The Illinois Sustainable Agriculture Committee met via conference call on March 22, 2013. Vice chair Tony Joehl conducted the meeting. Tony called the meeting to order at 9:07 am. Roll call of members in attendance was Tony Joehl, Mike Rahe, Dave Bishop, and Terra Brockman. Guest present was Laura Sova. Absent were Walt Gregory, Joel Gruver and Chad Wallace.

The minutes from the last meeting held February 15, 2013 were reviewed. A motion was made by Dave and seconded by Terra to approve the minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

Laura Sova, Division of Natural Resources Manager, introduced herself and expressed her encouragement to the Committee and the important role it has played in Sustainable Agriculture program efforts. She grew up on a farm and still farms with her parents in Kendall County.

Mike provided an overview of the new Cover Crop Initiative. A total of up to 15 cover crop demonstration plots will be established in 2013 along Illinois Interstates to encourage the use of cover crops for soil erosion reduction and to capture/recycle nutrients from crop fields to improve water quality. Up to an additional 15 small plots will be established by SWCDs working with local farmers that will include educational field days. Mike will provide a list at the next meeting of plots being established. Tony mentioned his experience with cover crops this summer and the odor from his radishes which caused complaints by neighbors.

The Committee discussed the possibility of hosting a statewide Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Possible target audiences include farmers, farm managers and crop consultants. Discussion also included whether to have a statewide conference or regional workshops. Potential topics mentioned included transitioning to organic (using farmer experiences), local foods, cover crops, food hubs, crop insurance, food grade production, non-gmo crops, special markets and value added. The Committee also discussed partnering with existing organizations and their events such as the Illinois Specialty Growers Conference, Chicago Farmers, Illinois Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers, rather than hosting our own event.

The Sioux City DVD Walt has will be viewed at the next meeting.

The Committee agreed to participate in the upcoming local foods event in Arthur Illinois at Stutzman Feed Mill on August 10. Director Flider is being invited to speak. Dave and Terra agreed to staff a Committee display highlighting some of the successes the Committee has been involved in. It is estimated there will be 1,000 in attendance.
Mike will send the Committee members the old application criteria that have been used in the past to select the Sustainable Agriculture Farmer Award for review and update at the next meeting.

Mike will send out ethics training materials to Committee members who have not taken it in 2013.

Under other business, Dave asked about the status of the Specialty Growers Conference sponsorship grant of $500 the Committee had approved. Mike informed the Committee that was still pending, waiting on the release of state funds, probably in June.

The next tentatively scheduled Committee meeting will be in April 2013 and December 10, 2013. Dave asked to place the topic “local food hub progress” on the agenda for the next meeting.

A motion to adjourn was made at 10:17 pm by Dave and seconded by Mike. Motion carried unanimously.

Approved ______, 2013