



Green Lands
Blue Waters

Changing non-operator landowner conservation behavior:

What we know and what comes next

Lessons, notes, and resources from a discussion
among nonprofit practitioners and researchers

Minneapolis, MN | May 14-15, 2019

Hosted by:
Green Lands Blue Waters
with support from the
Walton Family Foundation



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PRACTICAL FARMERS
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Executive Summary

Context

[Green Lands Blue Waters](#) (GLBW) is focused on increasing Continuous Living Cover (CLC) on the Upper Midwestern agricultural landscape through a wide range of strategies and partnerships with universities, researchers, educators, producer associations, businesses, nonprofits, governmental agencies, policy makers and practitioners. One avenue to establishing more year-round plant cover on farmland is to connect with non-operator landowners (NOLs), who may be in a position to support farmer-operators in implementing and funding conservation practices. Especially since land ownership is changing rapidly, **non-operator landowners have the potential to be a key constituency to drive on farm practice changes on the landscape.** Researchers and non-profit practitioners see work with NOLs as a way to achieve conservation goals on working agricultural lands at a local and regional scale, support gender and racial equity, protect farmland, and support rural communities. GLBW convened a group of people with expertise on NOL work in May 2019 to explore successes, resources, tools, unknowns, and future directions for work and research.

The Role of Researchers and Nonprofits with Non-Operator Landowners

The non-profit organizations represented at the convening play unique roles within the world of sustainable agriculture, conservation, land stewardship, land access, and rural vitality. All of the organizations attending have programming specific to reaching non-operator landowners, including: [The Women Food and Ag Network](#) focuses on approachable information transfer and field walks to encourage women farmers and landowners to take conservation action. [The Land Stewardship Project](#) hosts workshops, programming, and field days that build relationships with farmers and landowners and offer tangible information and resources for farmland conservation. [American Farmland Trust's](#) efforts include learning circles, research, network building, and policy work, as well as their national Women for the Land Initiative. [The Nature Conservancy](#) looks at economic and policy avenues to facilitate NOL conservation actions, paired with soil health workshops and broad outreach. [Liberty Prairie](#) works on a small, local scale, with a focus on land access and conservation on publicly owned farmland, as well as building farmer-NOL relationships. [Practical Farmers of Iowa](#) focuses on beginning farmers and farm transfer, including connecting new farmers and NOLs, supporting farm transfer planning, and workshops on writing leases to encourage conservation.

Researcher attendees presented recent work and participated in discussions with non-profit attendees. Dr. Pranay Ranjan of Purdue University focuses on examining the dynamic interactions between society and environment and evaluating how these interactions affect human behavior and collective decision making. Dr. Ranjan presented work on barriers and incentives to NOL conservation action. Dr. Peg Petrzelka of Utah State University is currently looking at barriers that prevent women landowners, and their tenant operators, from adopting sustainable agricultural leases, with the goal of developing and implementing a project that results in improved conservation practices on the land and empowerment of women landowners. Dr. Petrzelka presented research done in partnership with The American Farmland Trust on NOL willingness to implement conservation practices and related dynamics. Dr. Linda Prokopy of Purdue University looks at human threats to the environment with a focus on understanding how to encourage more people to become engaged in environmentally friendly behaviors. Dr. Prokopy and Dr. Ranjan facilitated a discussion on barriers to adoption of conservation practices on rented land.

Collaboration between researchers and nonprofits has already led to meaningful findings and opportunities for conservation action, and participants confirmed the importance of continued collaboration to maximize the efficiency of research and the effectiveness of NOL-focused conservation outreach and support. Collaboration also helps identify unknowns and future research directions.

Summary of Discussions and Breakouts

Participants discussed three topics related to NOL-focused conservation, producing useful insights for future work.

Power Differentials: Land ownership is complex and layered with multiple gender, social, and racial power dynamics; these must be considered for outreach and action to be effective.

Honing Existing Tools and Resources, Exploring New Tools: Learning circles, mailings, certain regulations, and connecting with early adopters are aspects of NOL work that work well. More tools are needed for outreach and continuing to build trust is essential.

Reaching Farmland Owners: There is no single strategy. It's important to use multiple channels and appropriate wording that makes all NOL demographics feel invited and welcome. Trust, connection, communication, and follow-up are essential.

What Does Success Look Like?

Nonprofit attendees responded to the questions, "How can we better define success and how can we measure the big vision?" and "How can we use technology to track success?" Participants mentioned the use of follow-up surveys and calls after workshops and learning circles, tracking action over several years, and asking NOLs about confidence levels before and after events. The Nature Conservancy also tracks data through surveys and remote sensing, which offers valuable data but needs refining to better reflect specific agricultural practices. Better coordination across nonprofits and other groups could help improve data collection by avoiding duplication and providing access to other relevant information.

Recommendations for Next Steps for Research, Practice, and Collaboration

Throughout the convening there was deep discussion on what is needed to move this work forward from both research and practice perspectives. Attendees outlined several areas where additional research was needed to better inform practitioner programming and key opportunities for growth.

Seven key focus areas for additional research were identified:

1. Better understanding who non-operator landowners are
2. Improving outreach methods and expanding reach
3. Digging deeper into non-operator and landowner relationships
4. Studying how well what we're currently doing is working
5. Better utilizing current research and data and improving research through collaboration
6. Widening the stakeholders aware of and supporting this work
7. More tangible, timely opportunities to encourage researcher-practitioner collaboration.

Background

[Green Lands Blue Waters](#) (GLBW) is focused on increasing Continuous Living Cover (CLC) on the Upper Midwestern agricultural landscape. We act as a connector, collaborator, convener, and communicator serving our broad network of partners in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Our network includes universities, researchers, educators, producer associations, environmental groups, businesses, nonprofits, governmental agencies, policy makers and practitioners.

Our network supports the development of and transition to a new generation of multi-functional agricultural systems in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and adjacent areas that integrate more perennial plants and other Continuous Living Cover into the agricultural landscape.

GLBW and partners conduct essential research, improving the genetics of old and new crops, translating knowledge into CLC farming systems, developing new extension and outreach capacity, working in farm fields, shaping policy, building profitable markets for new crops, and changing the narrative around what's possible through agriculture. GLBW and our wide network focus on a shared vision for a profitable agriculture based on keeping the soil covered **productively** year-round: farming with **Continuous Living Cover**.

GLBW is based at the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA) on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. We work across the Upper Mississippi River basin, focusing on Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. As a networking and convening organization, we work to bring together stakeholders from multiple perspectives, in particular researchers and practitioners.

In May 2019, with financial support from the Walton Family Foundation, GLBW convened a small group of nonprofits with experience delivering programming to non-operator landowners and researchers looking at conservation adoption among non-operator landowners. Land ownership continues to change rapidly across the upper Midwest. (In 2014, the last time the USDA released a report on land tenure, ownership and transition, the agency estimated that 10 percent of all farmland, 93 million acres, was expected to change hands between 2015 and 2019. Source: Bigelow, D., A. Borchers, and T. Hubbs. 2016. *U.S. Farmland Ownership, Tenure, and Transfer*, EIB-161, USDA, Economic Research Service.)

Attendees of this convening recognized that non-operator landowners have the potential to be an increasingly important constituency to drive conservation changes on the landscape.

This report includes information shared by the participants and attempts to reflect their insight, opinions, motivation, and experiences as well. It includes tips, tools, and resources from nonprofit practitioners and researchers; candid discussion of what's working and what's not; bulleted glimpses at brainstorming sessions of attendees – representing sharing of successes and challenges, opportunities, and gaps; notes from deeper-dive discussions; and recommended next steps for research, practice, and collaboration. While this report is not an exhaustive synthesis on the subject, attendees at this convening offer a wealth of knowledge and experience, and we hope you will find it useful. The meeting ended with a clear interest in staying connected and working to develop collaborative research projects.

