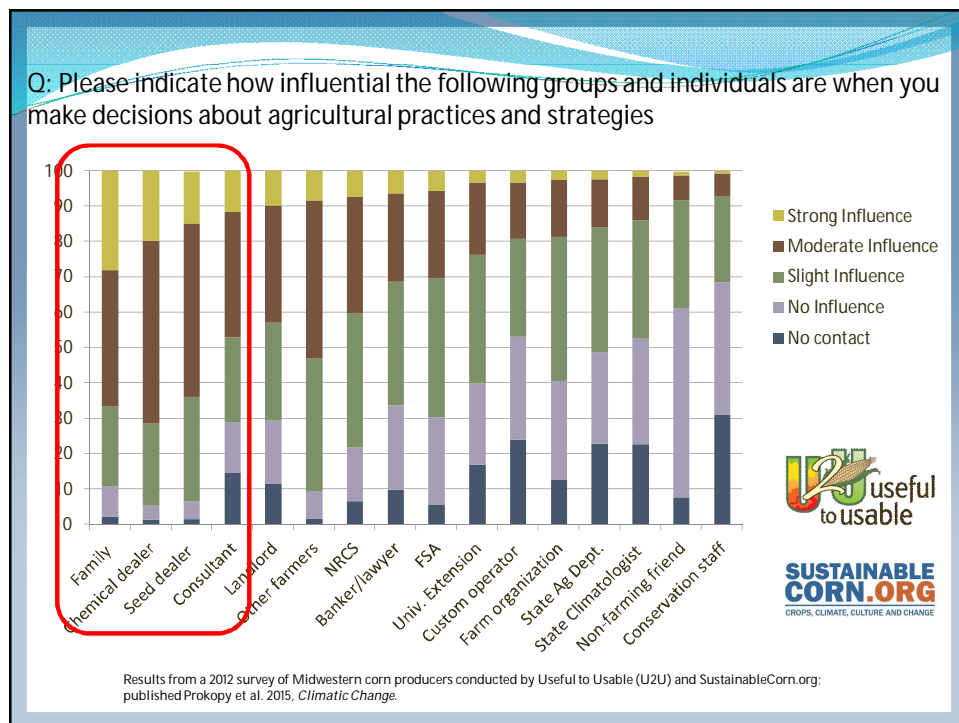


**FORESTRY
AND
NATURAL
RESOURCES**

Leveraging Crop Advisors to Deliver Agricultural Conservation Advice and Increase Adoption of Conservation Practices

SWCS, Michigan Chapter
March 6, 2019

Linda Prokopy and Francis Eanes



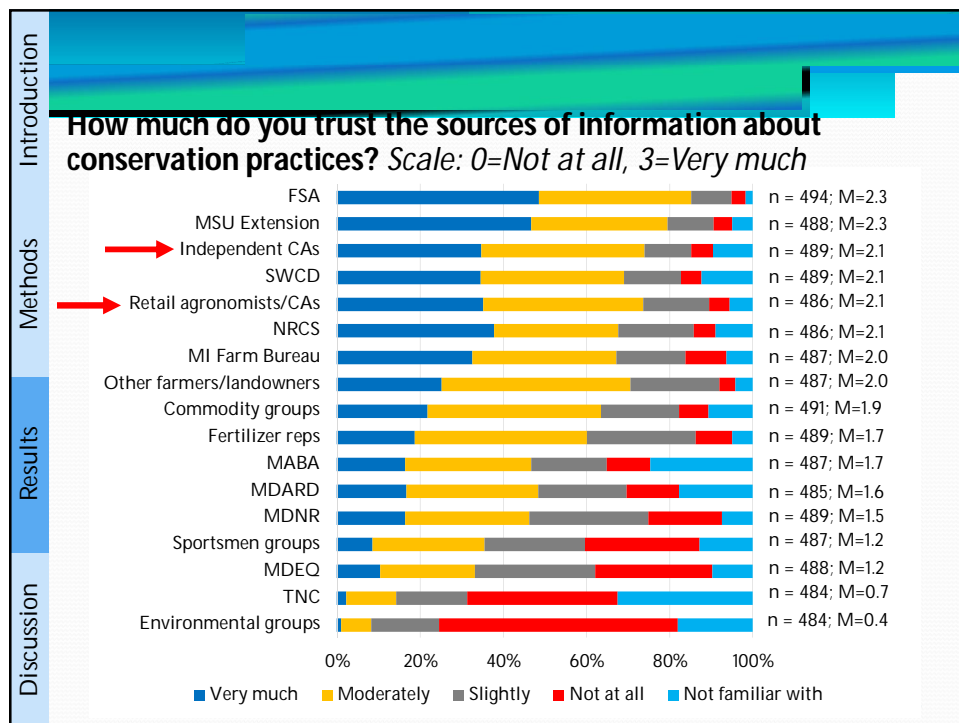
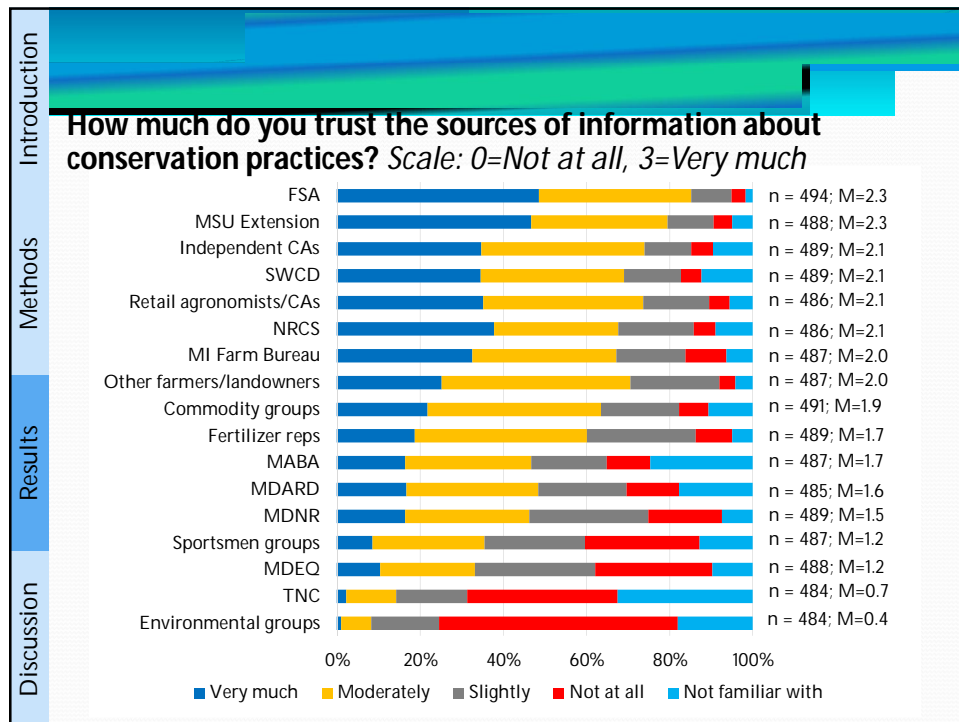


