and education to Iowans of all ages and residencies.

Iowa Learning Farms is growing more effective and so are our field days. 94% of 2014 field day attendees believed that our field days were either excellent or good in the overall quality, effectiveness of expert presentations, effectiveness of farmer presentations, and quality of information.

Field days are not only a means of getting support and reassurance in what farmers are doing or planning to do, but giving them the confidence to speak to the conservation practices they are using. As a result, field day attendees are discussing conservation practices with their peers, and influencing more farmers than those attending the field day in person, thus creating a multiplier effect.

Iowa Learning Farms is making a difference. Since 2010, 88% of farmers attending ILF field days have made a change in their behavior:

- **38% of farmers increased surface residue management on 97,331 new acres of strip-till or no-till since 2010**
- **373 = average number of increased acres put into no-till/strip-till since 2010**
- **Average of 47% of farmers planted 77,492 new acres of cover crops since 2010**
- **In 2014, 89% of farmers attending an ILF event took action toward increasing conservation practices on their farm**
- **In 2014, ILF and sister program Water Rocks! participated in a record 167 events (including farmer events, youth and community outreach, and conferences)!**

OVERVIEW OF ILF IN 2014

From January to December 2014, the Iowa Learning Farms program:

- **Sponsored 25 farmer events (field days/workshops) attended by 1,065 people**
- **Participated in 142 other outreach events, attended by 16,237 people**

Iowa Learning Farms partners: Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, Iowa Department of Natural Resources (USEPA 319), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Water Center and Practical Farmers of Iowa. This cooperative project has been funded in part through the Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

ILF APPROACH TO EVALUATION

Evaluation of Iowa Learning Farms outreach events occur in five stages:

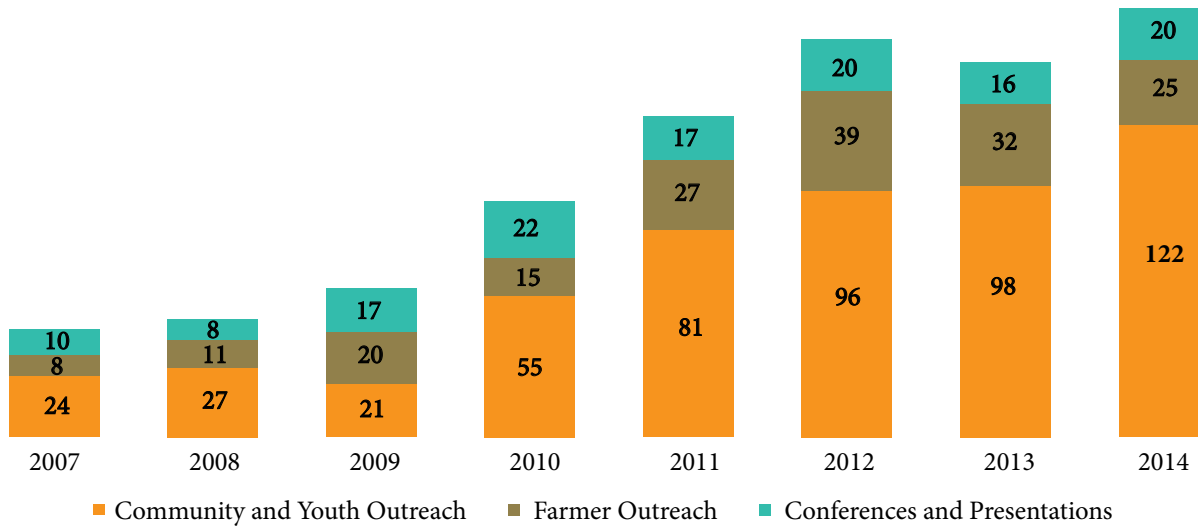
- **Event Evaluations** for every event in which ILF team members participate. These forms, completed by ILF team members, help us to understand the audience's level of engagement and help us to improve future outreach activities.
- **Comment Cards** filled out by all participants at an ILF-sponsored field day or workshop in order to gain a better understanding of who they are and why they are there.
- **Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires** to participants in any ILF-sponsored "field" event. These questionnaires were sent within three weeks of the event. The questions focused on the clarity and accessibility of the information received and inquired whether participants planned to make any changes in their land management as a result of the event. *The individual field day evaluations are in a separate report.*
- **Follow-up Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires** to participants in any ILF-sponsored "field" event. These surveys were sent in January 2015 to see if the participants had made the changes they said they were going to make in earlier evaluations.
- **Teacher Evaluations** of ILF school events (in partnership with Water Rocks! program). These questionnaires were handed to the teachers at each outreach event with a return envelope to help see how these individuals perceived our educational programming. *These evaluations are in a separate report.*

EVENT EVALUATIONS

Iowa Learning Farms staff complete event evaluation forms for all events including field days. For detailed information of a specific event, see the quarterly and year-end reports.