A full meeting agenda can be found in Appendix A. For further reading on their top-recommended resources, please refer to *Appendix E. Prep Materials – Top-Recommended Research, Reports & Tools* and *Appendix F. Resource Toolbox - Additional Suggested Research, Reports, Websites & Models*.

Participants

For this convening, we identified a broad group of researchers and nonprofit practitioners from IL, IA, MN, and WI. We also invited a few researchers and individuals from other parts of the country who had specific expertise, experience, and/or initiatives that would add to the conversations. While there is increasing interest in these topics from many organizations, this meeting was for attendees that could reflect on several years' experience.

While this convening was intentionally small, the following questions were asked many times: *Who else is working on this? Who else should be in the room? Who are other potential partners and resources (especially in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin)?* A list of this wider network can be found in Appendix D.

Participant List

Researchers Attending

Dr. Linda Prokopy

Professor of Natural Resources Social Science, Purdue University

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Dr. Pranay Ranjan

Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Prokopy Lab, Purdue University

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Dr. Peggy Petrzelka

Professor, Sociology Program Director, Utah State University

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Non-Profit Representatives Attending

Jen Filipiak *

Midwest Director, American Farmland Trust

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Sally Worley

Executive Director, Practical Farmers of Iowa

Focus: Iowa

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Randy Dell

Strategy Manager, North America Agriculture Program & Agriculture Program and Director, The Nature Conservancy in Michigan, The Nature Conservancy

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Bridget Holcomb *

Executive Director, Women Food & Ag Network

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Event Organizers and Funders Attending

Erin Meier

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Aaron Reser

Associate Director, Green Lands Blue Waters

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Amy Saltzman

Program Officer, Environment Program, Walton Family Foundation

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Molly Breslin

Project Contractor, Green Lands Blue Waters

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*Between the convening in 2019 and the publication of this report, several attendees have retired or changed roles, indicated by an asterisk. GLBW maintains close connections with new people in their roles and/or their organizations broadly.

Why Participants Attended

Participants were asked ahead of the convening what their goals were. Answers included sharing resources, tools and expertise; improving the field of work broadly through collaboration and knowledge sharing; and networking and connecting with peers in the same field with shared goals.

Why We Do This Work

Many of the shared goals were identified during a 'why we do this work' survey question.

- To achieve conservation and water quality goals on farmland.
- To increase conservation on a large scale and on agricultural lands
- To improve environmental outcomes in the Mississippi River Basin.
- To support land stewardship.
- To empower women and support gender equity.
- To connect environmental, agricultural, and rural work to the larger conversation of gender equity and racial and environmental justice.
- I know of no faster way to change agriculture than through empowering women NOLOs.
- To care for rural communities and the prevent the emptying of rural America.
- To keep farmland in farming.
- It's a topic with a vast scope for theoretical and applied research.
- It feels like I'm actually contributing to improving things in this world at some small level.
- To help farmers and landowners make decisions that benefit our environment, people, and communities.
- I see the intersection of how we farm and the future of life, communities, and the health of our families.
- Meeting and working with the landowners is inspiring and energizing - I learn so much from them!

A Note on Abbreviations

Numerous abbreviations are used throughout this report; we are providing this list for clarification. Note that many organizations refer to 'non-operator landowners' with slightly different language and abbreviations (NOLs, NOLOs). In this report we will use 'non-operator landowners' and 'NOLs.'

ABBREVIATIONS USED THROUGHOUT THIS DOCUMENT

- AIDA = Agricultural Investment Data Analyzer
- AFT = American Farmland Trust
- CTIC = Conservation Technology Information Center
- EWG = Environmental Working Group
- HUC = Hydrologic Unit Code
- LO = Landowner
- LSP = Land Stewardship Project
- NASS = National Agriculture Statistics Service
- NGO = non-governmental organization (used synonymously with non-profit organization in this context)
- NIFA = National Institute of Food and Agriculture (US Department of Agriculture)
- NRCS = National Resource Conservation Service
- NOL = Non-Operating Landowner
- NP = non-profit organization
- PFI = Practical Farmers of Iowa
- STAR = Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources
- SWCS = Soil and Water Conservation Society
- TOTAL = Tenure, Ownership, and Transition of Agricultural Land (subset of the Census of Agriculture)
- TNC = The Nature Conservancy
- USDA = United States Department of Agriculture
- U of I = University of Illinois
- WFAN = Women, Food, and Agriculture Network
- SARE = Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (US Department of Agriculture)

Role of Nonprofits with NOLS

A. What's going well with nonprofits? Shared learnings from participants

Nonprofit practitioners were given five minutes to highlight their top successes and specific approaches that are working for their organizations. These are summaries of their responses.

Women Food & Ag Network:

- Learning circles: Speaking and listening come first, then information transfer in an informal setting. Then field walk. Within 6 months many have taken conservation action. NOLS walk away with the relationships in addition to the information.
- Average ownership 300 acres. Approaching reaching 3,000 landowners. Continue to follow up with women with newsletter, pamphlets, handouts.
- Not dumbing down material but keep it basic – don't use acronyms, define scientific terms. Do use complex topics, but don't assume background knowledge.
- Younger landowners seem to be more actively seeking out WFAN; older landowners have to be actively recruited.

Land Stewardship Project:

- Used to do bigger workshops, now doing more small learning circle style events ("kitchen table" – 6-10 ppl) that women host in their homes.
- All work is based primarily on relationships with farmers and landowners. Relationships give us credibility and ability to make change. LSP staff put lots of energy into follow-up: phone calls, making one on one connections to relationships that can help NOLS.
- Basic acronym/info sheet explaining why farming works the way it does in MN.
- Farmer consultants who will go look at land with people and other LSP members who are willing to reach out with support.
- Starting to do add-on programming (2x so far): NOLS don't feel invited to field days. LSP will invite NOLS, they come an hour early.
- What's keeping farmers from asking NOLS for longer leases? It's confrontation avoidance.

American Farmland Trust:

- National Women for the Land initiative, new Women for the Land director.
- Approach: outreach (learning circles and other), research, creating allies and policy.
- Related national initiatives: Farming for the next gen, climate, legacy/protecting farmland.
- Being deliberate about creating networks and supporting them is an important next step.
- Don't open with data – tell stories first. Add data at end.

The Nature Conservancy:

- Initially looked at how to make an economic argument.
- Immediate opportunity: income tax credits, working on legislation at the state level.
- Outreach through Trust in Foods via online ads, emails, sending different soil health messages and seeing what responses we get. IN, IL, IA, into Chesapeake Bay region soon.
- Opportunity: institutional investors.

- Workshops on soil health: pull together researchers, ag attorneys, appraisers, farm management companies, commodity farm groups.

Liberty Prairie:

- Very small, very local. Coming at this from land access.
- NOLs not going to do this without help with motivation and equipping.
- Farm side: need sustainable farmer network.
- Start first with public NOLs – about 63k acres of publicly owned farmland (forest preserve, conservation districts). Usually have some kind of mandate for conservation.
- Event: “Building good relationships and good leases.” Workshopping possible problems, influencing perspectives. Switching NOL/farmer role play.
- Important for NOLs to know that farmers share their values: mixers with both groups.
- To explore: land trusts.