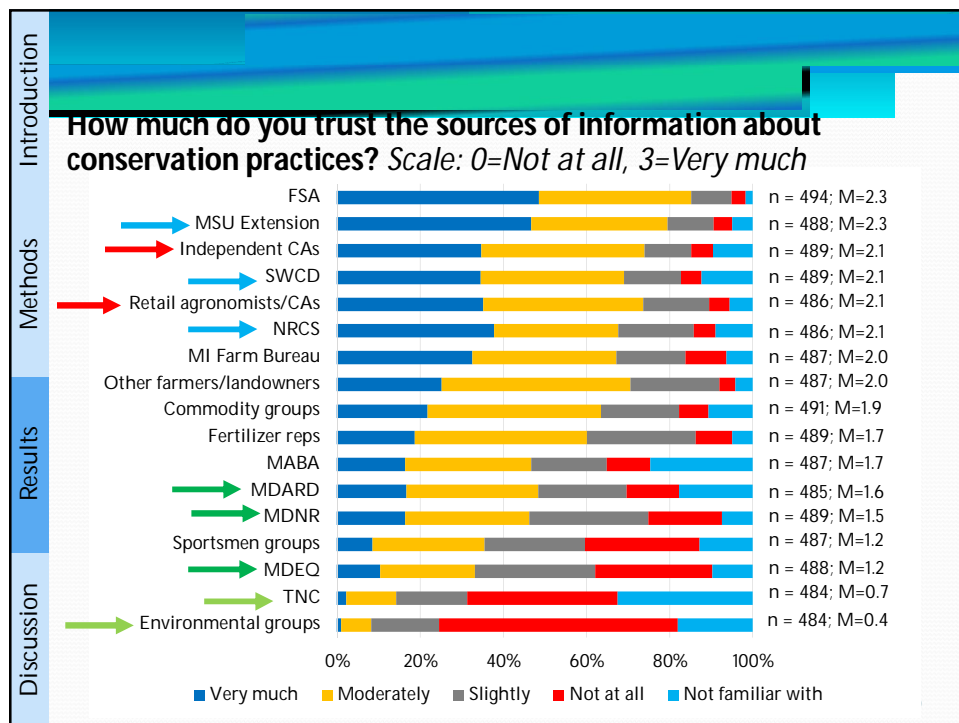
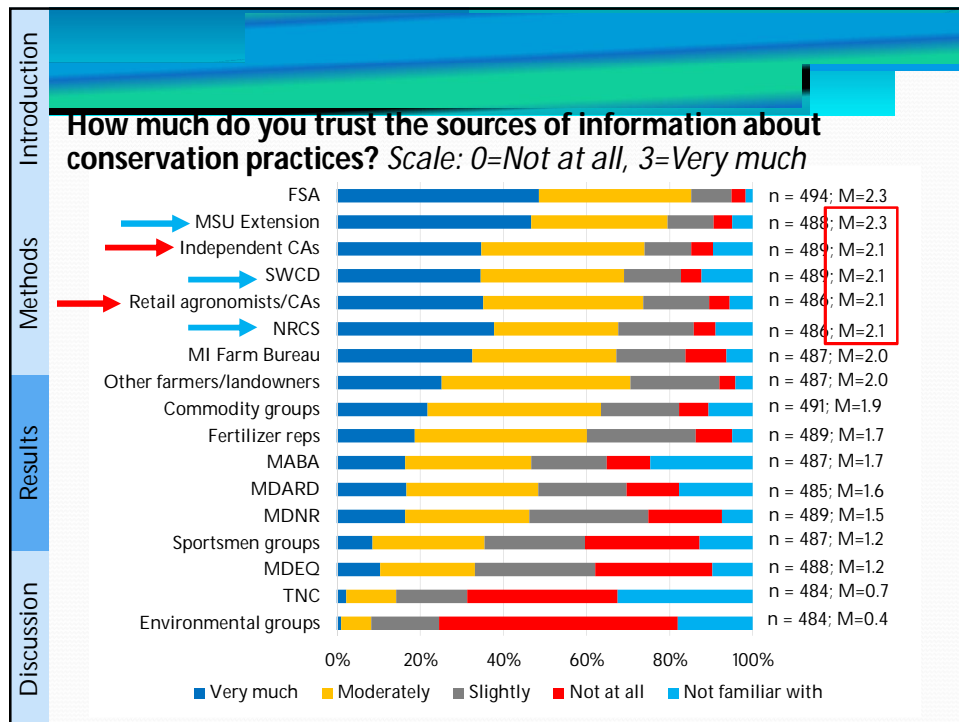
Introduction	<h3>Farmer survey</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population: ~45,000 agricultural landowners in study area Sample frame: 4,500 agricultural landowners who received government payments identified through FOIA request to Farm Service Agency Sample: 3,000 agricultural landowners randomly selected <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5-wave mail survey Responses: 1,459 in total (49.5% response rate) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 892 farmers, 567 non-operating landowners
Methods	
Results	
Discussion	

