

ANR Top 5

Frequently Asked Questions about the Agriculture and Natural Resources program unit within ISU Extension and Outreach

This resource provides a general overview and introduction to the ANR program of Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

The ANR Top 5 can provide answers to the **what, why, where, who, and how** questions you may have about ANR.

NOTE: If your immediate need is to find guidance and resources about handling common agriculture and natural resources questions received at the county Extension office (i.e. plant or insect I.D., soil or water sampling requests, wildlife issues, cash rents, custom rates, etc), access this ANR resource [Handling ANR Questions at the Local Level](#)



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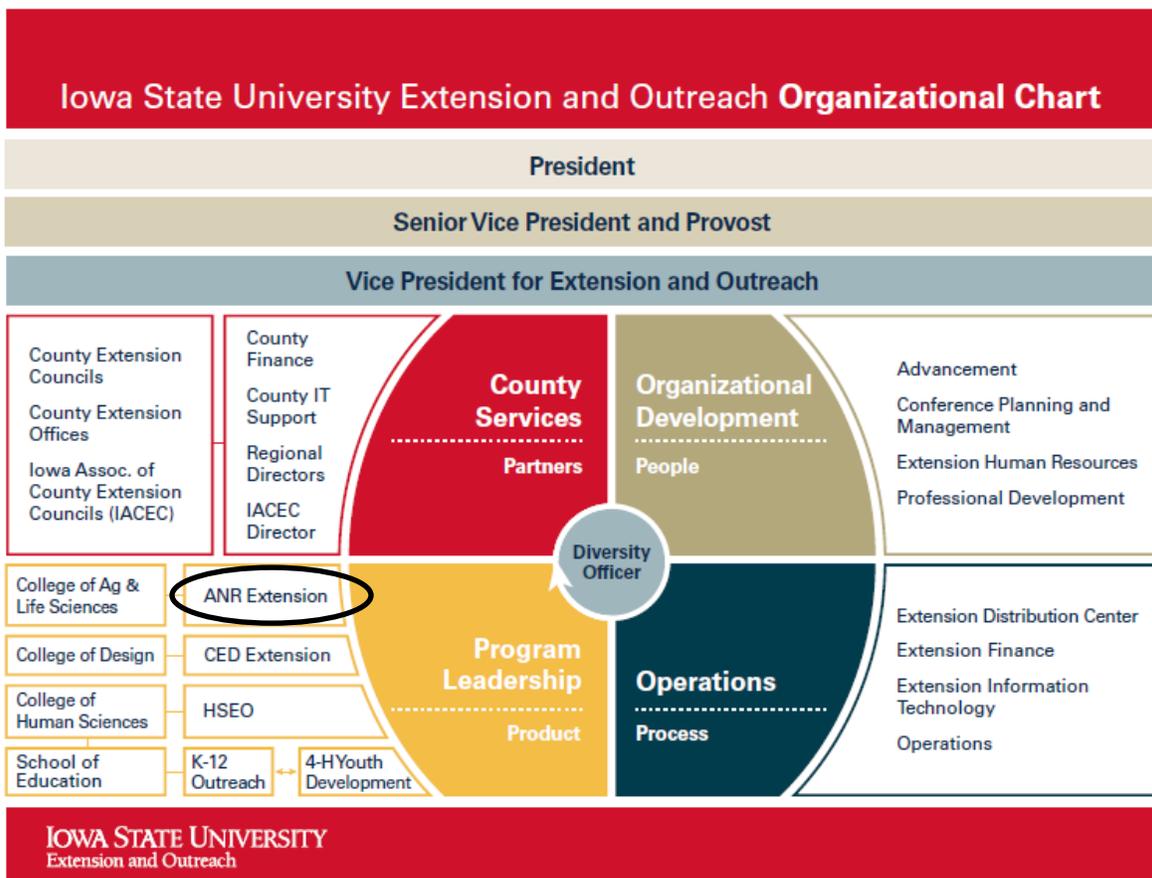
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WHAT

What is the ANR program, and where does it fit in within ISU Extension and Outreach?

ANR is one of four programs within ISU Extension and Outreach. It is connected to the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The other programs are Community and Economic Development, Human Sciences and 4-H Youth Development. Each aligning with different colleges at Iowa State University.