Practical Farmers of Iowa:

- Organization info now states that both farmers and landowners are stewards of our land.
- Workshops on how to write leases to encourage conservation. How landowners can protect their assets since it’s a long-term investment.
- Annual landowner award.
- Focus on beginning farmers and farm transfer. Website to connect NOLs to beginning farmers. Annual event on farm transfer that connects NOLs and beginning farmers.
- Stage play: “Map of My Kingdom.” Brings awareness to farm transfer and need to plan for it.
- Starting newsletter just for NOLs and one just for farm transfer.
- Land management companies reaching out to their members, actively recruiting new members.

B. Discussion: Nonprofits as Trusted Information Sources with NOLs

One topic that came up ahead of the convening was the effectiveness and farmer perceptions of nonprofits as trusted information sources with NOLs. The NOL researchers and nonprofit practitioners at the convening explored this question.

How are nonprofits serving farmers represented in research?

Is this missing? In the AFT surveys and other research materials, research seems to call out specific categories of sources of information for farmers, including farm managers, ag. retailers, extension, state agency staff, and crop consultants. Nonprofits were not mentioned.

In Peg Petrzelka’s research at Utah State University with American Farmland Trust, nonprofits are included as “conservation groups” – no focus group participants have yet specifically mentioned that farmer-supporting nonprofits need to be their own group. Linda Prokopy’s research at Purdue is often in partnership with private, public, and nonprofit partners. She shared examples of how discussion of how various partners are included in the outreach materials for data collection can shape response rate. For example, Linda’s team did focus groups as to whose name should be on postcards to farmers and NOLs. They found that the more logos they have on surveys, the better the response rate. However, there are concerns about including the name and logo of nonprofits that might be perceived as strongly environmental, for example The Nature Conservancy. (Focus groups also indicated that farmer trust of TNC is lower than other information sources, though whether that perception and trust holds for NOLs is unknown.) Thus, in conducting research with TNC, it’s important that outreach materials be jointly

branded. Pranay Ranjan mentioned that he will be looking more closely into the role of nonprofits through future research.

Nonprofits like those attending the convening are conducting essential programming for NOLs that is often not provided by other sectors, filling an important, and growing, need. One topic identified for further exploration is whether nonprofits could have a role in training agency staff or other trusted voices in farmer information delivery in the future. Nonprofits might have a role in training professionals in the sectors that are already trusted by farmers and NOLs – this could potentially serve to both increase the level of trust in the information provided to farmers and NOLs as well as increasing the reach of often limited-capacity nonprofits through the training of partners in other sectors that then go on to offer effective programs and services to farmers and NOLs.

C. Examples of Current Research/Nonprofit Partnerships

One of the driving reasons for this convening was to create better connections between researchers and nonprofit practitioners. Throughout the event it was affirmed that there is great potential to improve this field of work and see better conservation implementation on farmland owned by NOLs when researchers and on-the-ground practitioners work together. Better communication and feedback loops between researchers and practitioners can assist researchers in better calibrating future research to actual on-the-ground practice needs as well as ‘gut-checking’ research findings and can allow nonprofit practitioners to design and improve programming based on the latest research.

Early in the convening, Randall Dell with The Nature Conservancy and Jen Filipiak with American Farmland Trust offered examples of how nonprofits and researchers are currently partnering:

- AFT and USDA partnership (Massachusetts): Uses census and ag census data to glean information about NOLs
- TNC, AFT, and Peg Petrzela partnership: Working to better understand women landowners
- AFT and Great Lakes Protection Fund: Developing tools, discovering what landowners need to know
- TNC: Working with commodity farm groups as allies, also working with land management companies and elevator co-ops
 - TNC, U of I Farmdoc, and Illinois Corn Growers – working on nutrient loss reduction goals. Iowa corn growers have also reached out to TNC.

The Nature Conservancy and American Farmland Trust have released critical and groundbreaking reports on NOLs. See resources section for links.

The Nature Conservancy: Non-Operating Landowners and Conservation on Rented Farmland; Lessons Learned from a Year of Exploration, Randall Dell, 2019

www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NOLS-non-operating-landowners-final.pdf

Understanding and Activating Non-Operator Landowners; Non-Operator Landowner Survey Multi-State Report. Petrzela, P., Filipiak, J., Roesch-McNally, G., and Barnett, M. J. 2020.

<https://farmlandinfo.org/publications/understanding-and-activating-non-operator-landowners/>

Role of Researchers with NOLs

A. Researcher Attendees

Three leading scientists in NOL research were invited to the convening to present recent research and participate in dialogue with practitioners. Further information can be found on their websites.

Professor Peg Petrzelka, Utah State University, Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology
<https://sociology.usu.edu/people/directory/peggy-petrzelka>

Dr. Petrzelka's research interests focus on the interrelationships between the physical and social environment in a number of settings. Working with American Farmland Trust, we are conducting focus groups with women landowners of agricultural land—a growing group of landowners, yet a group whose voice has been invisible to both researchers and natural resource agencies. At present we are concentrating our efforts in the Great Lakes Region of the U.S., focusing on what incentives and barriers exist for these women landowners, and their tenant operators, to adopting sustainable agricultural leases, with the goal of developing and implementing a project in the region that results in improved conservation practices on the land and empowerment of women landowners.

Professor Linda Prokopy, Purdue University Dept. Forestry and Natural Resources, College of Agriculture
<https://ag.purdue.edu/fnr/Pages/profile.aspx?strAlias=lprokopy>

Natural resources in Indiana and elsewhere are increasingly threatened by human pressures such as land use change, climate change and water pollution. Dr. Prokopy's research, teaching and engagement address these human threats with a particular focus on understanding how to encourage more people to become engaged in environmentally friendly behaviors. I use both qualitative and quantitative methods in my research and frequently use techniques such as surveys, interviews and focus groups. Dr. Prokopy collaborates extensively with scientists across Purdue and co-leads a regional project to develop social indicators to measure the effectiveness of projects that try to minimize non-point source pollution.

Post Doc Pranay Ranjan, Purdue University Dep't Forestry and Natural Resources, College of Agriculture
<https://ag.purdue.edu/Pages/Profile.aspx?strAlias=ranjanp>

Dr. Pranay Ranjan is an environmental social scientist with interdisciplinary training in institutional analysis, social dilemmas, water governance, environmental policy, natural resource conservation, and action research. Dr. Ranjan holds a Ph.D. in Environment and Natural Resources from the Ohio State University and a Masters in Environmental Studies from TERI University. His research focuses on examining the dynamic interactions between society and environment, and evaluating how these interactions affect human behavior and collective decision making.

As the research presented at the convening was at various stages in publication, the presentations are not shared in this white paper. Below are notes from a Q&A session with the researchers, highlighting the value of opportunities for researchers and practitioners to connect. For more information on the specific research topics, we recommend an online/library search on the three researchers above!

B. Pranay Ranjan, Purdue: *What helps or hinders NOLs from taking steps toward conservation: Results from implementing a trial conservation program.*

Clarifying questions and notes about the project:

Q: How did the \$1500 incentive work?

A: LOs and tenant had to mail in proof to Purdue to get the money, and then there was some remote sensing verification. When sending things in the mail, the name used as the addressee was the one that Farm Market ID provided. A folder was sent in the mail including a paper offering a webinar; we ended up doing 3 different webinars. More people showed up to the webinar if they only received basic information than when they got lease information or the financial incentive – [Linda thinks] maybe it's possible to overwhelm people with too much information. Of interviews, 3 of 18 so far are with women.

Q: What was the time lag between receiving packet and follow-up?

A: About 3 months (packets were not all mailed at the same time).