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Results	Farmer interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 semi-structured in-person interviews all are farmers who responded to survey non-random, maximum-variability sample <ul style="list-style-type: none"> farm size crops grown age
Discussion	

Who do Saginaw Bay farmers say they trust the most for info about conservation?

- A. NRCS**
- B. Crop advisers**
- C. SWCDs**
- D. MSU Extension**
- E. All of the above equally**





Introduction

Crop advisers & conservation

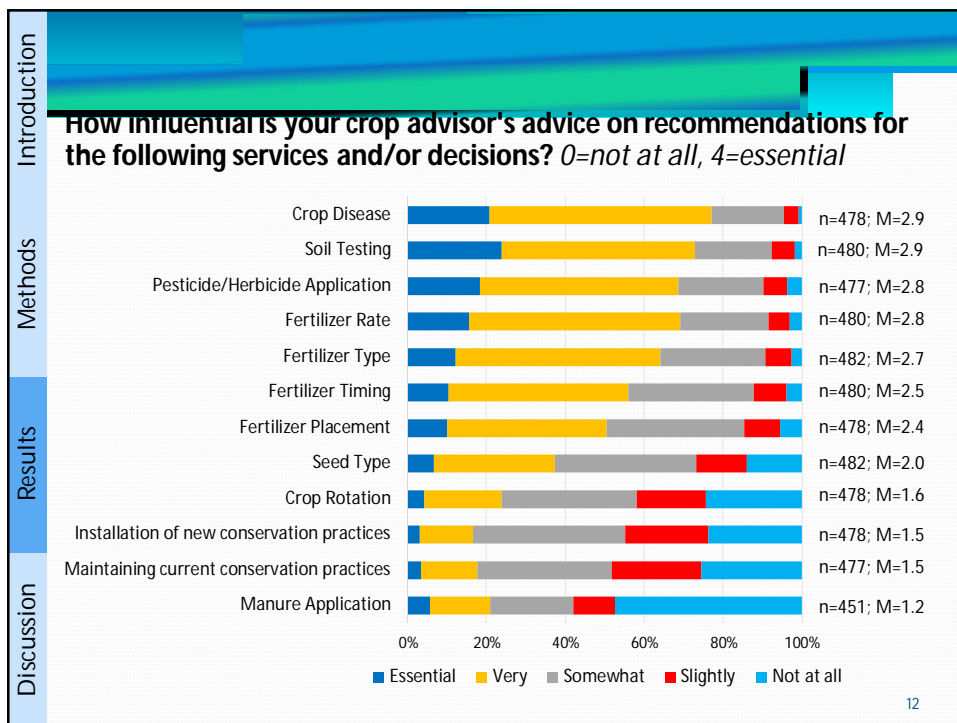
Methods

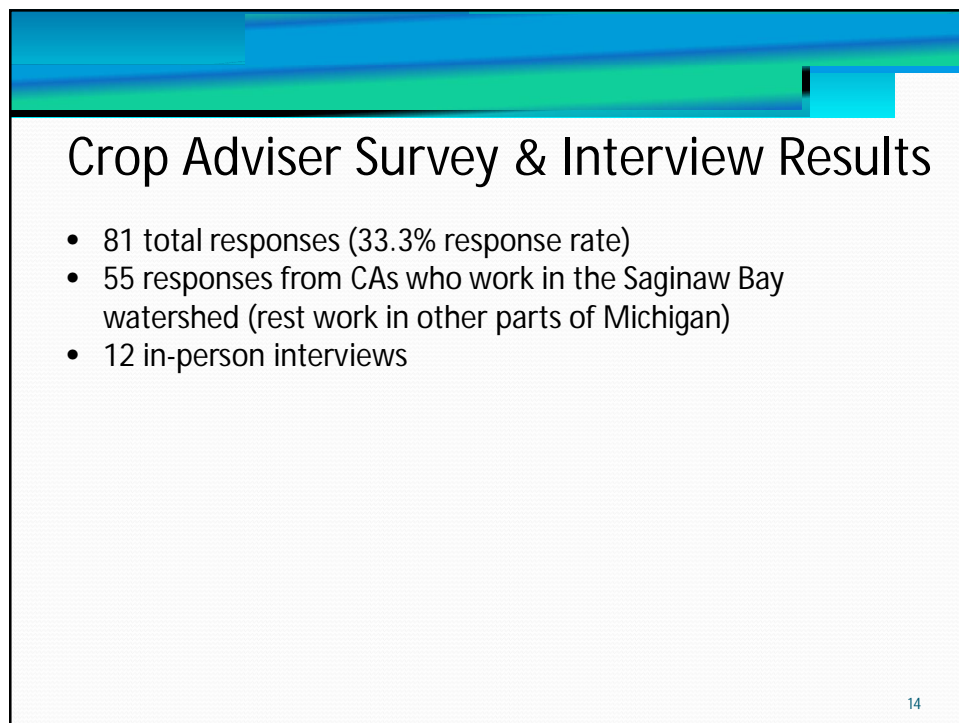
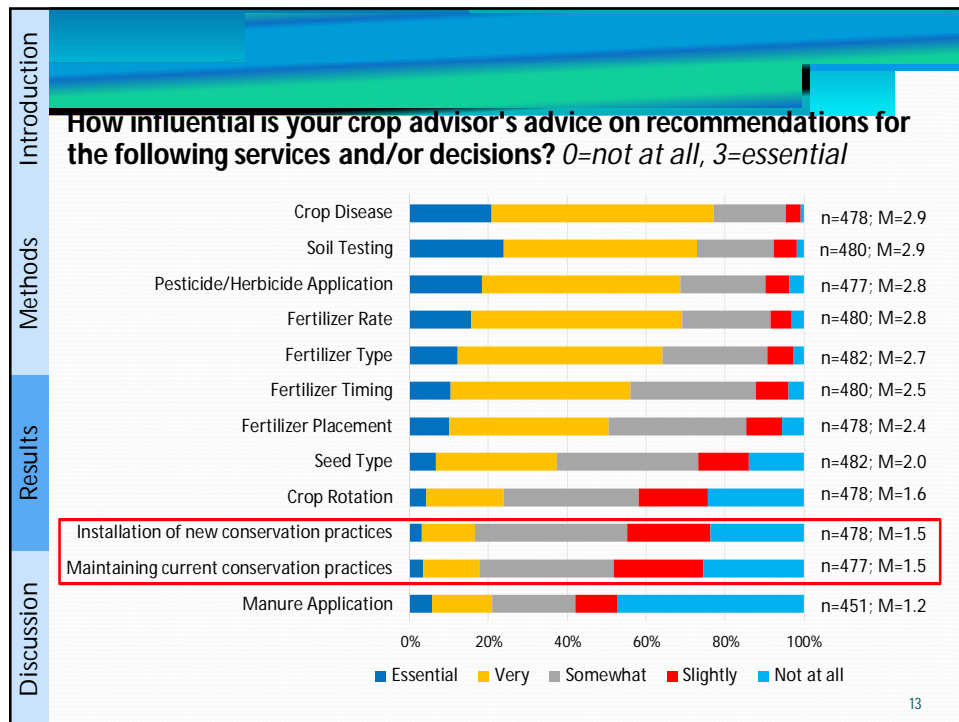
- 59.5% currently use a CA
 - Top 3: CPS, independent CA, Cooperative Elevator Co.
- Who uses CAs? Larger farms, younger farmers
- ~85% of agricultural land in Saginaw Bay farmed by a producer who uses a CA

Results

Discussion

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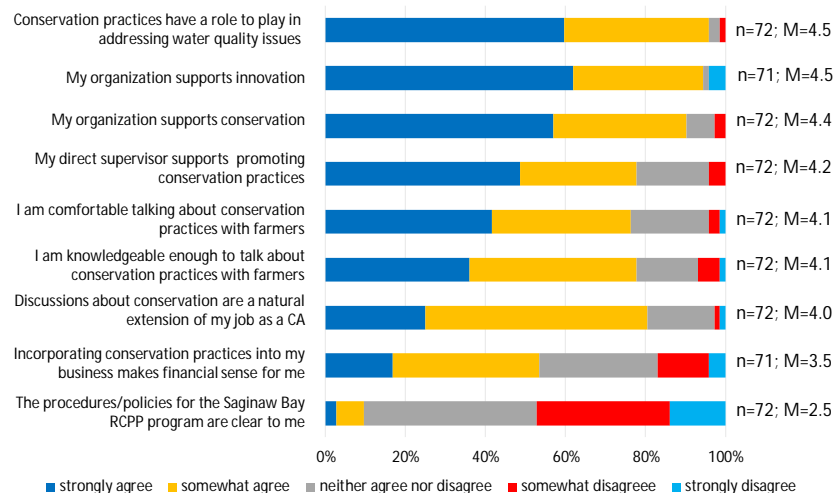


What percent of crop advisers think that conservation has a role to play in addressing water quality challenges?