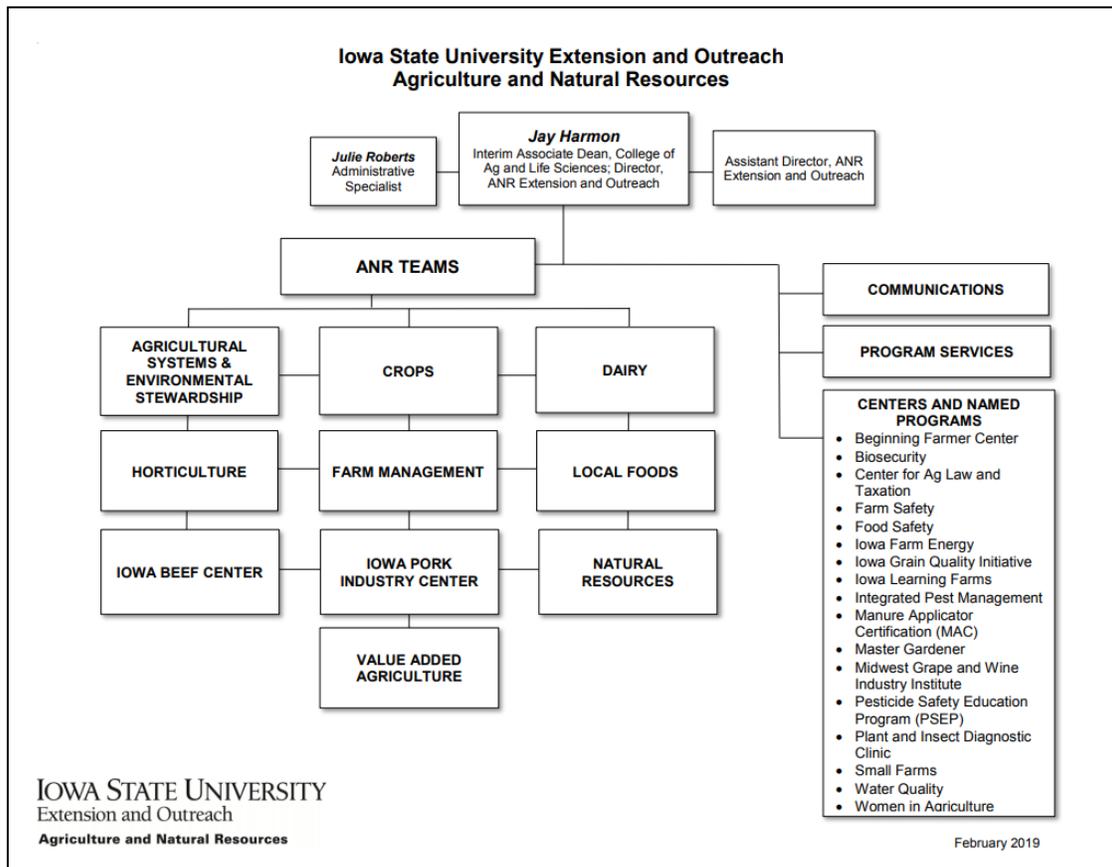


What falls under ANR, and how is everything organized?

The subject matter work and the staff in ANR are organized in teams or special topic areas. Currently there are ten ANR plan of work teams, and numerous centers and named programs. The ANR organizational chart is pictured below.

The team structure provides a way for ANR specialists on campus and around the state to assess needs of lowans involved in agriculture and natural resources. It also helps plan educational programming and resources to address the needs of our clientele.

[Download a copy of the ANR Organizational Chart](#)



WHY

Why is an Agriculture and Natural Resources program important to ISU Extension and Outreach and to the people of Iowa?

Agriculture is important to Iowa. We grow crops and raise livestock to feed our nation and beyond. Much of Iowa's economy thrives on our rich agricultural heritage and ANR Extension and Outreach plays an important role in providing research-based information and resources to educate Iowa's farmers, producers and agribusinesses. To learn more about ANR's mission and goals take a look at our [strategic plan](#).

WHERE

Where can you find information about ANR on the ISU Extension and Outreach website?

ANR related news releases are shown on the main ISU Extension and Outreach [home page](#), along with all other program area news.

Under the "Learn More About..." tab, navigate to the [Food and Environment](#) page. This page gives a brief overview of the programs and resources ANR delivers and also provides links to the online program catalog.

