
More on Regional Pest Management Centers (PMC)

The United States Department of Agriculture, through CSREES (Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service) has recently designated four regional Pest Management Centers in the U.S. The centers will strengthen USDA's connection with growers, research and extension programs and other stakeholders, by providing a pest management information network responsive to the needs of the public and private sectors. Issues such as regulatory restrictions, pest resistance, invasive species, biotechnology and pesticide use will be addressed. This is the second in a series of articles highlighting each regional center.

The Northeastern Pest Management Center

By Dr. Jim VanKirk and Dr. John Ayers

The Northeastern Pest Management Center works together with the other three regional centers and national leadership to address important pest management issues. While the four centers work with each other to address common issues, each employs unique structures and approaches. NE PMC is designed to efficiently address pest management issues and priorities in our region within the context of the national effort.

NE PMC includes five distinct entities, each critical to accomplishing our mission: the Information Network, IPM Commodity Working Groups, the Advisory Council, the Steering Committee, and the Center staff.

The Information Network is a series of state and multi-state based projects whose purpose is to gather, coordinate, and disseminate pest management information. Information network projects form a critical interface among IPM users (farmers, facility managers, pesticide applicators, etc.) researchers, extension educators, and regulatory offices. They each use advisory committees of stakeholders who help direct the program. Each information network project will develop or coordinate development of crop profiles and pest management strategic plans. These projects were funded through a competitive process managed by the NE PMC. We have one such project in each of our six southernmost states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia). The New England project is unique nationally in that it includes the six New England states in one project.

Six IPM Commodity Working Groups (CWGs) are organized along commodity lines. Initially CWGs will consist of about 12 stakeholders each and will meet once annually in addition to deliberating via email and conference calls. Each CWG is charged with defining priorities for pest management research, education, and regulation. CWGs will also take the first crack at suggesting future pest management center configurations that will suit the needs of the region. Finally, CWGs will provide a clearinghouse function for IPM protocols in the various IPM settings.

The NE PMC Advisory Council consists of about 40 people from across the spectrum of pest management stakeholders in the region. It includes people representing federal and state government, universities, farmers, and other pest management users, agricultural consultants, environmental groups, consumer organizations, and food system distributors and retailers. It meets once annually and is charged with providing long-term direction for NE PMC.

The Steering Committee provides oversight for NE PMC staff and activities. Twelve people from land grant universities, federal agencies and the private sector meet up to four times annually, with most meetings utilizing conference calls. All steering committee members also serve on the Advisory Council.

NE PMC staff are the people who put the Center plans into practice. The Director, John Ayers of Pennsylvania State University, manages the steering committee, the advisory council, and the competitive grants program. Coordinator James VanKirk at Cornell University manages daily Center functions, oversees development and distribution of NE PMC newsletters and reports, and leads development of our online information system. John and Jim work together to integrate our efforts with those of other regional centers. Information Specialist Elizabeth Thomas is our details person, and is involved in just about everything the Center does. She designs and distributes newsletters, manages mail lists, distributes reports, organizes conferences, etc. She also is working with Jim to develop a comprehensive online regional database for pest management. Writer/editor Elizabeth Myers writes some of the Center's output and provides quality control for all of our written work.

NE PMC is constantly growing and changing in an effort to better serve our region. The best way to keep an eye on us is probably to watch our website at <http://nepmc.org>. We produce a quarterly newsletter - contact Liz Thomas (egt3@cornell.edu) or Jim VanKirk (jrv1@cornell.edu) for a copy of the latest issue or to add your name to the subscription list.

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