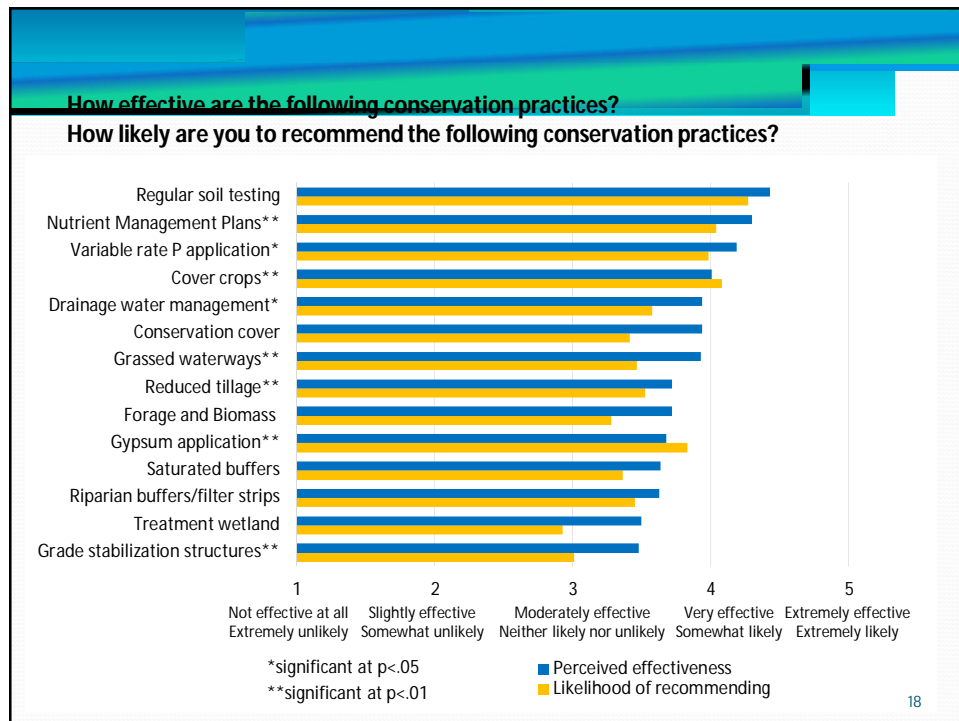
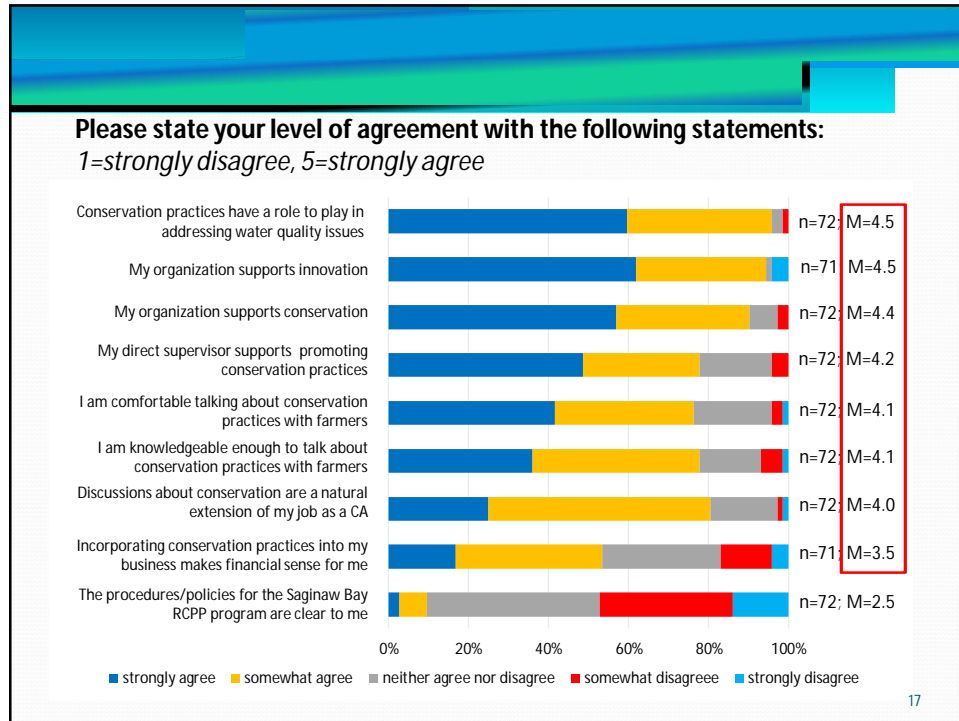
- A. <30%
- B. 50%
- C. 75%
- D. >90%

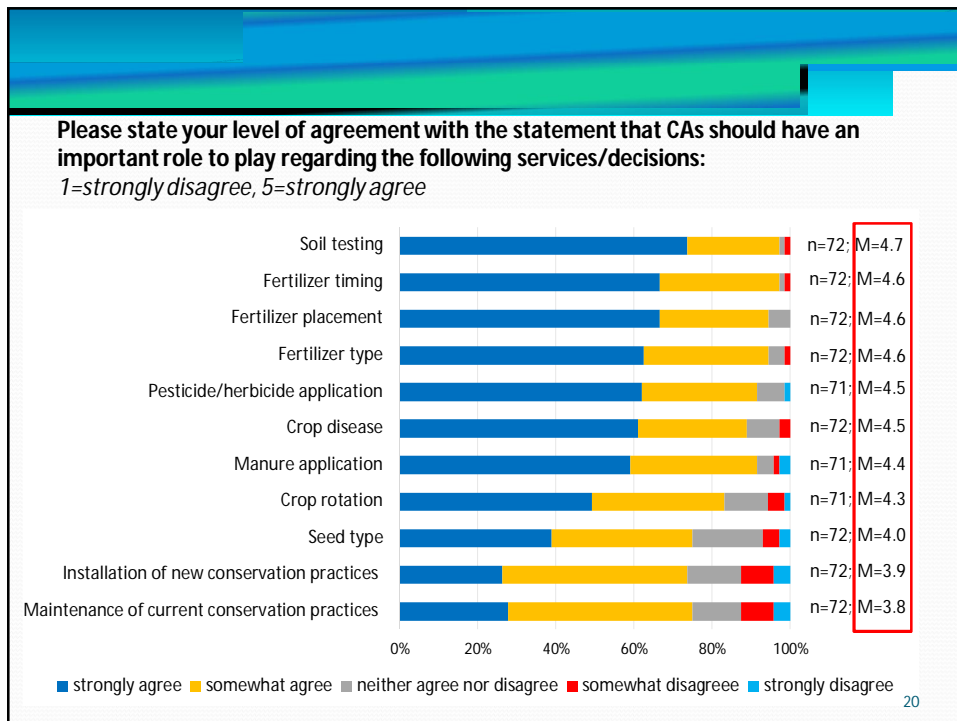
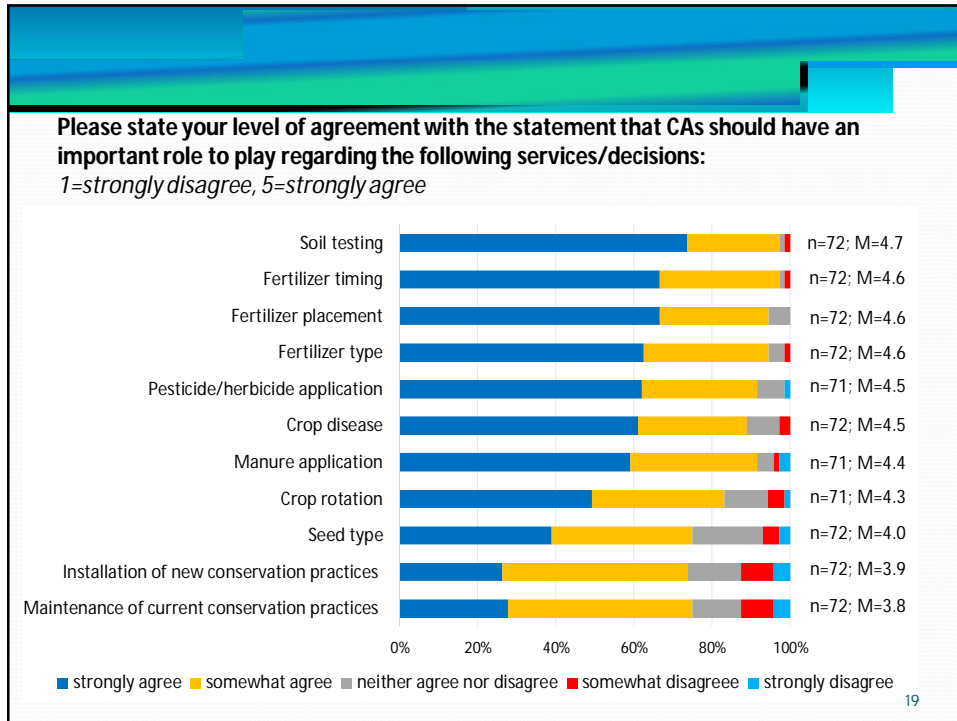
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Please state your level of agreement with the following statements:
1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree



