

Building a Team to Conduct Farm Bill Education Programs for Ohio Farmers

Griffith, M.¹; Brown, B.²; Zoller, C.³; Bruynis, C.; Chanon, A.; Custer, S.; Douridas, A.; Estadt, M.; Gastier, M.; Gelley, C.; Hartschuh, J.; Holden, A.; Leeds, R.; Lewandowski, R.; Lima, D.; Marrison, D.; Meyer, G.; Morris, J.; Noggle, S.; Nye, L.; Richer, E.; Shoemaker, D.; Williams, H.

Great Opportunity and Unique Position

The Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) made minor changes to the federal farm safety net, but it did require all Farm Service Agency (FSA) farms to re-enroll and re-elect in commodity programs such as the Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) programs. In Ohio, there were 231,274 FSA farms enrolled in 2014 Farm Bill programs. Additionally, Ohio was home to 2,045 dairy operations and 8.2 million cropland acres at the end of 2018. The challenge was large, but with great challenge comes great opportunity. Few organizations are equipped to respond in a manner like university Extension systems- thus OSU Extension stepped up and led in a time of great uncertainty and mounting financial pressures for Ohio farms. It was going to take a team of dedicated Extension professionals plus external partners to reach and educate Ohio producers in a narrow six-month enrollment window.

Partnership Funding

Statewide projects require two key ingredients: dedicated people and support funds. Four statewide coordinators stepped-up to provide leadership and design curriculum including two county Extension Educators and two state Farm Management Field Specialists. For funding, the coordinators received a grant from the North Central Risk Management Education Center. This grant along with funds from the Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics and nonmonetary support from Ohio's Agricultural organizations sufficiently funded the project.



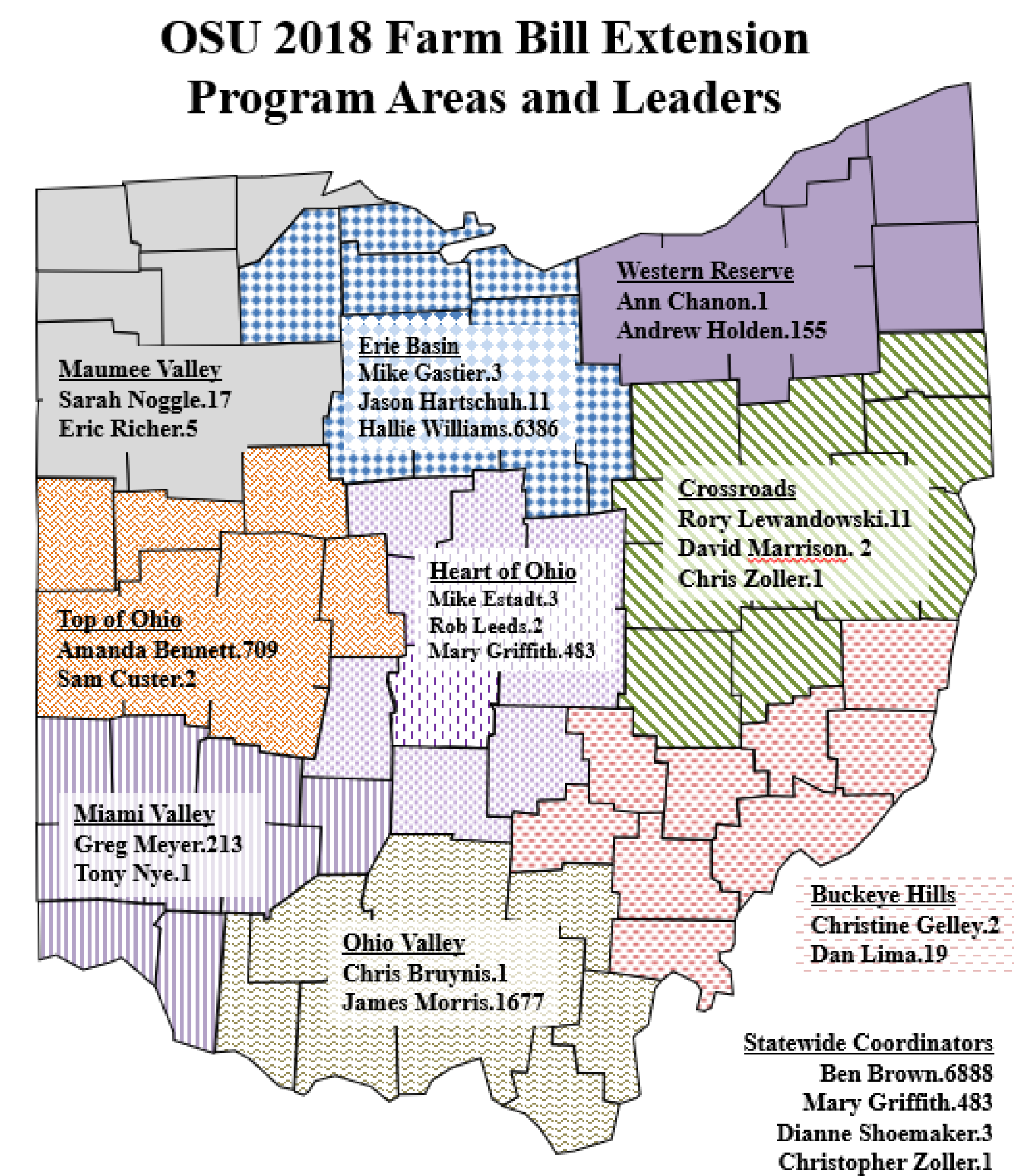
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Forming the OSU Extension Team

Ohio is made up of 88 counties and there are approximately 80 Agriculture and Natural Resource Educators.

To promote consistency and maximize time constraints, two Educators were identified as Farm Bill teachers for each of nine geographical regions. In a couple regions, more than two Educators led Farm Bill programing (image to right).



Educators serving as a regional Farm Bill Coordinator were expected to the following: participate in at least two training sessions, build knowledge about farm bill risk management programs and resources, make sure all counties have access to farm bill education and ensure evaluations were completed.

Partnering with Ohio Farm Service Agency

A memorandum of understanding was signed between OSU Extension and the Farm Service Agency outlining responsibilities for each. This communication step became critical throughout the process. OSU Extension Farm Bill Coordinators presented at the Ohio FSA state training and OSU FSA Leaders presented at OSU Extension's state training. County Educators and County FSA Offices were encouraged to work together to deliver programing.

Training and Preparing Educators

State coordinators individually met with all ANR educators including Farm Bill Leaders in all 9 geographical regions to outline expectations and start planning for county programing. These along with four virtual in-services were open to all Educators but required for regional leaders. A full day in-person in-service covered the major program characteristics with 43 Educator attendees. A handbook was created for Educators to reference key information including curriculum.



Above- four virtual in-services: Expectations, DMC Program, ARC-IC Program, and tips and tricks of presenting and FAQs.

Below- one face to face in-service with State FSA Leaders

Conclusion

Over 6 months, OSU Extension in partnership with Ohio FSA and the Ohio Agricultural Organizations developed a team of dedicated individuals, secured funding, developed education curriculum, delivered 172 county workshops and built a website housing webinars, frequently asked questions and decision tools for distance learning. Through voluntary evaluations, 98% of evaluators indicated the information provided will help them develop a plan to utilize farm bill programs to mitigate risk on their operations. This accomplishment and the size of program delivery would not have been possible with out developing a team and providing in-service training and supporting necessary resources.