ONE-PAGE BRIEF: Competitive Grant Report P2012-04

SALT Initiative II

Abstract: The continuing Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (SALT) project broadens its focus to consider the many sorts of ownership of Iowa farmland, and how best to approach each category of owner/operator. The goal is to encourage adoption of a suite of conservation practices through educational and legal means.

What was done and why?
This project expanded on the Sustainable Agricultural Land Tenure (SALT) Initiative, which conducted research on the impact of changing land tenure trends on conservation and sustainability in Iowa. The Initiative determined how legal arrangements and documents might address any conservation concerns identified.

Objectives:
1. Increase awareness of the need for sustainability on leased agricultural land among key landowner demographics, including women landowners and off-farm heirs and investors.
2. Improve landowner knowledge of the need for sustainable land management and their capacity for participation through the creation of a Landowners’ Forum, which offered an interactive social experience.
3. Empower key landowners to negotiate farm lease provisions from a position of knowledge and confidence. They will, therefore, be able to manage their land in a more sustainable, resilient and profitable manner and will be able to monitor and ensure enforcement of sustainable farm lease provisions.
4. Increase the capacity of landowners to provide beginning farmers access to land, residential facilities and diversified commercial enterprises.
5. Promote utilization and distribution of the resources developed through outreach services and nonprofit organizations, particularly those specializing in assisting beginning farmers, such as the Beginning Farmer Center, Women, Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN), and Practical Farmers of Iowa.
6. Determine the effects of land ownership structures on the effectiveness of current conservation program and outreach policy.

What did we learn?
The project identified significant changes in Iowa’s statutes and case law that impact land tenure arrangements, the decision-making capacity of landowners, public interaction with agriculture, recreation on private agricultural land, and, ultimately, the capacity and willingness of landowners to negotiate and implement conservation practices within their farm lease contracts.