Q: How many women showed up to the webinars?

A: Don't remember data, but think it was mixed gender.

Note: In current interview process, people already don't remember getting the packet. Some people are seeing interview conversation as a trigger to spur action.

Discussion:

- Jen would like demographic data on landowners who want to talk more
- NOLs aren't working on the same time scale as farmers – but if they are involved in farming at all, they are busy at this time of year
- Whether they talked to financial professionals – what would the conversation NOLs have with financial professionals (could be appraisers, farm managers, accountant) look like?
- Did any financial professionals know about soil health?
- LSP has a cropping systems calculator – can take it to the bank

C. Peg Petrzelka, Utah State: Recent Research with American Farmland Trust, focusing on Illinois & Iowa data

Clarifying questions and notes about the project:

- NOLs are very interested and willing to change leases and take other steps toward conservation on their land. Iowa State lab is administering the survey.
- **Great Lakes Protection Fund project** is addressing nutrient loss reduction.
- Learning circles with NOLs (6 hours with evaluation at end), farmers workshops for farmers renting from NOLs (2 hrs. with evaluation at end). Lawyer (NY) or extension agent (OH) who does ag leases presents to both groups. Both groups expressed significant increase in knowledge/confidence.
- Next steps: phone calls to women to ask if they have discussed or implemented the lease.

Q: How many times in a year did you talk to your tenant about farming?

A: Average of 14, range of 0-320.

Q: How many times in a year did you talk to your tenant about conservation?

A: Average of 4-5, range of 0-99.

Q: What was the least popular question/what do NOLs say are not a problem?

A: They're not worried about upsetting family or operator.

Q: Is there data on how dependent NOLs are on the farm rent income?

A: In Iowa reliance on income results were higher than in IL, where it was more investment income.

Q: Does anything on the survey ask about current practices?

A: Yes. It would be interesting to see if characteristics of those who already do conservation practices are significant.

Discussion:

Crop Shares vs. Cash Rent – how does this difference affect conservation possibilities?

- Power dynamics with female NOLs fall into three categories: those who yield, those who fire their renter, those who are happy with their relationship (this category often have crop share).
- NOLs are inheriting lease terms and tenants with the land.

Lease template ideas:

- 4x annual conversations/meetings between NOL and tenant operator
- Hunting Rights

Tips for stirring action in women NOLs:

- “Your farmer won’t bring this up to you.”
- “Your farmer might be interested in these things but might be afraid to ask you.”

Farm income needs:

- AFT survey asked how they use their farm income (to determine whether need for that income affects decisions).
- Pranay says a way to do this is to ask what % of total income this is.

The perfect of NOLs that say they don’t know what’s being done on the land is interesting.

D. Researcher Q&A: What don’t we know about NOL audience? What do you have planned? Where are you excited about research directions?

Peg Petrzelka:

- We want to see how competition for land plays into the dynamics in the relationship.
- “Communicating with your landowner” workshops didn’t get a good response. AFT embeds it in other events, like annual SWCD meetings, with good response.

Q: How does the lack of tenant farmers in a region affect NOLs’ unwillingness to make requests? (Seeing it in Mid-Atlantic, New York – affected by “actively farmed land” tax break.)

Q: Is there research on institutional landowners, management companies, trusts?

Q: What if you’re a landowner who really likes your farmer and you want to give him the land, but your family will be mad about it?

A: The way to do that is find the success stories and promote/normalize it. NOLs don't feel empowered to leave land to someone not in the family

Lists of NOLs:

- Robin/LSP: Many times both male and female individual landowners in a couple are grouped under the man's name. When we're buying prepared lists we're buying a set of assumptions that go with it.
- Margot/AFT: Changed our Farm Market ID-generated list to add "or current resident" because recipients called asking whether they could attend despite not being specifically addressed. Bonus: also avoids USPS returns. Led to increased registration/participation.

E. Barriers to adoption of conservation practices on rented land *Pranay Ranjan and Linda Prokopy*

Check in with attendees: Non-profits: does this resonate or not? What other barriers do you see?

What's missing? Researchers: how can you capture these things?

- Aesthetics are included in 40% of conversations in role play
- Information deficit is not a barrier to adoption of conservation practices for farmers; it is a barrier for NOLs
- Land management companies' barriers are different
- Status quo bias: How do we reset the baseline?
- Can we learn from Maryland/Chesapeake Bay awareness? In MD, all farmers are using cover crops; issues are more high-dollar expenditures, like fencing around streams
- Leases:
 - In the past, it was common to have biannual meetings with NOL and tenant; leases forcing meetings alleviate anxiety, reduce effects of power dynamics
 - 1-year leases are standard because "that's the way it's always been"
 - Automatic renewals are a potential tool and liability
 - How to share risk between farmer and NOL: lease terms
- Everyone wants a better relationship but doesn't say so – power dynamics
- There are 5 principles of soil health management: focusing on optimizing those principles instead of just no-till means including organic farmers
- NOLs care about a lot more than the rent – they're optimizing for the rent, not maximizing
- How to break through fear tenants have about suggesting change to NOLs?
 - AFT incentive: NOL and renter must apply for funding together
 - Education and relationships are key to breaking through all barriers
 - Possible tool: Worksheets that farmers and tenants can do together (could be farmer-initiated). Use \$ incentive to get people to do it?

F. Identifying a Research Agenda: What's needed next?

Throughout the convening there was deep discussion on what's needed to move this work forward, from research, practice, and collaborative perspectives. The roots of these needs and next steps are found throughout this document and are addressed explicitly in the final section on Recommended Next Steps for Research, Practice and Collaboration. Two documents in the appendix synthesize the conversations on needs and next steps from two brainstorming exercises.

Brainstorming exercises shared in the appendix

- Appendix B. Do We Know What We Don't Know?

- Appendix C. What Are our Blind Spots as Researchers & Practitioners?

Summary of Discussions and Breakouts

Before the event, attendees identified three topic areas for deeper discussion, areas where they were experiencing challenges or seeking feedback from their peers, or where they believed that there was the most potential to move this work forward: Power Differentials; Honing Existing Tools and Resources and Exploring new Tools; and Reaching NOLs. Summary notes for each are included below.

A. Power Differentials

- There are cascading & layered power differentials
- Embedded in culture of agricultural communities are cliques, historic relationships
- Systemic power differentials that are embedded into speech, gestures, all ways we communicate as individuals & communities
- Multi-party ownership is complicated, communication within owner group is complex
- As researcher, Pranay has found that he gets stuck at the issue of women NOLs & gender only when trying to address power differentials
- Best Practice? - NPs like LSP, AFT have rich growing datasets through one-on-one phone outreach to contact lists

B. Honing Existing Tools & Resources, Exploring New Tools

- Things that are working:
 - Learning circles (but are they/how are they scalable?)
 - Regulations like Maryland
 - Mailings work to create conversations and relationships with NOLs
 - We know how to reach early adopters.
 - NY nutrient management plan works as an incentive
 - Private consultants have emerged to help farmers do this
 - Consultants are a valuable source of unbiased information
 - Potential model to link conservation plans to eligibility/taxes
- Tools needed: More tools for outreach (more on Tools list, attached)
- If operators don't trust the practice, they're not going to do it - no matter what
- Farmers have no idea how much crop insurance is subsidized

C. Reaching Farmland Owners

Women Food and Ag. Network

- There is no silver bullet, try all strategies: Farm Market ID lists, mailings, FSA lists, ads in local shoppers, press and radio, family
- Word outreach carefully: avoid "environmental" or "conservation." Alternatives: "We know you care about your land;" "Leaving your land better than you found it;" "Future of your land;" "Your legacy"
- Be aware of how to make women not disqualify themselves: pictures of women that look like them, say event is for women, address in woman's name

