



Indiana State Department of Agriculture
Governor Michael R. Pence
Lt. Governor Sue Ellspermann, Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development
Gina Sheets, Indiana Agriculture Director

By Robert Ziegler, ISDA Director of Communications

Helping neighbors be neighbors.

That's one pretty good definition of the work done by Indiana Land Resources Council.

Established around the turn of the century to help local and state decision-makers create and implement land use policies, ILRC has been active in helping people from various sectors of society live in close proximity while respecting the property rights and other basic rights of one another.

A recent focus of the council has been local planning and zoning, particularly as it relates to the livestock industry. With the distance between agricultural and residential or other areas not always as great as it traditionally has been, it has been important to address from a regulatory perspective, the arrangements needed for all parties to reasonably pursue their economic and quality-of-life objectives.

Accordingly, Indiana State Department of Agriculture and the Council pursued the creation of Model Agricultural Zoning Ordinances in 2007. Updated in 2011, these ordinances are not a one-size fits all approach, but a vital framework to help counties and other local governmental entities create and implement proactive strategies about land use. ISDA Director of Policy and Regulatory Affairs Amy Cornell, who serves as executive director of the Council, said the model ordinances have made a big difference.

"The model ordinances are a technical resource that local government officials and employees can use when they are deciding how to plan for livestock in their county," Cornell said. She added that often the difference-maker in potential conflicts between varying sectors of Indiana society is parties developing a better understanding about agriculture itself.

"The key is education for both citizens and local officials in the county," Cornell said. "This may include providing opportunities for them to see a livestock facility if they've never had a chance to be at one. We can provide them with detailed explanations of all the regulations the industry is already under, so they can feel more confident that this is an industry watched closely by multiple agencies in the state."

Cornell added that the Council can provide education, technical assistance and advice on a wide range of issues around the state.

"It's important for people to know about the Council so we can have feedback from their constituents about what issues it needs to tackle next," she said.

Mary McConnell has been a member of the Council since its inception. She sees a number of potentially hot issues on the horizon, and looks back fondly on her time (thus far) in service.



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“It has been a remarkable journey in trying to make Indian a better place to live, work and play,” McConnell, state director of the Indiana chapter for The Nature Conservancy, said. “Helping people plan the use of their resources has been a a huge part of that. If we can provide them with resources to better make those decisions, then that is a really good thing. I want to be a part of that. The Council has done some really good things and has helped local organizations make some really good decisions. I’m proud of that.”

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