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October 10, 2013

To: Board Members
From: Gary Fish, Manager of Pesticide Programs
Subject: Availability of Online Continuing Education Options

At the October meeting, Board members asked the staff to research the availability of online training programs, number of credits offered in the different commodities (private applicators) and categories (commercial applicators), and how we might increase the “Maine” crop specific online course content.

We have discovered that the already approved online credit offerings are very robust. Ten different providers offer up to 178 credits and over 150 courses. Courses are available for every crop/commodity and for most commercial categories (see attached charts for the Cornell and PestNetnetwork.com courses). These courses range in cost from free to as much as \$25 per credit. The average cost is around \$10.00 - \$15.00 per credit.

I also have been conversing with Steve Johnson at the Presque Isle Extension office and he has another one-half hour online course almost complete and he is also willing to develop more offerings (one on organic pesticides) if he can get approval from the University administration.

I have suggested that additional courses be developed for blueberries and vegetables by the crop specialists in those areas, but have not heard back from them.

Finally, Anne and I have been working with colleagues in the Maine Forest Service to see how they have been using video equipment and creating webinars and other online training content. We have tentatively decided to start by recording the initial training session at the Ag Trades Show and Anne has been experimenting with PowerPoint as a tool to add narration to existing slide shows like the IPM Coordinator training module we have already posted.

It looks like we are firmly planted in the 21st century when it comes to online training opportunities; the only drawback I see is that most of the content is not Maine crop specific. We look forward to hearing your additional ideas on how that Maine specific content might be achieved.