

## Building a New Advanced Inspector Training:

"Assessing Biodiversity and Natural Resources on the Farm" - by Jonda Crosby

IOIA's goal for this training was to make this learning experience an eye opening and confidence-building opportunity for both experienced inspectors and for those who are not sure how to go about inspecting or reviewing for Natural Resource and Biodiversity Conservation (NR-BC) on farms. And to prepare inspectors to assess NOP Guidance 5020 – by learning the key visual cues and indicators for assessing the soil, water, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife, and other features on farms; as per "Role of Inspectors in Policy and Procedures of the 5020 Guidance", it states: "Inspectors must be qualified to assess compliance with 7 CFR § 205.200. More specifically, inspectors must be able to recognize and evaluate areas where: 1) natural resources and biodiversity are already conserved; 2) conservation projects are planned; and 3) improvement is needed."



Trainers for the course in Ohio included 3 amazing farmers that were identified by OEFFA and were quite remarkable in their capacity to explain their NR & BC goals, practices and outcomes. The instructors for the training included agroecologist Jo Ann Baumgartner (Executive Director of the Wild Farm Alliance); geologist Tony Fleming; and Bryan Lee, Ohio NRCS State Archeologist and Organic Champion.



**Jo Ann Baumgartner**

### Post Training Summary from Course Trainers Jo Ann and Tony:

*"Thanks to all of you who participated in this first-of-its-kind IOIA on farm NR & BC training. We really appreciate the many excellent observations, comments, and questions that you posed during our farm visits.*

*"It also was instructive to read your final assignments and see how each person's perspective framed their descriptions of the farms. Based on your responses, it is safe to say that everyone came away understanding the key points that define and differentiate the three farms. Each of you also pointed out crucial details, some of which didn't necessarily occur to us."*

Preparation for the training included a small selection of essential background readings designed to highlight the history, regulatory requirements, and unique challenges involved in inspecting for natural resources and biodiversity, along with an overview of useful metrics to incorporate into an inspection or reviewing routine.

At the training site a brief classroom introduction by trainers Jo Ann Baumgartner and Tony Fleming focused on the key natural resources and biodiversity topics. Following the evening presentations there were three field visits to farms where participants gained hands-on experience assessing the management of biodiversity and natural resources.

A key element of the training was having participants evaluate the farm's OSP sections on biodiversity and natural resources during the farm visit. Another outcome was having participants learn key sensory indicators that can be used for efficiently and effectively assessing natural resources/biodiversity. This first-of-a-kind training featured