

ACES 2018 Tuesday Evening Town Hall

Title: *Conservation Innovation Grants: Over a Decade of Supporting Environmental Markets Development—Where Do We Go from Here?*

Description:

USDA's Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program has, since 2004, supported the development of environmental markets and market-based mechanisms for conservation. Many of the leading water quality trading programs and agricultural greenhouse gas protocols have benefited from CIG support, and CIG has also funded several wildlife habitat mitigation efforts. Frameworks, programs and protocols central to the operation of water quality, greenhouse gas, and wildlife habitat markets have been proven through pilot projects and initial trades. Going forward, the success or failure of market-based approaches will be largely based on policy decisions rather than questions of feasibility and credibility. CIG's statutory language, maintained in 2018 Farm Bill drafts in the Senate and House of Representatives, supports the provision of grants for projects demonstrating "market systems for pollution reduction and practices for the storage of carbon in soil." This town hall will explore how USDA can continue to support market-based approaches through CIG in the future. CIG program staff and USDA leadership are interested in acquiring stakeholder feedback as USDA looks to improve CIG and reinvigorate the program after more than a decade of partnership and grantmaking. Stakeholder feedback sessions like this one will be conducted at other events and venues in 2018 and 2019.

Session Agenda:

- 15 minutes of the history of the CIG program and an overview of its support of market-based approaches to date.
- 15 minutes of remarks from past CIG market-based recipients.
- 30 minutes of facilitated discussion with participants.

Discussion Questions:

How has CIG funding been most useful to the development of ecosystem services markets and market-based approaches?

What remaining challenges exist to the adoption and scaling of market-based approaches, and how might CIG be used to address those challenges?

How can CIG best be used to support market-based approaches in the future?

Audience:

The target audience is all ACES conference participants. Past CIG recipients and those familiar with the program may be particularly interested, but CIG offers opportunities for everyone at the conference, whether one's interest in ecosystem services and markets is purely academic or more applied.

Organizer:

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Kari supervises CIG program staff and leads NRCS's environmental markets and conservation finance activities.