Month	# of events							
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
January	5	3	7	5	1	5		
February	8	1	4	4	3	8		
March	11	8	8	8	14	5		
April	13	15	15	15	3	2	2	1
May	15	14	21	15	6	3	6	2
June	26	24	21	19	14	8	7	8
July	28	27	34	20	22	9	17	14
August	15	13	19	8	12	6	4	9
September	16	9	9	21	11	5	8	8
October	18	12	14	10	6	3	3	1
November	12	17	2			1		
December		3	1			3		
Total	167	146	155	125	92	58	46	42

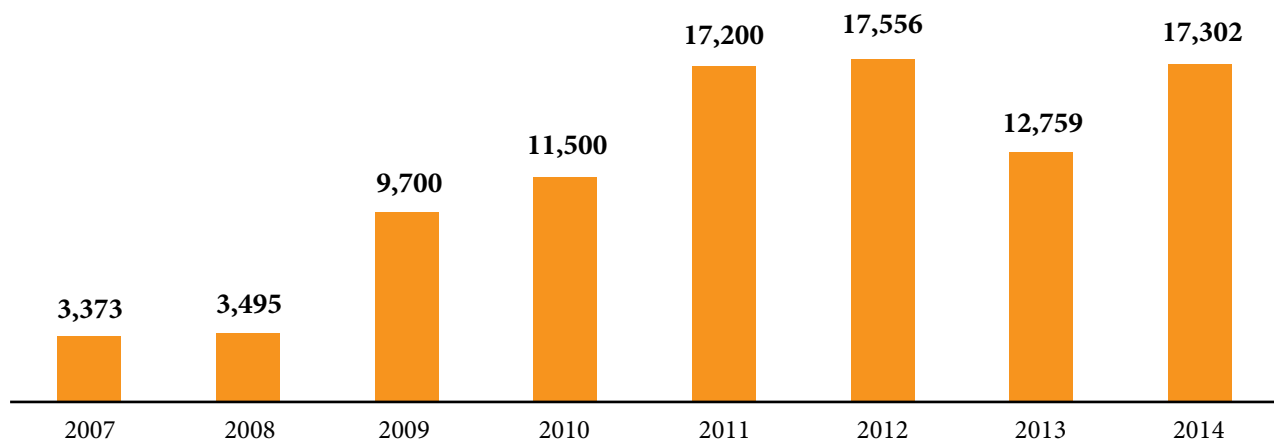
ILF Outreach Events by Type and Year



Description of Audiences at Outreach Events								
	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Age groups								
<i>Primarily youth</i>	43%	28%	25%	27%	24%	10%	26%	14%
<i>All ages</i>	28%	31%	34%	27%	27%	21%	35%	42%
<i>Primarily adults</i>	29%	41%	41%	46%	49%	69%	44%	44%
Background								
<i>Rural</i>	31%	41%	42%	52%	52%	47%	54%	56%
<i>Urban</i>	28%	29%	21%	9%	14%	2%	11%	7%
<i>Rural/urban mix</i>	41%	30%	37%	39%	34%	52%	35%	37%
Level of engagement*								
<i>High</i>	92%	85%	91%	78%	78%	81%	83%	77%
<i>Average</i>	7%	14%	8%	18%	15%	14%	13%	18%
<i>Low</i>	1%	1%	1%	1%	7%	5%	4%	5%

*This information comes from evaluations that staff complete after every outreach event. These evaluations help us to improve future outreach activities.

Total Number of Attendees



2014 Field Day/Workshop Audience Participation in Evaluation

Attendees # Comment Cards # Returned Evaluations # Returned Follow-up Evaluations

March 13, Cover Crop Meeting, Clarion	100	NA	NA	NA
March 25, Cover Crop Workshop, Osage	49	39	16	10
March 26, Cover Crop Workshop, Chariton	45	30	12	9
April 3, Cover Crop Field Day, Joe Kriegel farm, Malcom	71	49	21	15
April 8, Cover Crop Workshop, Arcadia	33	21	7	6
April 9, Cover Crop Workshop, Oakland	18	11	8	3
June 5, Cover Crops for Forage and Grazing Field Day, Tama County	49	26	8	7
June 17, Cover Crop/Strip-till Field Day, Mark Thompson farm, Badger	38	27	11	6
June 19, Cover Crop/STRIPs Field Day, Dick Sloan farm, Rowley	68	36	9	15
June 19, STRIPs Field Day, Roverud Family Partnership Farm, Elkader	18	9	NA	NA
June 23, Strip-till Field Day, Tom Wagner farm, Primghar	37	21	9	10
June 25, (LICA) Nutrient Reduction Strategies Field Day, Melbourne	14	7	NA	NA
July 10, Prairie STRIPs Field Day, Gary Guthrie farm, Nevada	18	6	3	2
July 31, Triple C Pasture Improvement Field Day, Triple C farms, Leon	40	17	9	4
August 19, Cover Crop/Strip-till Field Day, Dean Stromer farm, Klemme	111	88	36	23
September 9, Cover Crop/STRIPs Field Day, Seth Watkins farm, Taylor County	18	9	7	3
September 10, Biorenewables (Miscanthus) Field Day, University of Iowa	77	36	19	5
September 12, Cover Crop Workshop, Titan Machinery, Williams	50	43	20	20
September 17, Cover Crop Field Day, Dennis Lundy farm, Adair County	36	18	7	5
October 16, CREP Tour with DMACC, Boone	30	NA	NA	NA
November 12, Cover Crop Workshop, Armstrong Research Farm, Lewis	23	10	*NA	3

