



NRCS Soil Health Update

November 2018

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



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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.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers.gov – Park your plow: 5 tips for the no-till-curious

With harvest season winding down, you're no doubt making an important decision for your working land. Will you hook up the plow, or is this the year you'll park it for good? If you'd like to try no-till, we wrote this for you. [Use these 5 tips to go from no-till-curious to no-till farmer.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Farmers.gov – Grow and Tell: Bring out the crimp
You can look at Levi Lyle's tractor and see that he farms smarter, not harder. With a front-mounted roller crimper and planter in tow, Levi only needs one pass to terminate cover crops and plant the seeds of his next harvest. [Watch this short Grow and Tell video](#) to learn how Levi is benefiting, personally and professionally, from adopting cover crops and no-till farming methods.



Soil Health Institute – [Documentary] *Living Soil*
Living Soil is a 60-minute documentary about soil health featuring innovative farmers and soil health experts. These stakeholders share thoughts about the health of the soil ecosystem, and why farmers are making changes in their farm management. The purpose of the documentary is to educate the general public about the benefits of soil health, and it will be accompanied by soil health curricula designed for high school and college students. [Learn more and watch *Living Soil* here.](#)



No-Till Farmer – [Podcast] Building up your no-till nutrient management to protect the environment and your profitability

In this episode of the *No-Till Farmer* podcast we're joined by co-director of the University of Wisconsin's Discovery Farms program, Amber Radatz, who will share on-farm data from more than 200 site years in Wisconsin and Minnesota. [Listen here.](#)



Corn + Soybean Digest – 10 years, 10 soil takeaways

Jack Boyer takes a scientific approach to building soil health. For the past 10 years, the retired ag engineer has focused on optimizing cover crop benefits, learning from both successes and failures of test strips on his farm near Reinbeck, Iowa. Boyer has worked with Practical Farmers of Iowa, the Iowa Soybean Association, Iowa State University, and others to test the best ways to integrate cover crops into his seed corn, commercial corn, and soybean operation. He and his wife Marion operate a 1,000-acre Century farm and grow their own cover crop seed.



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[After 10 years of testing and observation, here are Boyer's 10 takeaways.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – Give your farm a rugged, natural look

Many farmers till during the fall. This year, we encourage you not to. Leave it be, let it grow. Save time, money, and improve your soil's health by joining the farmers who observe "No-Till November." [Learn more.](#)

Indiana Prairie Farmer – Plan for 2019 cover crops this winter

It's not too early to think about securing seed sources and examining seeding options for the 2019 cover crop season. [Read more.](#)

Delta Farm Press – Cover crops: 9 ways to make them pay in 2019

"We let the cover crop get as tall as it can," says Adam Chappell, a no-till corn, cotton, rice, and soybean farmer at Cotton Plant, Arkansas. [Here are some tips for growing cover crops that he and other proponents have developed for the Mid-South.](#)

Dakota Farmer – No-till, soil health efforts pay off in higher yields, more topsoil

It didn't take Terry Ness, Pierre, S.D., long to become a believer in the benefits of no-till. Ness started no-tilling 28 years ago. In his second year of no-till, he got 11 inches of rain in one day on already saturated soils. While the runoff from the storm eroded conventionally tilled fields around his farm, the soil on his no-till fields stayed in place. He had no runoff. [Read more.](#)

United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service – Wallowa County farmers replacing skepticism with innovation

A group of farmers in Wallowa County, Oregon, have teamed up to share ideas, experiment with



field trials, and seek technical expertise to develop a unique recipe for soil health that suits their operation. [Learn more.](#)

The Delmarva Farmer – NRCS promotes soil health among Maryland landowners

Lewis Smith, a fourth-generation farmer from Easton, Maryland, is exploring the benefits of healthy soil through a 5-year cover-crop study on his 340-acre Beaver Dam Farm. This year, with the varying weather conditions, the benefits of cover crops were visually evident in Smith's study. "You can see a significant difference in the height and color of the corn where there is no cover crop versus where cover crop was used," Jack King, an NRCS district conservationist, observed. [Read more.](#)

Indiana Prairie Farmer – Covers aren't just for corn, soybeans

Because cover crops provide weed control, erosion control, organic matter, nutrient scavenging, and other benefits, they have a place in specialty crop production. This may be large-acre specialty crops, or it may be for those who raise just a few acres of vegetables for farmers markets in an intense-production system. [Learn more.](#)

Additional soil health communications materials are in development, so stay tuned for further updates.

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