

IN-ACRE Summer Recap

This was an eventful summer for the IN-ACRE! With involvement around the state, our team kept busy as we represented the coalition at a great deal of events while also meeting with our farmer members. Continuing conversations surrounding climate issues and renewable energy was a key to our success this summer. Telling the story of the farmer and advocating for agriculture allowed us to work not only with those in the climate and energy sectors, but also with our elected officials. Meeting with state legislators and local officials, we were able to advocate for the best interests of the IN-ACRE coalition across the state.

- 2024 Rural Energy Tours
 - Intro
 - Taking place at Fair Oaks Farms and Northeastern REMC, the 2024 Rural Energy Tours were a success. Both tours were well attended by a diverse group of individuals from many different industries. Whether it was agriculture, construction, legislators, farmers, or local elected officials, there were people from all different walks of life together learning more about these energy systems. As a founding organizer of the Rural Energy Tours, we are happy to work with Indiana Farm Bureau, the Association of Indiana Counties, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, and the Office of Energy Development in putting together these events now in the third year.
 - June 4 - Fair Oaks Farms
 - The highlight of the Fair Oaks Energy Tour was a demonstration of how the farm utilizes digesters to produce unique forms of energy. The energy produced from the farm moves through the digester system and is then used to power the vehicles. We also saw the digester operations, which was very interesting to the attendees. Some dignitaries in attendance were ISDA Director Don Lamb, State Rep. and Indiana Farm Bureau First Vice President Kendell Culp (R-Rensselaer), State Rep. Sue Errington (D-Muncie), State Rep. Matt Pierce (D-Bloomington), representatives from Congressman Baird and Senator Young's Offices, and several local elected officials.
 - July 17 - Northeastern REMC
 - Touring a battery storage facility was very interesting for the attendees at the Northeastern REMC location in Columbia City, IN. At this tour, those attending were able to see the structure of their battery storage system and learn about how it operates. This was another great event for professionals to continue networking with their peers while still learning about the evolution of the energy industry. Some dignitaries in attendance

were State Rep. and Chairman of the Energy Committee Edmond Soliday (R-Valparaiso), State Rep. Jim Pressel (R-Rolling Prairie), and many local elected officials.

- Media Appearances
 - Our team has appeared on the following media outlets:
 - ***Abdul At Large*** with Abdul-Hakim Shabazz -radio interview on ag and climate
 - The Anderson Herald, Anderson, IN-newspaper interview about farmers and solar
 - https://www.heraldbulletin.com/business/climate-summit-ai-to-help-farmers-get-greener/article_1cf47102-33de-11ef-9431-77a9d94ac40d.html
 - ***EcoRight Speaks*** Podcast -general conversation about climate and ag
 - <https://republicen.org/blog/ecoright-speaks-season-six-episode-7-sarah-beth-aubrey-in-climate-conversations>
 - The Republican Newspaper, Danville, IN -recap on siting
 - Published an Op-Ed in the ***Capital Chronicle*** -online newspaper op ed
 - <https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2024/03/27/a-grid-for-a-greater-indiana/>
 - Stakeholder Engagement
 - We are engaged with a growing number of renewable energy advocates in the state. Below is a list of solar and renewable energy sponsors that we are actively working with through sponsorship of events and collaborations:
 - Solar United Neighbors
 - Drive Clean Indiana
 - Indiana Ethanol Producers Association
 - Hoosier Solar
 - Center for Energy Education
 - Reliable Energy Inc.
 - NIPSCO
 - HSI Solar
 - Wabash Valley Resources
 - Farm to Power
 - AES Indiana
 - Energy Systems Network
 - We also began engagement with PACT - The Platform for Climate Agriculture
 - Social Media Engagement

- Social media campaigns have been important to the growth and exposure of IN-ACRE. We have not only promoted the Conservation Attitude Survey, but also began a ‘Did You Know’ campaign. This campaign included sustainability facts surrounding topics of what we call the “Six Pillars of the Climate Conversation. We also highlighted the Rural Energy Tours to gain interest prior to the events.
- Goals Met
 - Connecting with local elected officials
 - Building our producer network
 - Advocating through all forms of media
 - Conducting the Conservation Attitude Survey
 - Adding members and stakeholders- 47 new members of our network from the Energy Tours
- Survey Highlights
 - 50% of surveyed landowners see carbon intensity score more than likely affecting their operation.
 - 55.6% of surveyed landowners see the political environment as a factor in the shift toward conservation agriculture.
- Other Collaborations Where We Participate:
 - Solar Siting table for the Rural Climate Partnership
 - This monthly group meets about new developments in the renewable energy space.
 - Highlights government programs that help support renewable initiatives.
 - Brings together experts in the field to discuss important issues within the space.
 - Roots Clean Energy (ROOTS) Group - A Midwest clean energy consortium
 - Federal Agriculture Committee Advisory (FACA) membership - nationwide group of agriculture groups that advocate for policy in clean energy
 - R-STEP
 - Added to the Purdue University Renewable Energy Siting through Technical Engagement and Planning (R-STEP) program to support increased delivery of farmer education on renewables and opportunities to coordinate advocate farmers and local elected officials. This will be a three-year program and collaboration with a variety of Indiana stakeholders.
 - Launched and participated in a women in sustainability initiative and hosted first event in June 2024
 - Attended the Women in Green Breakfast sponsored by the US Green Building Council

- Our team will attend the Ham Breakfast, an ag and political leader gathering, before the opening of the state fair and volunteer during the State Fair to interact with farmers
- Team Member Highlights
 - Jayden Simpson, policy and coalitions engagement intern, was a member of the Indiana Farm Bureau Resolutions Committee representing the Collegiate Farm Bureau chapters in Indiana.
 - Rachel Conner participated on the Indiana Farm Bureau Energy Subcommittee
 - Sarah Beth Aubrey will be speaking at the Indianapolis Carbon Removal Summit sponsored by IU Indianapolis in October
- Meet the Team
 - Jayden Simpson, Policy and Coalitions Engagement Intern
 - Jayden is a rising junior at Purdue University majoring in Agricultural Economics with a concentration in Policy and Pre-Law. Jayden has been with us since January primary focus being on statehouse action and working with other IN-ACRE events as well as managing day-to-day social media campaigns.
 - Rachel Conner, Consultant
 - Rachel Conner is a Hoosier native and lawyer with experience in agriculture, renewable energy, and land use policy. Her career work has varied from farm advocacy to commercial construction litigation to local economic development projects and zoning. She launched her own firm, Rachel Conner Consulting, LLC, in 2023 to provide public affairs and project management services to energy and agricultural stakeholders in Indiana.
 - Carty Beaston, Marketing Specialist
 - Carty Beaston works to coordinate digital media used by the coalitions we operate. As our Marketing Specialist, Carty builds and coordinates the website features that we use. In addition to this, Carty also assists in social media and content management.
- Looking Ahead to the Fall and Winter
 - Candidate education opportunities about renewables
 - Building out a Land Owner Council and seeking sponsorships and members for this to grow and develop land owner and farmer advocates
 - Beginning work with Green Light America
 - <https://www.greenlightamerica.org/>
 - Participation in multiple Statehouse events in winter 2025
 - Updating our Farmer Advocates videos and stories online and for our social media outlets
 - Workshops

- In progress
- Focused on improving engagement with landowners