November 18, Cover Crop Workshop, Northeast Research Farm, Nashua	29	19	*NA	9
November 19, Cover Crop Workshop, Kanawha	27	19	*NA	5
November 20, Cover Crop/Bioreactor Workshop, Rob Stout farm, Washington	36	28	*NA	6
November, 25, Cover Crop Workshop, Truro	30	20	*NA	8
Total	+1,065	**477	202 (42% response rate)	++174 (39% response rate)

**Due to these field days occurring in November, the participants will only receive the follow-up mailing.*

*** 477 represents the number of people who were mailed an evaluation. Not all of those who filled out a comment card received an evaluation because they worked for ISUEO or a state or federal agency. The total number of comment cards was actually 620.*

+ This represents the total number of people at field days but not every field day was evaluated. The last five field days were so late in the year, we only evaluated them once using the January survey. There was a STRIPs field day in Elkader and a Nutrient Reduction Strategies field day in Melbourne that didn't warrant evaluation due to low turnout and high percentage of agency people. There was also an annual cover crop meeting in Clarion and a CREP tour in Boone that didn't warrant an evaluation.

++This is a 39% response rate. This is a good response to a single mailed survey.

Summary of Comment Cards (filled out by attendees at the field day)

n=620

<i>Which statement best describes you?</i>	
Farmer/operator	56%
Landowner	32%
Government Employee	15%
Other	15%
Individuals could choose more than one category.	

<i>How did you hear about the field day?</i>	
Neighbor/Word of mouth	26%
Mailing	20%
ISU Extension and Outreach	17%
Newspaper	14%
District Office	12%
Website	11%
Other	8%
Radio	5%
Individuals could choose more than one category.	

<i>Age range of attendees</i>	
18-30	17%
31-40	15%
41-50	10%
51-60	27%
61-70	18%
71+	13%

Summary of Mailed Evaluation Questionnaires for Field Days

The information shown below was obtained from the 16 field days/workshops that ILF evaluated between March 25th and September 17th. Two field days weren't evaluated at all and five field days were late in the year and only evaluated using the January evaluation.

These evaluations were mailed to attendees within three weeks following the field day/workshop. The total number of attendees that were mailed a three-week evaluation between March 25th and September 17th was 477, with 202 evaluations returned. That is a response rate of 42%. The follow-up evaluation sent in January was mailed to 448 people with 174 returned. That is a response rate of 39%.

n=202	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor
Overall quality of field day or workshop	41%	53%	5%	1%	--
Effectiveness of expert presentations	49%	44%	6%	<1%	<1%
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	48%	45%	6%	<1%	<1%
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	41%	50%	8%	1%	--

n=202	Excellent	Good	Average	Fair	Poor	Response averages
Overall quality of field day or workshop	5	4	3	2	1	4.33
Effectiveness of expert presentations	5	4	3	2	1	4.41
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	5	4	3	2	1	4.40
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	5	4	3	2	1	4.31

% of respondents who thought the field day was Excellent or Good

	2014	2013	2012
Overall quality of field day or workshop	94%	94%	91%
Effectiveness of expert presentations	93%	91%	88%
Effectiveness of farmer presentations	93%	92%	85%
Quality of information exchanged during presentations and discussion	91%	92%	90%

ILF field days and workshops continue to receive positive feedback. 2014 saw an increase in the effectiveness of both the experts and farmers while the overall quality of the field days/workshops remained high.