Land Stewardship Project

- Acknowledging that outreach may seem like it's trying to 'take' the land; be very careful that your outreach conveys that you are simply trying to educate or help

Practical Farmers of Iowa

- Identifying absentee NOLs is easier than non-operating landowner (out of state address is a more obvious indicator that the owner is not living on the land, can use Farm Market ID)
- Agricultural Research & Extension Network (AgREN)
- Bought out an NRCS person's time to meet with NOLs that live out of state when they were back "in town" visiting family
- AIDA model

American Farmland Trust – Mid-Atlantic

- Outreach items use phrase "invitation to an engaging discussion" - people react positively to being invited rather than being offered an educational seminar
- Don't include photos of specific crops because those being recruited may think "I don't grow that crop, so this learning circle doesn't apply to me"
- Use Zillow and Realtor.com to see which farms have sold in the last months
- Cold mailing to local realtors, accountants, farm credit agencies, attorneys who indicate they work with farmland, Master Gardeners, beekeepers, farm supply stores
 - Send a paper flier to places like farm supply stores - they will not print and hang up a flier sent over email

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Tips for postal letters

- Use a real stamp rather than having it stamped at the post office
- Use blue ink in the signature

Never charging or always charging for workshops and learning circles?

- Ohio and New York are charging \$10; WFAN charges \$10; AFT Mid-Atlantic charges \$5

Strengthening connections at the end of workshops and learning circles; being an advocate

- Make one-on-one connections at end of workshop: "Hey Bridget, did you meet Sally? She works for NRCS and..."

Lists to find landowners

- Inconsistency on how FSA lists are shared across the country (ex. Bridget vs. Margot experience - *explore potential GLBW/group role on helping with more consistency?*)

When to hold workshops?

- Weekends, weeknights, daytime (landowners who work sometimes willing to take time off)
- Hard to invite partners (i.e., NRCS) to speak on weekends due to overtime rules

What does success look like?

Time was provided in the agenda for all attendees to think about “what success in your work look like to you?” and then to share their thoughts with someone they were seated next to. That exercise lead into each organization sharing how they are currently thinking about success and tracking it. Each nonprofit attendee provided the following information in response to the prompt question below. A group brainstorm on better tracking success with technology followed.

A. How can we better define success and how can we measure the big vision?

American Farmland Trust:

- Trying to set goals but too much is unknown about base population (how much do they control; how many acres are available and how many are affected?)
- Trying to follow up with learning circle participants 6-18 months later.
- Measuring confidence levels measured at the end of each session of 3-day learning circles.
- Quotes on notecards for grant reports and social media posts.
- Capture acres rented at registration point.
- “Please tell me how you learned about the learning circle so I can thank them.” (Gets results!)

Practical Farmers of Iowa:

- In their follow up surveys, 44% of landowners increased conservation investment in their land

Land Stewardship Project:

- Tracking acres affected and tracking measurable action (conversation, enrollment in NRCS program, implementing a written lease)
- Important to track actions because change can take several years.
- Follow-up calls (also make sure getting connected to resources): “How many acres do you rent out? Are you doing this on all your acres or a portion? How many?”
- Exit surveys also ask for a range of acres controlled.
- Long timeline measure: track how many times we contact someone.

Women Food & Ag Network:

- Tracking pre- and post-event levels of confidence; actual implementation of practices
- Trying to pull quotes, get them to become their own storytellers.
- Would like to track people 5-10 years - need funding.

Liberty Prairie:

- Goal to survey people over time.

The Nature Conservancy:

- Tracks data through surveys
- Tracks acres
- OPTIS remote sensing program

B. How can we use technology to track success?

This list summarizes responses from a brainstorming exercise on smarter and more efficient use of data tracking tools and methods for measuring success.

- TNC works with OPTIS, which measures DNDC (Denitrification – Decomposition, a computer model of carbon and nitrogen biogeochemistry and agricultural systems. TNC has data from Indiana from 2005-2018, can detect all kinds of things, including cover crops, though there are some inaccuracies. CTIC’s website, publicly available for free at HUC 8 watershed. Companies are interested. They are a private company.
- Walton Foundation funded some work with Environmental Working Group and PFI for cover – it sensed presence and absence of plants, not as good as OPTIS but more affordable
- We need to be able to pick up tillage practices, etc.
- Surveys are also a useful tool to track change over time. Currently we have long-term survey data in IA, but we need more that are repeated elsewhere.
- PFI member survey results have long-term data for practice adoption: conservation, crop diversity, etc.
- Our time would be well spent to figure out how to combine surveys, not ask the same questions.
- Is there a systematic way to provide technical assistance and collect data? (Robin at LSP is doing this).
- Maybe we could tap medical field for medical cooperative data ideas (GEMS from UMN?)
- Special NASS survey, used as a base for nutrient loss reduction strategy
- Ways to track behavior change? Survey staff of federal agencies: number of inquiries, number of people they know, number and type of federal contracts
- Need for data center for this kind of data – all would need to agree on a set of data being collected
- Peg’s research currently collects data in the same place as evaluations, which means there is no identifying info so researchers can’t track them

Recommended Next Steps for Research, Practice and Collaboration

Throughout the convening there was deep discussion on what is needed to move this work forward from both research and practice perspectives. Attendees outlined areas where more research is needed to inform practitioner programming and opportunities for growth – including widening and building the support ecosystem for NOLs and ways to partner further. Attendees repeatedly identified NIFA funding opportunities as a potential way to support shared researcher-practitioner proposals (especially tracking SARE RFPs and timelines, and NIFA calls related to land tenure and access).

In addition, Appendix B. *Do We Know What We Don’t Know?* and Appendix C. *What Are our Blind Spots as Researchers & Practitioners?* summarize the outcome of two brainstorming exercises and help synthesize needs and next steps.

Seven key focus areas for additional research were identified:

1. Better understanding who non-operator landowners are
2. Improving outreach methods and expanding reach

3. Digging deeper into non-operator and landowner relationships
4. Studying how well what we're currently doing is working
5. Better utilizing current research and data and improving research through collaboration
6. Widening the stakeholders aware of and supporting this work
7. More tangible, timely opportunities for researcher-practitioner collaboration.

A. Better understanding who non-operator landowners are

- NOL Demographics
 - Are there differences among sub-groups? For example, of people who say they're willing to implement change, what are their demographics? How can we focus on them?
 - Which sub-groups are likely to shift to more conservation (in addition to women)?
 - We need to better understand segments of NOLs since they are many groups.
- Accounting for Geography
 - What are differences in needs (in information, outreach, etc.) in different areas?
 - Explore needs over a large region to better understand regional NOL differences.
- Better Understanding NOL Needs
 - What are the information deficits?
 - How do we better understand NOL needs by sub-group, without assumptions?
- Beyond Individual Ownership
 - How can we characterize and engage multiple owner NOL groups?
 - How to include trusts when they do not identify name/individual?

