



NRCS Soil Health Update *October 2018*

Sharing soil health resources from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, partners, and the media.



United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – Soil health mailing list

Would you like to receive updates from the Natural Resources Conservation Service on new blogs, multimedia stories, and campaigns related to soil health? [Sign up for email updates today!](#)



United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – USDA releases standard indicators and laboratory procedures to assess soil health for public comment

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is releasing a set of standard indicators and associated laboratory procedures to assess soil health. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has posted a draft Technical Note in the [Federal Register](#) for public review. NRCS is accepting comments through December 13, 2018. [Learn more.](#)

INDIANA **PrairieFarmer.**

Indiana Prairie Farmer – 6 thoughts about harvest and beyond for 2018

The 2018 harvest season is here. It's eventful. Sometimes the to-do list seems endless. But [considering these six key things](#) can make your next cropping year go more smoothly and help make your soil healthier in the long run.



United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers.gov – Grow and Tell: Oregon microbe farmer

Oregon farmer Jen Aron knows a secret – if you feed soil microbes, they'll help your plants grow. "The microbes are at the forefront of everything



WallacesFarmer.



CORNELL FIELD CROPS NEWS

we do here,” said Jen. “It’s not about what we put on the soil, it’s about how we care for the soil.” [Watch this short *Grow and Tell* video](#) to learn how Jen takes care of her microbes, and how they take care of her plants.

United States Department of Agriculture, *Farmers.gov* – #FridaysOnTheFarm: A soil health game changer

[Meet Kenneth McAlister](#), a nationally recognized soil health champion from Electra, Texas, who has used no-till and cover crops to diversify his operation and strengthen his bottom line.

Wallaces Farmer – Tying soil conservation to nutrient management

Farming in north-central Iowa, Tim Smith wants to be part of the solution. In 2011, he began adding practices that kept soil in place and held nutrients to improve soil health and water quality. Smith says his local NRCS office helped make the cost-share application process simple. Jon Hubbert, assistant state conservationist for programs, is glad to hear that. “Our goal is to provide farmers with the voluntary support they need to overcome the risk associated with trying something new,” he says. [Read more.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, *Natural Resources Conservation Service with Partners* – Our amazing grasslands – Livermont Ranch

Steve Livermont manages his ranch in Martin, South Dakota, with a future of conservation in mind. [Learn how rotational grazing has strengthened his operation.](#)

AgDaily – Future of Agriculture podcaster traveling the country with Cool Planet to uncover soil stories

A new educational multimedia series about soil health, called *Stories from the Soil*, is being launched. [Learn more.](#) [Watch the first episode here.](#)

Cornell Field Crops News – Reduced Tillage Handbook now available free

[A handbook](#) for improving soil health in both organic and conventional vegetable, row crop, and small grain systems is now available at no charge

from Cornell Cooperative Extension and partners.
[Learn more.](#)

WallacesFarmer.



Wallaces Farmer – Land gives back when you take care of it

A couple's vision for the family farm is becoming reality, thanks to a sound plan, a couple years of very hard work, and guidance and assistance from USDA. In fall 2017, the couple planted a cover crops mix of cereal rye, wheat, and turnips on 30 corn acres for another source of livestock feed. The result? The cows love it! [Read more.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers.gov – Conservation system helps Missouri farmer weather drought

Much of Missouri is suffering from drought. One farmer says a change in his management system has made his land more resilient. [Read more.](#)



United States Department of Agriculture – It's all about water quality for Ward's Berry Farm

Lots of neighbors mean lots of customers for Ward's Berry Farm's retail farm stand and pick-your-own operation in Sharon, Massachusetts. They also mean competition for water resources and stricter state regulations to protect public drinking water supplies. Farmer Jim Ward has found a way to meet customer demand while protecting water resources; he's adopted good soil health practices with the help of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. [Read more.](#)



No-Till Farmer – [PODCAST] It's all about carbon: Building a thriving soil biological community

In this episode of the *No-Till Farmer* podcast, we're discussing healthy soils and diverse organisms with Dennis Chessman, team leader for the NRCS Soil Health Division in Lexington, Kentucky. [Listen here.](#)



High Plains/Midwest Ag Journal – Dirt clods, mud pies and other insights in soil sustainability

Like most farmers, Doug Peterson's concepts about farming and soil management were founded on the experiences and teachings of his father and grandfather. A college degree reinforced those ideas, and a career as a Natural Resources Conservation Service field specialist let him put those ideas to work. By his 20th year on the job, he felt he knew about everything there was to know—[then he learned about managing for soil health.](#)

Lancaster Farming – Conservation district heightens cover crop reach

Along with broadcasting, drilling, and aerial seeding, a new, specialized tool for seeding cover crops is taking flight. It comes in the form of a 12-foot tall cover crop interseeder. [Learn more.](#)

Additional soil health communications materials are in development, so stay tuned for further updates. As always, please feel free to contact me at any time if you need additional information or would like to offer contributions to the Update.

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