Food and Environment

IMPACT: Managing Weeds, Insects and Diseases

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Find local educational opportunities on these topics

- Commercial Agriculture Production Efficiency and Productivity
- Environmental Protection and Enhancement
- Farm Business Management
- Farm Transition and Beginning Farmers
- Food Safety
- Meat Sciences
- Regional and Local Foods
- Risk Management and Marketing

Blog with our experts

AgMRC Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
A national information resource for value-added agriculture. Catch up on the AgMRC blog today.

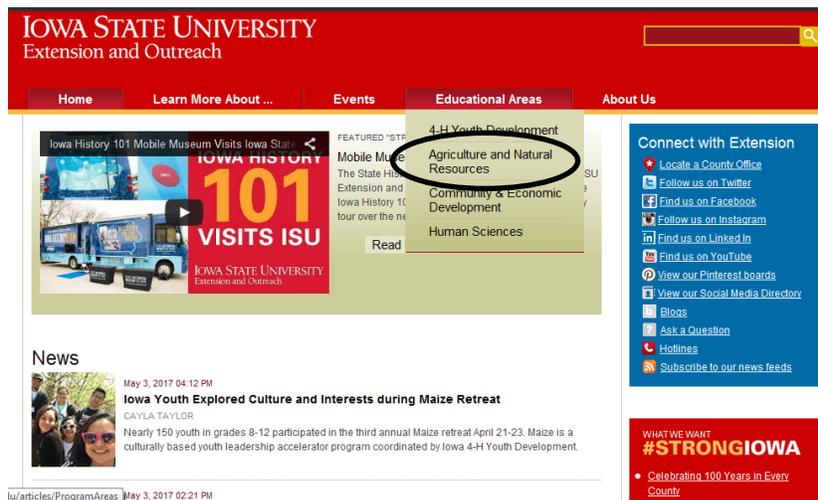
Ag Decision Maker
An agricultural economics and business website. Read the latest AgDM blogs.

Publications & Materials
Explore the ISU Extension library for publications and materials about:

- Crops
- Environment
- Farm Management
- Field Guides
- Flowers
- Food Safety
- Fruit
- Gardening
- Lawn, Shrubs and Trees
- Livestock
- Local Foods
- Plant Diseases
- Vegetables and Herbs

Talk to an expert
Find an expert in your area
Locate ANR Specialists for your county
Beginning Farmer Center
(877-8FC-1999)
Program to match beginning and rising farmers
HORTLINE
(515-294-3108) or hortline@iastate.edu
Answers questions related to lawn, garden and landscape plants
Plant and Insect Diagnostic Clinic
(515-294-0581) or pic@iastate.edu

Under the “Educational Areas” tab, if you click on [Agriculture and Natural Resources](#) you will be directed to the ANR website.



Where can I find information about ANR events?

Take a look at the [statewide calendar](#), keep an eye out for [news releases](#) (posted on the main extension page and also fed into county pages) and bookmark the [ANR Program Services](#) website for conferences and workshops.

Where can I find ANR publications?

All extension publications are found in the [ISU Extension Store](#). Look under Agriculture & Environment or Yard & Garden. [This video provides a helpful introduction.](#)

Where can I find ANR information within MyExtension (the staff-only website)?

In [MyExtension](#), navigate to the “Program Areas” drop down menu. Ag and Natural Resources is the second option with an extended menu of its own. Common finds include the [ANR News](#) archive, ANR [Reporting Tools and Guides](#) and information on [Area Ag Teams](#).

WHO

Who are the ANR staff members who serve my county or region?

ANR has both campus-based staff and field-based staff. For most agriculture and natural resources situations and questions, field-based staff are your FIRST points-of-contact.

Option 1: A comprehensive [ANR Staff Directory](#) is offered on the ANR website. Specialists are organized by topic area and territory maps show what counties are covered by each field-based specialist.

Option 2: Most county websites have a listing of ANR specialists who work in their county. Navigate to your county's staff page to find your ANR specialists.

NOTE: When referring to an ANR staff member it is not necessary to designate if field-based or campus-based. The correct terminology is simply "specialist". For example, Dan Anderson and Greg Brenneman are both ag engineers working for ANR. Dan is based on campus and has teaching duties along with Extension duties. Greg is based in the field at a county Extension office, and has duties to conduct Extension programming as well as respond to clients' questions. Both are referred to as specialists: Dan Anderson, ag engineering specialist and Greg Brenneman, ag engineering specialist.

Who attends ANR team meetings, conference calls and in-service trainings?