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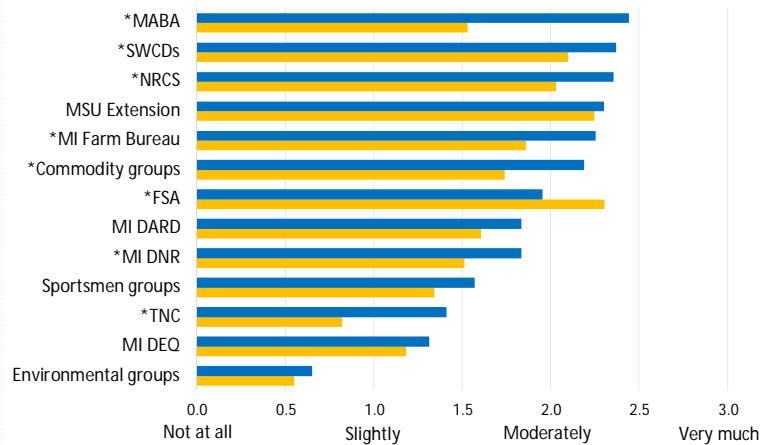


Who do crop advisers say they trust the most for info about conservation?

- A. MABA
- B. NRCS
- C. SWCDs
- D. MSU Extension

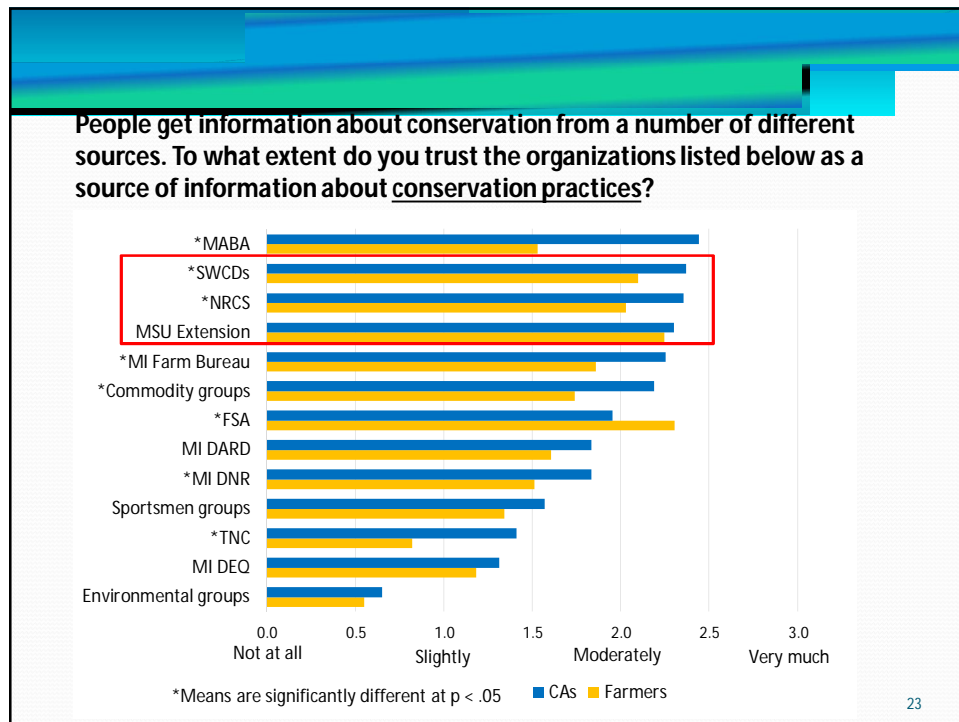
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People get information about conservation from a number of different sources. To what extent do you trust the organizations listed below as a source of information about conservation practices?



