

## Advanced Conservation Drainage Training – Session 2 - Presenter Bios

### Trevor Sample, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

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Trevor Sample has worked in the Watershed Management Section at the Illinois EPA for 16 years. He has experience as a project manager on Total Maximum Daily Loads and 319 Nonpoint Source projects, and currently serves as the Agency Coordinator for the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. Trevor received his B.S. in Agronomy from Illinois State University.

### Jill Kostel, The Wetlands Initiative



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Dr. Jill Kostel is the senior environmental engineer/project manager at the Wetlands Initiative. The Wetlands Initiative, a non-profit organization, is dedicated to restoring the wetland resources of the Midwest to improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat and biodiversity, and reduce flood damage. Jill is the project manager for the Wetland Initiative's "Growing Wetlands for Clean Water" program in central Illinois, which advances the use of small, farm-based constructed wetlands to naturally reduce nutrient runoff in tile drainage. She works directly with farmers and landowners to provide technical assistance in the design and implementation of constructed wetlands and partners with organizations to increase education and outreach about conservation drainage practices. Originally from Pittsburgh, Jill stayed in Illinois after receiving her PhD in Environmental Engineering at Northwestern University.

### Dr. David Kovacic, University of Illinois



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Dr. David Kovacic is the director of the Wetland Ecology Laboratory (Dept. Landscape Architecture, University of Illinois). In 2012, he retired as an emeritus professor of ecology in the Departments of Landscape Architecture and Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois. Kovacic's current research focuses on methods of reducing nutrient loading to agricultural drainages. His work was the first to show that wetlands can be effective in reducing tile drainage nitrate loading in the Midwest, the major source of Gulf Hypoxia. In 2006, he served on the Gulf Hypoxia nutrient advisory committee co-sponsored by the USDA and USEPA to identify solutions to nitrate loading. He currently works with The Nature Conservancy, the Environmental Defense Fund, NRCS, the McLean SWCD, and the Lake Bloomington Water Treatment facility, and the IEPA to implement tile-drainage wetlands on a watershed scale to improve drinking water quality in Lakes Bloomington and Evergreen and other Illinois watersheds.

## Dr. Maria Lemke, Aquatic Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy



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Maria's coordinated more than 10 years of research along the Mackinaw River at an experimental project site and at the Conservancy's Research and Demonstration Farm, owned by the Franklin family in Lexington, IL. The focus of this research includes gaining a better understanding of why local farmers implement conservation practices; how best to reach them and influence their conservation decisions; and measuring the effectiveness of these practices at mitigating agricultural impacts on freshwater streams and rivers.

## Ruth Book, NRCS State Conservation Engineer – Illinois



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Dr. Ruth Book is the State Conservation Engineer for the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Illinois, and has been named Fellow of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers. She is responsible for the planning and design of all NRCS engineering conservation practices in the state. In recent years, Ruth has also provided national leadership for NRCS technical expertise with conservation drainage practices. With NRCS, Ruth has provided leadership in the development of software and technical guidance for engineering design. However, her wide-ranging career includes work in industry and academia, as well as government. She began her engineering career in hydraulic system design with Cessna Fluid Power and Eaton Hydraulics in Kansas and Minnesota. After taking time away from employment to raise a young family, she went back to school at the University of Illinois, earning a doctorate and doing some research and teaching. She joined NRCS in September 2000.

## Krista Kirkham, Assistant Aquatic Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy



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Krista is the assistant aquatic ecologist for the Illinois chapter's Mackinaw River Program. She and her team work with several agricultural agencies, landowners, and universities to implement and study agricultural conservation practices like constructed wetlands and how they improve water quality in the Mackinaw River.



**Joe Pyszka, IL Farm Bill Biologist, Pheasants Forever, Inc. and Quail Forever**

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Joe has been working with Pheasants Forever as a Farm Bill Biologist for over a year, serving landowners in McLean, Livingston, Tazewell, Woodford, and DeWitt counties. A graduate of Western Illinois University, Joe works with landowners to increase wildlife habitat, as well as improve existing habitat, by utilizing federal conservation programs.

**Ryan Arch, Executive Director, IL LICA**



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The Land Improvement Contractors of America (LICA) is a national association dedicated to encouraging high standards of workmanship in resource management, land improvement practices and to promote enterprises in the area of land improvement contracting.

**Jamie Diebal, USDA Farm Service Agency**

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Jamie Diebal is a Conservation Program Specialists with the USDA Farm Service Agency state office in Springfield, Illinois.

**Jeremy Beck, USDA NRCS**

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Jeremy Beck currently works in the Eureka USDA NRCS Field Office as a soil conservationist. He has worked for NRCS for 18 years in Central and Northeast Illinois.