Typically, the ten ANR teams found in the organizational chart work together to form united goals, priorities and share information. The teams gather periodically for in-service training and program planning. Teams include both campus-based staff and field specialists.

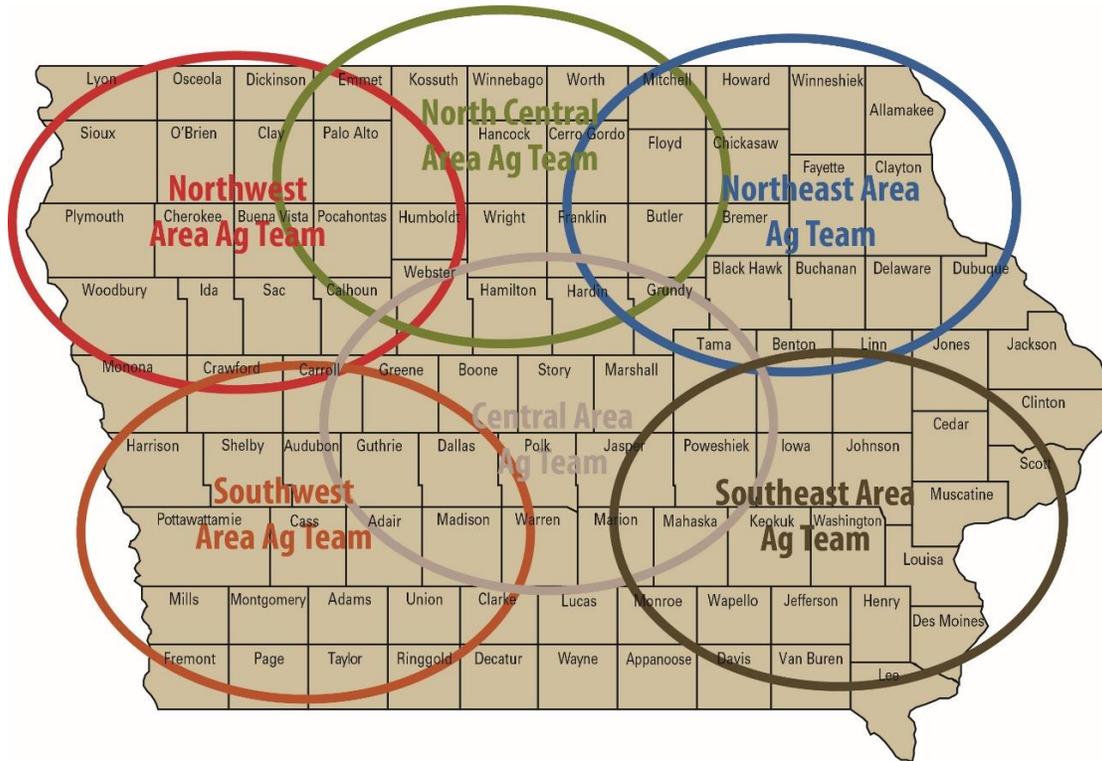
[Priorities for each team can be found on MyExtension.](#)

Who can attend Area Ag Team meetings?

Area Ag Team meetings are attended by many personnel: county professionals, ANR field-based specialists and regional directors. Occasionally campus staff attend as well.

These meetings, usually held quarterly, provide regional colleagues a way to stay informed about ag and natural resource issues and programming.

Below is a map of the Area Ag Team territories. [Download your own copy](#) of the map from MyExtension or to learn more about a team near you, [visit the Area Ag Team page on MyExtension](#).



Who are the external partners connected to agriculture and natural resources? (Often you are told to “network” with partners but who are these partners and organizations?)

A good way to generate a list of local external partners in the agriculture and natural resources realm is to first talk with several ANR field-based specialists serving your area. Ask for names of partners you can reach out to build your network of contacts and stakeholders. Below is an example of potential external partners:

- Local cooperatives
- Local agribusiness retailers (implement, supplies, machinery)
- Local service providers that work with farmers and landowners (banks, insurance companies)
- Local associations related to agriculture and natural resources. Talk with farmers and landowners to find out about local groups or chapters (County Cattleman

Associations, ISU Research Farm Association, Pheasants Forever, Trees Forever, watershed groups)

- Look for local offices of national or state organizations (Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, USDA, Farm Services Agency, Iowa Department of Natural Resources)

HOW

How do I handle agriculture or natural resources-related requests and situations at the local or field level? (Especially if I don't have a background or formal training in all aspects of agriculture and natural resources?)