Summary of Follow-Up Evaluation Questionnaires for Field Days

(sent by mail in January 2015 to farmers and landowners only)

Please describe at least one way you will integrate what you learned at this meeting into your farming:

	Jan 2015 follow-up n=174	Jan 2014 follow-up n=408	Jan 2013 follow-up n=195	Jan 2012 follow-up n=253	Feb 2011 follow-up n=96	Feb 2010 follow-up n=130
Increased use of surface residue management (no-till or strip-till) on some of my acres	44%	51%	36%	38%	32%	30%
List # of acres	24,120	12,414	7,198	32,058	8,983	12,558
Average # of acres per respondent who said they were putting more acres into no-till or strip-till	395	318	267	458	428	370
I fall seeded cover crops on some of my acres in fall 2014	63% (16,979 new acres)	64% (42,167 new acres)	53% (12,399 new acres)	32% (4,348 new acres)	47% (1,599 new acres)	23%
Average # of acres per respondent who said they were putting more acres into cover crops	170	168	197	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I discussed +/- of using no-till or strip-till with my landowners	Not asked	61%	40%	35%	27%	33%
I discussed +/- of using cover crops with my landowners	Not asked	65%	50%	21%	Not asked	Not asked
I discussed +/- of using no-till/strip-till/cover crops with my landowners/tenants	73%	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I networked conservation ideas with other farmers or my farmer clients	67%	67%	65%	47%	61%	72%
If yes, how successful were you	One other: 48% Two or more: 32% No others: 20%	One other: 36% Two or more: 40% No others: 24%	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I did not make any changes	11%	8%	9%	14%	16%	18%

The remaining questions asked respondents specifics about cover crops as well as barriers to additional conservation implementation, number of field days/workshops attended and topics, and their perspectives on the Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy.

Cover Crops

Types of cover crops used? (could list more than one) n=101

Cereal rye	77%
Radish/Turnips	35%
Oats	17%
Other*	13%
Wheat	4%

*Other includes: Hairy vetch, clover, winter pea, rapeseed, triticale, and annual rye.

Single species	55%
Mix	45%

Number of years since you first tried cover crops? n=101

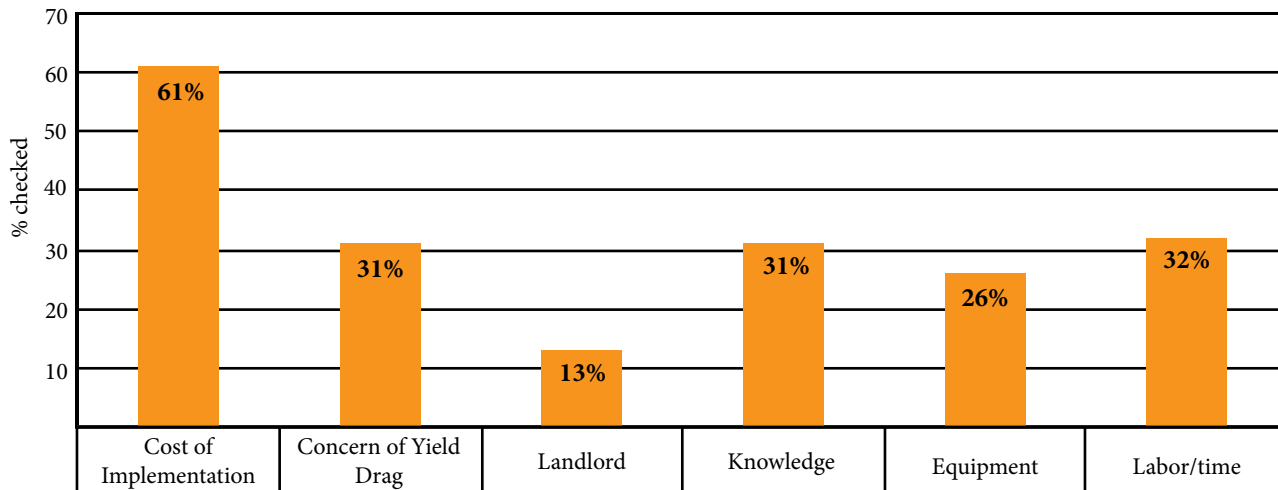
# of years	
1	30%
2	23%
3-5	34%
6+	13%

Was cost share used? n =101

Yes	58%
No	42%

Barriers

What are the biggest barriers to implementing additional conservation practices? (Could list more than one) n=174











Field Days/Workshops

List the number of field days/workshops you have attended since 2009? n=174

1	28%
2-5	50%
6-9	8%
10+	14%

<i>Average number of field days since 2009</i>
4

Which topics were presented at the field days/workshops?

Cover Crops	86%	
Strip-till/no-till	50%	
Prairie strips	11%	
CREP wetlands	6%	
Grazing/pasture walk	25%	
Nutrient management	44%	
Bioreactor	22%	
Biofuels	9%	

Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy

The Iowa Nutrient Reduction Strategy calls for reductions in nonpoint source loads: 41% for nitrogen and 29% for phosphorus. Based on your knowledge of the local area, is this achievable? n=174