B. Improving outreach methods and expanding reach

- Mailings work to create conversations and relationships with NOLs, but we need more research on the specifics of best/most effective methods, such as how to localize.
- What's the sequence of interactions needed to produce action by NOLs?
- Reaching beginning NOLs and farmers
 - Use similar or different tools?
 - Beginning farmers seem to have a more business-focused outlook; can we develop business-based tools?
 - Conservation is not built into ag education programs. Can we focus there? Providing curriculum, etc.?
 - Who are the beginning farmer influencers?
- We need tools to reach young NOLs and operators who are busy and have family demands.
- We need to reach out to NOLs, and specifically women NOLs, in a way that they start to see themselves as a group with power.
 - Would NOL networks help?
- Focus on out of state landowners and replicate work of Larry Redmon at Texas A&M: a 3-day workshop yearly educating out of state NOLs on conservation
 - AGREN list of NOLs – can still get the data? Write it up? (Call Tom and find out process)
 - Is AIDA (Agricultural Investment Data Analyzer) data available?
- Expanding outreach to new groups
 - In Minnesota, are lake associations a way to engage NOLs? Many lakeside owners are or were farmers and may be NOLs.
 - Broaden outreach geographically and to POC landowners
 - How to break through to more risk-averse farmers?

C. Digging deeper into non-operator landowner and operator relationships

- How to get farmers to approach landowners with change ideas? How receptive are landowners?
- Test an incentive such as: you get \$200 just for having a conversation between NOL and renter about conservation.
- Is there more space for conservation conversation in crop share vs. cash rent scenario?
- Aesthetics were included in 40% of conversations in role play – explore further since they are important to NOLs.
- What are trusted information sources? What are influential sources? Are these the same?

Power differentials

- Is it possible to quantify/validate experiences of those on the outside?
- Who is not being asked as NOL because data is limited or biased by FarmID?
- Who is actually making decisions and committed to the owned land?
 - Can surveys include questions to tease out who makes decisions about the land?
- Teasing apart layered and deeply embedded power differentials
 - There are cascading and layered power differentials in NOL - farmers relationships
 - The cliques and historic relationships embedded in agricultural communities prevent some from being invited to the table
 - Systemic power differentials are embedded into ways we communicate as individuals and communities.
 - Ownership can be complicated, with multiple parties involved and sharing their opinions in all sorts of interpersonal ways.
 - As researcher, Pranay has found that he gets stuck at the issue of women NOLs and gender only. Gender is important but not the only power differential.
- How does the role of competitiveness for land play into dynamics?
- How and where is lack of tenant farmers a barrier? For example, in the eastern half of Maryland, there are not enough renters. So, owners don't want to push buttons.
- Study of landowners *and* renters (both perspectives *together*).

D. How well are current practices are working?

- What are the most effective interventions? Incentives, learning circles, workshops, 1-on-1s?
 - Developing Moves management model to track conservation changes. Monica at St. Croix River Association is doing this with woodland owners.
- Which tools are working? We haven't really tested tools. Jen at AFT says the Farmland Information Center will test some of these in 2019 .
 - Checklists for reducing knowledge differentials.
 - Tools for encouraging relationships.
- Why are we not seeing more conservation in general? Because the program wasn't effective? Because there are too many other barriers?
- Measuring success: We need better research on the difference between intent to behave in a certain way and actual behavior change.
- When behaviors change, are they maintained? Relevant to both NOLs and operators.

E. Better utilizing current research and data, and improving research through collaboration with nonprofit practitioners

Exploring shared data

- How can there be better collaboration and information sharing between organizations?
- A shared data center could allow better niche-finding and specialization - are there barriers related to universities not allowing data sharing?
- Can we slice and dice existing data in new ways?
 - For ex. STAR (Saving Tomorrow's Agricultural Resources, <https://starfreetool.com/>)
- We could all measure the same 3-4 metrics using the same questions to collect more uniform data. Things like: number of acres vs. range, conservation investment, cost vs. increase in acres
- Can we add questions in existing data collection activities that help this work? For example, how are we measuring land tenure on existing farmer surveys?
- Research building from nonprofits' strong track records and relationships
- Best Practice? - Nonprofits like The Land Stewardship Project and American Farmland Trust have rich growing datasets through one-on-one phone outreach to contact lists.
- Nonprofits have spent time building a high degree of trust with individuals - can researchers use those relationships to improve research? For example, having someone go with Robin to ask questions as part of her regular landowner visits vs. having a researcher cold call?
- Co-designed and implemented research
- Nonprofits share suggested marketing and communication approaches to help researchers with effective study design.

F. Widening the stakeholders aware of and supporting this work

Policy Change, Culture Change, and building a support system of service providers can help activate farmers conservation behaviors

- How do we get crop insurance to reflect actual risk based on farming practices?
- Conservation and compliance are tied to crop insurance discount – but maybe promotion is more important than the actual financial incentive. We need to see if it works and where.
- How to get land appraisers to include soil health?
- How to get conservation compliance monitored the way Iowa does it?
- What is the effect of a tax break for land in agricultural production?
 - Example: In New York, landowners have a significant incentive to keep it farmed and so may not be willing to risk compromising the relationship with the operating tenant.
- How do we reset the baseline expectation to expect conservation vs 'business as usual'?
- We need general media outreach and education on NOLs and tenants and their role in shifting agricultural practices.

G. More tangible, timely opportunities for researcher-practitioner collaboration.

The focus areas for research above highlight how researchers and practitioners can continue to collaborate, with great potential impact. Opportunities below would help facilitate that collaboration.

Collaborate on future research.

- ID near term funding streams and apply for grants together.
- Increase communication and connections between researchers and nonprofit practitioners, and between researcher and practitioners.

Collaboratively develop shared research baselines.

- Find a way to standardize some questions for all outreach materials, surveys etc.
- Develop a shared baseline that is accessible and can be measured against consistently over time.

Develop a platform to share resources with professionals working with NOLs.

- Continue to build on the shared toolbox of resources identified here.
- Build a NOLs research clearinghouse to compile past research and distribute new findings.
- Possible location: Farmland Information Center website.

Build a network of peers working with NOLs.

- Clear current gap = further connection and communication channels with professionals that work with NOLs in both research and practice.
- Start a listserv?
- Host calls or webinars focused on sharing best practices.
- NOL-focused national conferences or other regional events.
- Consider launching a subnetwork for NOLs to connect with each other.

Coordinated messaging for shared impact.

- Highlight stories of people making change in NOL work: professionals, NOLs, and farmers.
- Develop a general media/audience outreach and education strategy about NOLs and their tenants and their role in shifting agriculture.
- Develop a shared media strategy and calendar.
 - Choose and use consistent hashtags on NOL work.
 - Set an annual group media strategy and editorial calendar.
 - Amplify each other's work: Write a press release summarizing recent research or highlighting an individual piece. Then all organizations can use that research at the same time for their communications – like blog posts about their NOL work on the ground.

Coordinated advocacy for shared impact.

- For example, there is inconsistency on how FSA lists are shared across the country. How can those who have had success in some regions assist in consistency and success in other regions?
- Identify and address system levers together.

Be intentional about broadening the field together.