Please keep in mind NONE of us know all the answers to all situations and questions about agriculture and natural resources. We are not expected to know all the answers.

Instead, we suggest developing a skill that might be called "*the art of being an extension professional*". At any level in our organization, this approach will serve you well, and help you serve your clientele well.

- 1. Listen carefully.**
- 2. Ask questions to seek more understanding.**
- 3. Determine if the response can be handled immediately, or if it needs to be referred--- or a combination of these two actions:**
 - Respond by providing access to the answer via materials available in the office.
Use [Handling ANR Questions at the Local Level](#).
 - Respond by offering to refer the request to one of the specialists. Use the [ANR Staff Directory](#) to locate specialist in the topic area related to your client's request.
 - Provide information at hand and connect the client to a specialist via referral.
- 4. Demonstrate respect and professionalism.**

You may find a few tips and advice from experienced ISU Extension and Outreach colleagues helpful to you.

Advice from Gene Mohling, regional director:

- Your main job is to connect the client to the right specialists. To do this, you must develop the “art of asking questions”.
- It’s all about asking a series of questions to get at the heart of what the client is seeking to know. It’s a matter of identifying the key words in the client’s questions that would point to the subject matter area of concern.
- Once you determine the subject area, you are then able to locate the right person to make the referral.

Advice from Mary Tuttle, program coordinator:

- It’s a sharp learning curve! It’s normal to feel overwhelmed or confused at times. You are not dumb! It’s ok that you don’t know everything all at once. Stay calm!
- Build your comfort level. Talk with ANR specialists to gradually learn more and more about agriculture and natural resources and about ANR programming.
- Prepare for the big programs. For example, pesticide applicator training (PAT) is detailed and can be confusing. Meet directly with the ANR specialist who will conduct the program to learn about details with the paperwork, how to prepare for the event and all the important logistics.
- Before any ANR event, double-check with the specialist on audio visual needs, handouts, registration and logistics. Be professional, prepared and be proud that you are representing ISU Extension and Outreach!

Advice from Greg Brenneman, retired ag engineering specialist:

- Don’t worry about not being perfect. When preparing to refer a client, don’t hesitate to double check with the ANR specialist: “Is this your area? Is this something you can address? If not, who should I call?” Take your best shot, then pick up the phone to double-check. It’s a learning process.
- Gradually build your knowledge. As you gain knowledge and experience, you can be very helpful by answering clients’ questions on event logistics and details. As

your knowledge about ISU Extension and Outreach events develop, you will be more confident about handling questions.

Advice from Denise Schwab, beef specialist:

- Ask probing questions. Clients will come in the door with general questions. Find out more information: “Help me understand what you are asking...”, “Tell me more about the situation...” or “If I understand, you are asking for...”.
- Be the bridge to the ANR specialist. Once you learn the client’s topic and question, connect them to the ANR specialist with the expertise on the topic. Unless they prefer to contact the specialist themselves, obtain the client’s name and contact information. Call the ANR specialist to pass along the client information. Most ANR specialists will prefer to call the client directly to talk in detail about the topic at hand.

How can I find out about the concerns and practices regarding agriculture and natural resources in my county and region?

This knowledge builds over time as you build your network with staff and external partners or stakeholders.

Start by visiting with each of the ANR specialists who serve your county or your region. Have a one-on-one conversation to get to know them, their area of work, and how you can best interface with them from your position.

[Here is a suggested set of questions](#) to guide this discussion with ANR specialists. Many have found taking time to do this was very beneficial, and one of the best things they did as part of their orientation process.

Attend an Area Ag Team near you. See [MyExtension](#) where you can find a map of the Area Ag Teams, contact information for current team leaders, and general information about Area Ag Teams.

How can I learn more about what “respect and professionalism” looks like in the context of doing ISU Extension and Outreach work – especially at the local level?

As the saying goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” With that in mind, we invite you to view these two short videos created at a county office.

The first video demonstrates what not to do at the county office when a client comes in with an ANR-related request: <https://vimeo.com/132474765> Password: anr

The second video demonstrates a much better way to convey respect and professionalism when handling a client’s request: <https://vimeo.com/132474706> Password: anr

Additional resources:

[Handling ANR Questions at the Local Level](#)

[ANR Team Priorities](#)

[ANR Newsletters](#)

[ANR Social Media Directory](#)

[ANR Staff Directory](#)

[A Year in the Life of ANR Programming](#)

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