*Means are significantly different at $p < .05$ ■ CAs ■ Farmers

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Barriers to CAs recommending conservation practices

1. Lack of reliable financial incentives or clear compensation parameters for CAs to “sell” conservation practices like other products or services
2. Lack of complete knowledge on the holistic cost-benefit tradeoffs of conservation practices, which is necessary for making a convincing value proposition to farmers
3. Competition concerns – i.e. fear that farmers will utilize other Ag retail vendors to implement practices recommended by a CA

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Barriers to CAs recommending enrollment in conservation programs

1. Too much paperwork, delays, and program complexity
2. Fear that (1) and a lack of program flexibility will lead to farmers having bad experiences in programs, which will reflect poorly on the recommending CA
3. Challenge of quantifying the value of delivering conservation program recommendations and fairly assigning credit (e.g. between NRCS and the CA)
4. Challenge of bridging the gap between the pace at which conservation programs operate, and the quarterly business cycle in which CAs and their employers operate

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NRCS-SWCD Survey Results

- 55 total responses (43.3% response rate) from NRCS and SWCD staff whose duties directly pertain to conservation, and whose offices cover some part of the Saginaw Bay watershed

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What approach to conservation do NRCS and SWCD professionals say they prefer

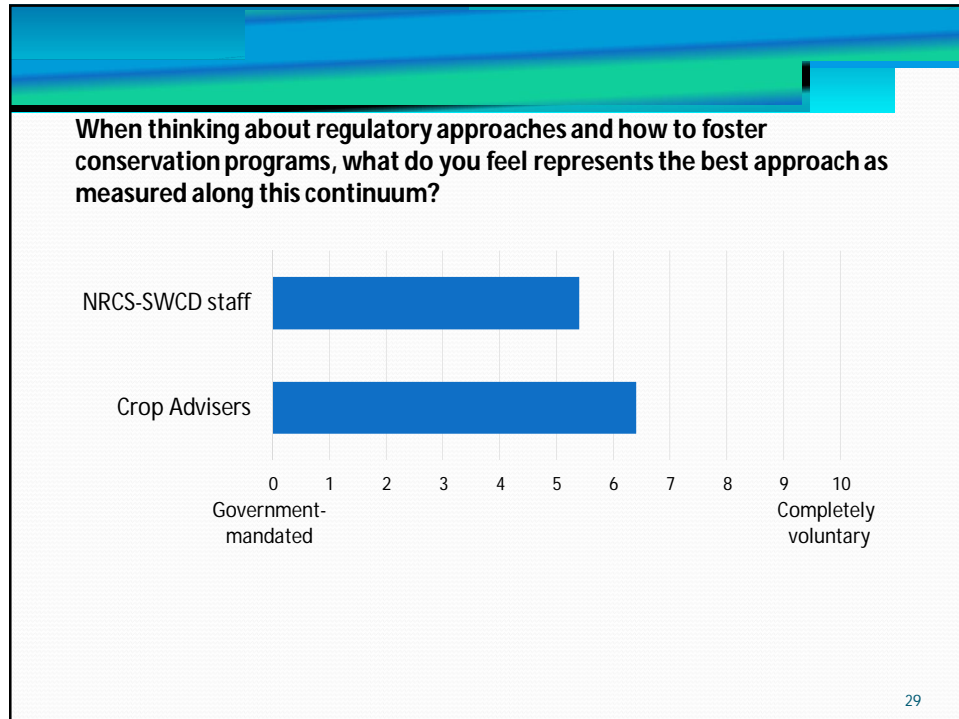
- A. Mostly voluntary**
- B. Mostly gov't mandated**
- C. Mix of voluntary/regulatory**

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What approach to conservation do crop advisers say they prefer

- A. Mostly voluntary**
- B. Mostly gov't mandated**
- C. Mix of voluntary/regulatory**