- Broaden outreach, geographically and to BIPOC landowners.
- Broaden the network of professionals working with NOLs to include 'support ecosystem' like farm lenders, insurance agents, crop consultants, state agency staff and beyond.
- Landowners and operators need to be included in research and program design

Appendices

- A. Agenda
- B. Do We Know What We Don't Know?
- C. What Are Our Blind spots as Researchers and Practitioners?
- D. The Wider Network
- E. Prep Materials – Top Recommended Research, Reports & Tools
- F. Resource Toolbox – Additional Suggested Research, Reports, Websites, & Models

Appendix A. Agenda – May 14-15, 2019, Minneapolis, MN



Non-operator landowner behavior change: A shared nonprofit & researcher discussion

Tuesday May 14

Aloft Hotel

4:00pm – attendees settled at hotel

4:30pm – meet in hotel lobby to head to restaurant together

Birchwood Café

5:00 pm – ~8:00pm

- **Welcome & Introductions**
 - GLBW Welcome & Personal Introductions
 - Non-profit & Researcher background experience with NOLs
- **Enjoy a shared meal together!**

Wednesday May 15

Mill City Museum -- ADM Conference Room

7:45am – attendees can begin arriving for breakfast

MORNING SESSION 8:00 - ~12:30

8:00am – Working Breakfast/ Welcome

Role of researchers with NOLs

Utah State University research update

Purdue University research update

Role of nonprofits with NOLs

Successes & role of nonprofits as trusted information sources

Examples of current nonprofit/researcher partnerships

Barriers to Adoption of Conservation Practices on Rented Land

- Gut-checking current research with practice experience
- Exploring future potential for tracking barriers & solutions

Small Group Discussions

Power differentials in this work

Honing existing tools & resources; exploring new tools

Reaching NOLs

Lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION ~1:00 - 4:00

What does success look like? Is our work successful?

Visioning for the future

Measuring success – now and in new ways

What are our blind spots as researchers and practitioners?

Researchers and nonprofits working together

- Small group brainstorming
- Targeted identification of next-steps

Wrap up & Closing

4:00pm Depart

Appendix B. Do We Know What We Don't Know?

At the beginning of the meeting, participants were asked, "What are the main things that we, as individuals and a group, don't know or haven't tried/explored yet?" These things are holding back progress and could potentially be addressed, together.

- How to connect to research
- What NOLs don't know
- Differences in needs in different geographic areas
- How to explore needs over a large region
- How to find/contact NOLs easily and cheaply
- How to reach NOLs to network them & directly support them
- How to convince women to engage and realize it's worth it
- Land ownership structures and how they affect behavior change
- What's the sequence of interactions needed to produce action by NOLs?
- What values cause shifts to action?
- How landowners think and make change
- Role of non-profits in NOL work
- Who are the influencers / trusted information sources?
- Why does conservation have to be seen as a cost?
- Pressure to avoid change; will that change as generations transition?
- What tools do NOLs/landowners need to enable and spur action?
- How do we better advocate for NOLs, especially women?
- How to change the underlying system to make bigger change?
- We don't have a population! So much we don't know about NOL demographics
- What are sub-demographics (in addition to/ beyond 'women') that are more likely to shift practices & how do we get them to do so?
- Apply diffusion of innovation to NOLs
- How to better apply networks to NOLs and prove value of networks

- Need to test farmer incentives
- How to engage women NOLs & have them value their own involvement enough to engage even in outreach to/ for them
- Need to better understand barriers to increasing conservation
- Need to better understand and address land access
- Need to better understand and address rural culture of “not making waves”
- Info and education only go so far to create change - need tools to help NOLs change
- What are the most effective entry points?
- How do we collaborate with farm/commodity groups, elevators, coops and with land management companies?

Appendix C. What Are Our Blind Spots as Researchers and Practitioners?

Important Overarching Themes

- Not understanding conservation on owner operated land, let alone owned by NOLs
- Addressing whether the current agricultural paradigm ever fix systemic issues
- The Patriarchal structure of agriculture
- Lack of communication between organizations due to competition for funding
- Lack of diversity and the dominance of White culture in agriculture, land ownership, and agriculture-focused nonprofit organizations
- Corporate influence on nonprofit organizations and individual practitioners
- Maintaining long range tracking over the course of funding and staff changes
- How to address huge deep-culture topics like power differentials and gender equity?

Blind Spots in Research and Researchers

- Inflated results don't accurately reflect current knowledge or effectiveness
- What were key motivations for people to change farmland management? This could help us identify good target groups
- Research dollars are not best used re-testing if learning circles work
- How are decisions made with multi-landowners?
- We may be ignoring jointly-owned lands
- There are enough non-binary folks in agriculture to make male/female categories incomplete
- Women may not be able to say if they were affected by men in the room
- Lists used to contact NOLs have bias (for example, they may defer to male owner)
- What are NOL values and priorities? (There is some survey data available)
- Importance of land access for beginning farmers, and NOL role
- Where is the higher return on investment? Farmer vs. NOL engagement

Nonprofit organizations and agencies

- Why is there not more conservation on owned land?
- Federal or local agencies may be biased toward certain constituencies
- Assuming more ag and conservation knowledge than actually exists with NOLs
- Expanding conservation practices beyond cover crops

- Engaging non-local NOLs
- Legal power/rights vs. cultural power/rights: “you own the land; you can do whatever you want”
- Nonprofit organizations can have tunnel vision and be somewhat unaware of other NGOs, research, and historic work on the topic
- Organizations may not be aware of who they are “turning off”
- Whose role is the listening role? Should nonprofits be presenting information that NOLs are listening to, or should nonprofits be listening to NOLs?
- Is there a role for NGOs to help facilitate NOL-farmer conversations?
- How do we create alternative advising services for NOLs when public options aren’t good?
- Other than women as a general group, what other demographic sub-groups are most likely to respond to our messages? To change?

Individuals, practitioners, and communities

- What social support networks and values do NOLs need to deal with social pressure around conventional agriculture?
- Where do faith communities fit into this?
- How to change community culture around land use and land aesthetics?
- What about nationwide networks of NOL support networks?

Appendix D. The Wider Network

For this convening, invitations were sent to a select group of researchers and nonprofit practitioners from IL, IA, MN, and WI as well as a few key researchers and practitioners from other parts of the country who had specific expertise, experience, and/or initiatives that would add to the conversations. This meeting was specifically designed for attendees that could reflect back together from a place of several years’ experience.

However, the following questions were asked many times: *Who else is working on this? Who else should be in the room? Who are other potential partners and resources (especially in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Wisconsin)?* The following list was generated as an ongoing brainstorm on the wall during the convening.

People

- [Dr. J. Arbuckle](#)
- [Dr. Andrea Basche](#)
- [Dr. Angie Carter](#)
- [Dr. Mae Davenport](#)
- [Justin Durdan](#) – Member of the Illinois Corn Board who would hold annual meetings for his landowners. Tech savvy farmer interested in using technology to minimize environmental impacts.
- Financial advisors
- [Maggie Monast – EDF](#)
- [Neal Hamilton](#) - Agricultural law at Drake; offers materials online for communication with NOL/tenant, leases for conservation
- [Larry Redmon](#), Texas A&M. Holds [land stewardship conferences](#) for NOLs.
- [Kathy Ruhf](#) - Former ED of Land for Good; still involved

- [Mark Schleusner](#) (IL) developed questions with NASS specifically on practices that are part of IL Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (Peg also used these questions in Utah)
- [Lisa Schulte-Moore at IA State](#)
- [Rod Weinzierl – IL Corn](#)

Organizations

- [Izaak Walton Leagues](#)
- [Land for Good](#) in the northeast focuses on NOLs, has a program that sets up NOLs with beginning farmers.
- [League of Women Voters](#)
- [MOSES](#)
- [Pheasants Forever](#)
- [Renewing the Countryside](#)
- [Savanna Institute](#)
- [Sustainable Farming Association](#)
- [Wisconsin Farmers Union](#)

Appendix E. Prep Materials – Top-Recommended Research, Reports & Tools

Before the convening, attendees were asked to share one or two favorite resources as prep materials for the full group. Below are the recommended research articles and other resources.

Top-Recommended Nonprofit Resources, Links and Toolkits

American Farmland Trust

<https://farmland.org>

The American Farmland Trust is an organization founded in 1980 that works holistically to conserve farmland and encourage adoption of environmentally sound farming practices. They aim to keep farmers on the land and support them in conservation agriculture approaches. Their website offers a wealth of information on related topics.

