Good to Grow in the 4-state Driftless Region

Michelle Miller
UW-Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems

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Original Goal of Good to Grow Initiative

To build a strategic framework that scales sustainable regional food systems from 2% to 10% of food produced and consumed within the region.
TIERS of a FOOD SYSTEM

Source: Jim Bower, Blue Planet Partners; Ron Doetch, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute; Steve Stevenson, Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems–University of Wisconsin
Strategy Nesting by Scale

- Super Region
- States
- Regional Economic Collaboratives
- Production Regions
- Local Community / Metro
Focus on market region or production region?
The Driftless Area is a unique region in the Upper Mississippi River Basin encompassing northeastern Iowa, southeastern Wisconsin, and southern Illinois. The area was once covered by glaciers, which carved out distinctive landscapes.

Many of the soils that compose the steep slopes and rocky crevices are known for their natural resources, including a diverse range of flora and fauna. The area is recognized for its unique ecosystems and cultural heritage.

Legend
- Elevation
- Watershed Boundaries
- Forest Boundaries
- Project Area Boundaries

Elevation
- Low: 200' 
- High: 1,200'

Regional Overview

Driftless Area Initiative
Driftless Area of Southwest Wisconsin, Southeast Minnesota, Northeast Iowa, and Northwest Illinois

Forest Habit Assessment: 4,000ha Matrix

Habitat Connectivity

Forest Habitat Assessment

Legend

Municipal Boundaries
County Boundaries
Driftless Area Boundary
Major Lakes & Rivers
Non-Forest
Combined Habitat Tiers
1-2 (Low Nettles Potential)
3-4 (Mid-Nettles Potential)
5-6 (High Nettles Potential)
Forest Connectivity (by BCC Index)

Landscape Tiers
Forest Density:
Type 1 = Low Density
Type 2 = Medium Density
Type 3 = High Density
Health Habitat Preriod:
Type 1 = Poor Health
Type 2 = Good Health
Type 3 = Excellent Health
Type 4 = Excellent Health

Landscape Habitat Context

Focus: Driftless Area

Driftless Area Initiative
Driftless Region / Upper Mississippi River Valley

- Four states
- 57 counties
- ~30,000 square miles
- ~20,000 acres
- Karst landscape similar to Appalachia
- Mishi Sippi = Big River in Ojibwe
- 15 major tributaries to the Big River
Constellation of regional and local initiatives

- Driftless Area Initiative
- Riverlands Economic Development Partnership
- NE IA Food and Fitness Initiative
- Valley Stewardship Network’s Food and Farm Initiative
- SE MN Food Network
- Upper Mississippi River Valley appellation
- Crossroads Research Center reports
Community food enterprises

- Organic Valley
- Grown LOCALLY
- Coop Partners Warehouse
- Packing houses such as Alsum Produce, Wescott Agri-products
- Produce auctions
- Buy local restaurants
- Farm-to-cafeteria projects
Potential areas of region-wide work

- Region-wide initiatives such as farm-to-school projects, developing culinary identity, addressing food access and sovereignty issues
- Economic analysis - many pieces in place
- Refined asset analysis, especially to assist in infrastructure investments
- Systems thinking professional development for activists and entrepreneurs
- Policy work to harmonize the 4 states, counties – federal conservation programs, as an example
Potential areas of region-wide work, continued

- Participatory governance work, esp. on land use issues

- Land use analysis and recommendations to policy makers: what is the nature of regional multi-functionality and how can policy support that?

- Work with production sectors to align with a regional production strategy and marketing message that supports sustainability

- Explore new cropping systems best suited to region – agroforestry, permaculture, aronia, hazelnuts, others?
Next steps for aligning the region

- TODAY at 4:30 – Driftless Convention World Café. Tell us about your work, your vision for the region, help set the agenda.

- March 18 Prairie du Chien – all day meeting to hear from multi-county initiatives

- Specialty Crop Research Initiative proposal – submitted 1/14

- Other grant funding opportunities

- Self-organized with emerging leadership
University of Wisconsin – Madison
Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems

www.cias.wisc.edu
mmmile6@wisc.edu