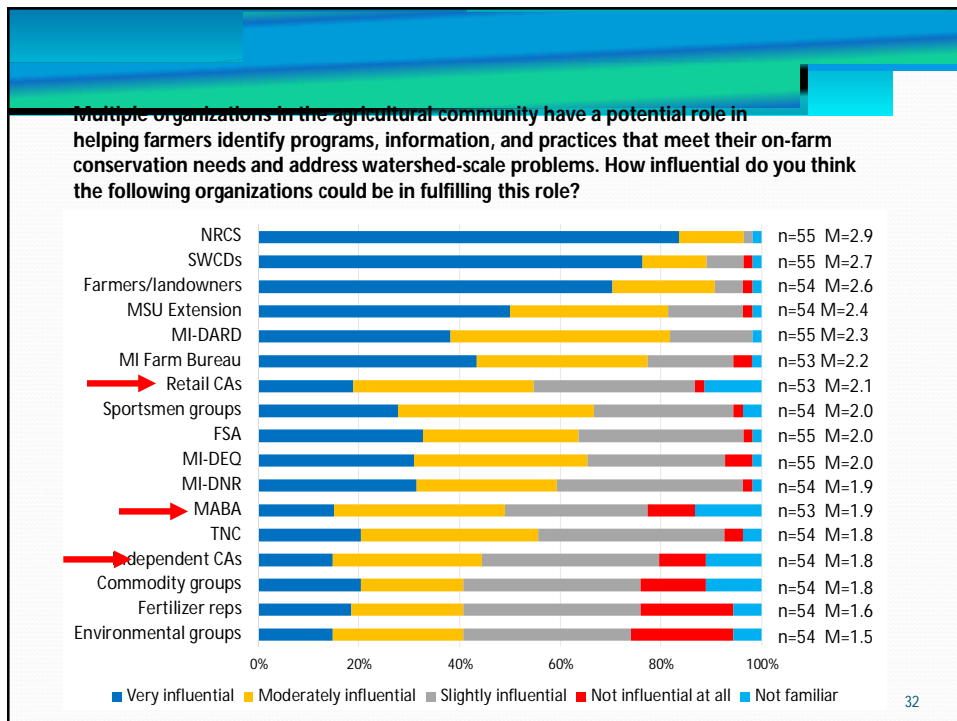
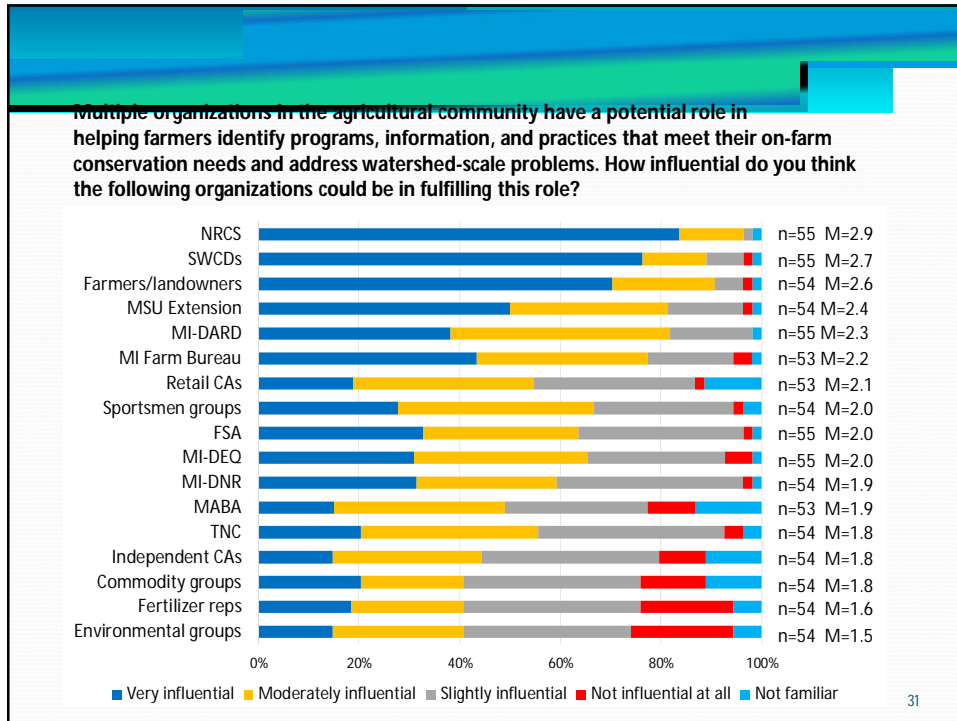
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Whom do NRCS/SWCD staff say could be the most influential in promoting conservation?

- A. NRCS**
- B. SWCDs**
- C. MSU Extension**
- D. Crop advisers**

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Why (or why not) are you comfortable with CAs participating in programs like RCPP and delivering conservation advice to farmers?

Response	Frequency
Delivering conservation information conflicts with CAs' primary role	13
CAs lack the proper training/expertise in conservation	11
Conservation programs are a low priority for CAs	7
CAs could be influential if adequately trained	6
CAs have not yet delivered on their promised support role for RCPP	4
CAs could be influential if public-private sector collaborations barriers were lowered	1

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How, if at all, should CAs be compensated for delivering recommendations/advice on conservation programs or practices?

Response	Frequency
Unsure/other	15
CAs should not be financially compensated	10
CAs should receive some form of indirect compensation	7
CAs should receive some form of direct compensation	4
...after a farmer's application has been funded	1
...from their employer	1
CAs should be compensated based on conservation performance	3
CAs should receive some sort of non-monetary compensation	3

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Discussion of cross-cutting themes

1. Considerable **agreement** that conservation (in general) and conservation practices (specifically) are worthwhile and important
2. Farmers are open to and interested in receiving conservation advice/recommendations from CAs, but unsure of who will pay for it
 - Have not yet formed strong attitudes, as CAs generally do not perform this role

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Discussion of cross-cutting themes

3. **Misalignment** between who *farmers* say they trust (and who influences them) and who *NRCS-SWCDs* think that farmers trust
4. **Disagreement** between who CAs and NRCS-SWCDs think have a role in conservation
5. Uncertainty about whether/how CAs should be compensated for supporting conservation practices & programs
6. Considerable agreement that more public-private collaboration is needed, but acknowledgement that significant barriers to collaboration remain.

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The Nature Conservancy

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Citations:

Eanes, Francis R., Ajay S. Singh, Brian R. Bulla, Pranay Ranjan, Linda S. Prokopy, Mary Fales, Benjamin Wickerham, and Patrick J. Doran.

"Midwestern US farmers perceive crop advisers as conduits of information on agricultural conservation practices." *Environmental management* 60, no. 5 (2017): 974-988.

Eanes, Francis R., Ajay S. Singh, Brian R. Bulla, Pranay Ranjan, Mary Fales, Benjamin Wickerham, Patrick J. Doran, and Linda S. Prokopy. "Crop advisers as conservation intermediaries: Perceptions and policy implications for relying on nontraditional partners to increase US farmers' adoption of soil and water conservation practices." *Land Use Policy* 81 (2019): 360-370.

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