Improving On Farm Conservation Webpage

<http://www.farmlandinfo.org/improve-on-farm-conservation>

On Farm Conservation aims to maintain agricultural productivity while protecting soil health, improving water quality, and increasing crop diversity. This page compiles dozens of links to more information on specific elements of conservation agriculture and resources for developing a conservation plan, finding expert advice, and getting financial support.

AFT Research on Women Landowners

<https://farmland.org/research-into-women-landowners/>

Information on women landowners is lacking, but the American Farmland Trust has been working to better understand and support this demographic and address the barriers they face in leasing agricultural land. AFT provides several reports and surveys related to women landowners.

Understanding and Activating Non-Operator Landowners; Non-Operator Landowner Survey Multi-State Report. Petrzelka, P., Filipiak, J., Roesch-McNally, G., and Barnett, M. J. 2020.

farmlandinfo.org/publications/understanding-and-activating-non-operator-landowners/

Before the convening, AFT staff provided NOL survey results from a few early research states for attendee review. Between the time of the convening and the release of this white paper, American Farmland Trust has released a groundbreaking new report that includes, but goes well beyond, the state data that was available and discussed at the GLBW convening.

Land Stewardship Project

<https://landstewardshipproject.org>

The Land Stewardship Project is a nonprofit organization founded in 1982 that works towards agricultural and community sustainability through farmer training as well as justice and policy work. You can find hundreds of resources on their website.

Conservation Leases Resources

<https://landstewardshipproject.org/stewardshipfood/conservationleases>

*This page offers information and a toolkit on Conservation Leases, a type of lease agreement that incorporates stewardship practices. You'll also find links to examples where conservation leases worked well for both landowners and tenants. The toolkit can be viewed and downloaded here: **Toolkit of Resources for Farm Landowners and Renters: Soil Health Building and Conservation Leasing** landstewardshipproject.org/repository/1/3273/conservation_leases_toolkit_7_16_20.pdf*

The Nature Conservancy

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/>

The Nature Conservancy's wide range of international conservation efforts includes work on conservation on agricultural land. You can find more information on their agriculture related projects here (<http://projects.tnc.org/ag/>), and stories on agricultural conservation in North America here (www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-priorities/provide-food-and-water-sustainably/food-and-water-stories/north-america-agriculture/)

The Nature Conservancy: Non-Operating Landowners and Conservation on Rented Farmland; Lessons Learned from a Year of Exploration

www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/NOLS-non-operating-landowners-final.pdf

This report presents findings on non-operator landowners and the barriers and opportunities to conservation on rented land.

Women Food & Ag Network

<https://wfan.org>

*The mission of WFAN is "to engage women in building an ecological and just food and agricultural system through individual and community power." They offer a range of programs, training, conferences, events, and other resources for women interested in farming, conservation, and political action. Their **Women Caring for the Land** program (<https://wfan.org/women-caring-for-the-land>) provides resources and training for women farmland owners who want to learn more about conservation.*

Improving Conservation Outreach to Female Non-Operator Farmland Owners

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ae9eb0a697a9837968fb75c/t/5c537ec34785d31a3476878a/1548975854548/8thEdition_final-compressed+%281%29.pdf

This Manual, developed through the Women Caring for the Land Program, offers a dozen conservation education activities that can be used by conservation agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community groups working with women non-operator landowners.

Top Recommended Peer-Reviewed Research

Understanding barriers and opportunities for adoption of conservation practices on rented farmland in the US. Ranjan et al. Land Use Policy, 2019: [ranjan et al 2019](#)

Current agricultural conservation programs often focus on farm operators without fully taking into account non-operator landowner dynamics and rental arrangements that disincentive implementing conservation practices. This study examined barriers to conservation practice implementation on rented land, which included risk aversion, farm aesthetics, and annual lease terms, among other factors. The authors present suggestions from NOLs and operators interviewed on how to reduce barriers, for example, by improving NOL-renter communication and creating lease terms with equitable sharing of risk and rewards. These findings can inform policy and the work of agricultural conservation programs.

Women agricultural landowners — past time to put them “on the radar”. Petrzelka et al. Society & Natural Resources, 2018: [petrzelka et al 2018](#)

Women own approximately 25% of rented farmland, but data on women landowners and federal policy that focuses on them is lacking. These factors marginalize women NOLs in federal agriculture policy, despite the USDA mandate to ensure that underserved populations are better included. The authors provide specific policy recommendations for including women NOLs.

Measuring farmer conservation behaviors: Challenges and best practices. Floress et al. Land Use Policy, 2018: [floress et al 2018](#)

Not all measures of conservation behavior are equally accurate or useful. This article examines when it is most effective to use actual behaviors, willingness or intent to adopt a behavior, or examples of how behaviors have been used in the past when planning or evaluating a project. Authors also recommend that research always be theoretically grounded and that composite measures should be used when possible.

Appendix F. Resource Toolbox - Additional Suggested Research, Reports, Websites & Models

Complimenting the top-recommended prep materials (research, reports, and tools) above, throughout the meeting notes were taken on additional recommended resources. Attendees were welcome to voice suggestions at any point during the meeting, or to add their ideas to white paper on the wall throughout the meeting. The following suggestions were captured.

For work directly with Nonoperator Landowners

Strategies

- Encourage the power of networks
- Create safe spaces for women or minorities only
- Harness the power of stories
- NOL, tenant, and “conservation minded” farmer mixers
- Verbal conversations (meetings as part of lease agreements)

People

- Neal Hamilton, Agricultural Law at Drake: Materials online for communication with NOL/tenant, leases for conservation
- Paul Goeringer – UMD: <http://agrisk.umd.edu/paul-goeringer>
- Larry Redmon at Texas A&M - Holds annual 3-day workshop educating out of state NOLs on conservation: agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/solutions/bennett-trust-land-stewardship-conferences/

Tools

- Land Stewardship Project Cropping system calculator
- Crop rate workshop as an NOL educational tool (how much IS the farmer making?)
- Financial advisors – financial value of soil health (some in mid-Atlantic doing this)
- The Principles of Soil Health tool to give to investors.
- Tenant-to-NOL relationship advocate (Liberty Prairie Curriculum)

Information

- Practical Farmers of Iowa - NOL and generational transfer newsletters and events
- Practical Farmers of Iowa - profiling landowners in publications.
- Communication tip sheets and financial visibility – not shared with tenant (reality re: rental rates)
- Communications template with lease workshop – currently used by Sarah Everhart - University of MD:
 - <http://umaglaw.org/publications-library/agricultural-conservation-leasing-guid>
 - <http://umaglaw.org/aleis-conservation-leasing-workshops-featured-in-podcast/>
- [Precision conservation management](#)

For identification and outreach

- Tillable – online meeting space (private company) - based in Chicago – land lease site/company (like Virginia Farm Link on east coast) – interest in creating a farmer and land environmental attribute database.
- American Farm Media – subset “Trust in Food” - Great database of both farmers and landowners, including what media they use.
- Land access community/exchange tools such as those used by Liberty Prairie and Tillable
- Land trusts as doorways to NOLs
- Engaging institutional investors
- NASS survey
 - special NASS survey, used as a base for nutrient loss reduction strategy – organizer Mark Schleusner

- TOTAL survey
- [Core Logic](#)
- Resources to answer the question of why to focus on women-only groups.
 - Women only woodlands network has this.
 - WFAN has some of this.
 - Jen is creating a guide for how to do this.