

National IPM Communicator

Proposal and Update for the National IPM Coordinating Committee

October 2018

The Problem

Integrated pest management can have tremendous benefits in reducing pesticide use, protecting human and environmental health and reducing pest-management costs. Yet IPM adoption has lagged behind federal goals, and funding for IPM research hasn't kept pace with an ever-changing pest complex affected by climate, invasive species and pesticide resistance.

To increase awareness, acceptance and adoption of IPM, the National Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee has been actively working to increase the visibility of integrated pest management and better communicate IPM successes. The committee, which operates within the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities science and technology sector, wrote in its *2016 State of IPM Report*, "What is needed is a process to aggregate, package and disseminate success stories."

The committee asked a group of evaluators and communicators from the Regional IPM Centers to lead a workshop exploring ways to accomplish this goal at a meeting in Washington, D.C. in October 2017. Titled "How to Be Successful with Success Stories," the workshop focused on:

- Training Resources and Databases: What is available and what metrics (beyond survey results) can be used to measure mid- and long-term impacts like changes in behavior and changes in condition.
- Potential for National IPM Impacts: How to capture and communicate success stories and bring state and regional successes to the national level.

At the end of several presentations and a discussion-and-consensus-building process, the committee endorsed the concept of creating a **National IPM Communicator** whose responsibility it would be to aggregate, package and disseminate IPM success stories nationally.

Western IPM Center Communication Coordinator Steve Elliott and National IPM Coordinating Committee Executive Committee Chair Patrick Beauzay further developed the concept, which Beauzay presented to the committee in April 2018. The committee reaffirmed its commitment.

The Proposed Solution

The National IPM Communicator would fill a missing link in the broad national IPM information network of researchers, extension educators, state IPM coordinators and the Regional IPM Centers by focusing on key national audiences of decision-makers, influencers and potential IPM advocates, partners and supporters. He or she will work at the direction of the National IPM Coordinating Committee's Executive Committee, which includes representatives from each of the nation's four Regional IPM Technical Committees and members of key APLU subcommittees. The National IPM Communicator will work with the Regional IPM Centers, state IPM coordinators and IPM-related Regional Technical Committees to develop and

disseminate nationally focused IPM stories and reports to demonstrate the public value of integrated pest management. The message, tailored to the audiences listed above, is that IPM is effective, economical, adaptable, environmentally sound and necessary for America's food and national security.

On a day-to-day basis, the national communicator will make the connections, do the synthesis and tell the big-picture stories that show the impacts IPM is making in agriculture, natural areas and communities. Using individual examples to illustrate larger trends, the communicator will coordinate communication efforts across states and regions to amplify outreach efforts already under way. The communicator will produce or coordinate topic-focused publications in agricultural, community and natural-area IPM and alert the Regional IPM Centers and state programs ahead of their publication. So when a national report on IPM in schools comes out, for example, regional and state programs can send out press releases or hold media events highlighting their own school IPM successes, tying those releases to the publication of the national report. The national communicator will develop draft releases for other programs to localize, and work with communicators at the nation's land-grant universities, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions and tribal colleges to improve their understanding and ability to communicate IPM information.

IPM issues and successes will be communicated through these topic-focused publications, press releases, Twitter and a new website focused on the benefits IPM brings. (Potential domains are ipmimpacts.org, ipmworks.org or others.) The website will be aimed at a general audience and feature stories, publications and links to other resources. The communicator will look for opportunities to get IPM stories placed and IPM experts and advocates interviewed in the national media when appropriate.

The Impact

A national IPM communicator will increase the frequency that integrated pest management is featured in traditional and social media, and, over time, increase the general understanding of the concepts and benefits of IPM. The goal will be to increase awareness, acceptance and adoption of IPM. The communicator will increase the coordination of communication efforts and help members of the IPM community see beyond their local or regional efforts and visualize the national impact integrated pest management makes. He or she will help the IPM community speak with one voice to important audiences that no one regularly engages now.

The communicator will not interfere or take away from state efforts to communicate *how* to practice IPM, which is specific to systems and crops and pests and areas. Instead, she or he will focus on showing people *why* practicing IPM is beneficial and the results of our ongoing national efforts. Because researchers, universities, state programs and the regional centers already produce reports and impact statements and IPM success stories, accomplishing this doesn't take a huge investment. The missing piece is synthesizing and communicating these local and regional impacts, and tailoring the information already being produced for different audiences. One focused person can close that gap.

Structure and Funding

We propose the National Communicator prepare an annual work plan for and in conjunction with the National IPM Coordinating Committee's executive committee, and provide the executive committee with regular updates and briefings.

The position itself, however, would be attached to one of the Regional IPM Centers, with day-to-day supervision and performance evaluation the responsibility of the Center director. (The IPM Information Systems Project Supplement is handled similarly.)

For the first three to four years, we project an annual budget as follows:

Salary and benefits	\$135,000
Indirect charges	\$40,000
Travel	\$40,000
Printing and mailing	\$25,000
Design (web and publication)	\$10,000
Total	\$250,000

The Centers have discussed funding options and explored possibilities with NIFA leaders. The best option we have been able to identify is to privately fundraise the money necessary to launch and sustain the effort for an initial four years. A development officer at the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources has reviewed the proposal and is ready to begin soliciting funding, and two centers have developed initial lists of organizations to approach.

We delayed making those approaches due to the director vacancy in the West, and to conduct this briefing (and solicit additional funding possibilities.)