



NRCS Soil Health Update

January, 2018

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

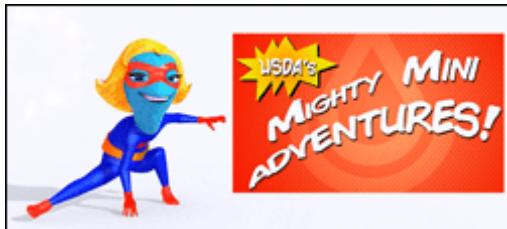


USDA-NRCS – Proposals sought for soil health innovations

Are you a conservation-minded, innovative problem solver? USDA plans to invest \$10 million in Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) for innovative conservation strategies and technologies in three focus areas: grazing lands, organic systems and soil health. Don't miss your chance to partner with NRCS through CIG. Get more information from NRCS staff members during a **Jan. 11 webinar at 4 p.m.** Eastern.

[READ MORE](#)

[JOIN THE WEBINAR](#)



USDA-NRCS – Meet Mighty Mini Microbe : A mini-Q&A with soil's tiny superhero

“Mini Microbe” is a new USDA mascot, representing the trillions of beneficial soil microbes that make farming possible. Though intended primarily for educational outreach to children, Mini will help make soil microbiology more approachable for people of all ages. You can read more about her [here](#) or order a [free coloring book](#). “Q: Today we’re talking with ‘Mighty Mini Microbe,’ NRCS’ new soil health superhero. Welcome to the USDA family! Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?” [Read more](#).



Corn & Soybean Digest – Soil health research, education receives \$20 million funding

Today, on World Soil Day, the nonprofit Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research announces a \$9.4 million grant to the Soil Health Institute, NCGA’s Soil Health Partnership and The Nature Conservancy to improve soil health and, ultimately, support positive economic and environmental outcomes for American

farmers. The grant will be matched by General Mills, Grantham Trust, Midwest Row Crop Collaborative, Monsanto, Nestlé Purina PetCare Company, The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Walmart Foundation, the Walton Family Foundation, and individual donors for a total investment of nearly \$20 million. [Read more.](#)



TEDx Talks – A six-legged march toward regenerative agriculture

Insects shape the colors, scents, and tastes of the world we live in, but too often we choose to stomp, smack, squish, crush, and spray them out of our lives. Regenerative farmers are promoting insect life on their farms and may have figured out a way to solve planetary scale problems to boot. Be inspired and learn what's happening in the natural world around you in this funny and approachable talk. Dr. Jonathan Lundgren is an agroecologist, entomologist, farmer, and beekeeper. Watch the [TEDx video.](#) (13:43)



Sosland Publishing's Baking & Snack and Milling & Baking News

Baking Business – General Mills collaborates on soil health research

A collaboration designed to research soil health practices on wheat farms — and extol the benefits to 125,000 farmers who cultivate those fields — received a \$735,000 shot in the arm from General Mills, Inc. The National Wheat Foundation and the Soil Health Partnership will use the funds over the next three growing seasons for research and farmer outreach to promote widespread adoption and implementation of soil health practices on U.S. agricultural farmland.

[Read more.](#)

Missouri Ruralist – 1-2 punch for improving soil health

Missouri Ruralist begins a new feature, "Focus on Soil Health," with this story: Ron Willis grew up in the "Dark Ages" of tilling the fields before planting and after harvest. With every pass, he saw some of the most productive topsoil of the family farm lying bare, susceptible to loss from rain or wind. When Ron purchased his own piece of land, he enacted change.

[Read more.](#)

Brownfield – Farmer sees benefits of cover crops on his farm

A central Indiana farmer continues to use cover crops and other conservation practices to improve production on his farm. Mike Shuter says he began planting cover crops on everything he farms three years ago, and it helps his farm withstand weather challenges. "The more organic matter we can get into



WallacesFarmer



the soil, the better water-holding capacity and water infiltration," He says. "It helps us in both a wet year and a dry year." [Listen](#). (2:42)

Wallaces Farmer – Don't treat your soil like dirt; Take the 1% challenge

Many of the benefits from improving soil health don't happen overnight, says Kurt Simon, State Conservationist for NRCS in Iowa. They build over time, as farmers consistently implement soil health practices like no-till, cover crops and crop rotations. But there is a way to monitor your progress: measuring the amount of organic matter in your soil. [Read more](#).

Oklahoma Farm Report – State Conservationist Gary O'Neil says farmers really "dig" soil health and conservation programs

Oklahoma NRCS State Conservationist Gary O'Neil has worked extensively with farmers on financial assistance programs and new, innovative ideas and practices like soil health systems. "It just continues to pick up steam and more people are getting involved in the systems and the practices within those systems," O'Neil said. "We have farmers who are kind of setting the stage for this part of the country on what can happen." [Read more](#).

Soil Carbon Coalition – Free facilitator's manual on soil health and watershed function

Understanding Soil Health and Watershed Function: A Teacher's Manual has over 100 pages of suggestions to get participants engaged in deep discussions about soil's role in community resilience, systems-thinking about watershed function, and projects fueled by their own questions. The manual is focused on soil biology's role in the regeneration of the natural "soil carbon sponge." Download the [FREE manual](#).

Land Stewardship Project – Soil health, water & climate change: A pocket guide to what you need to know



The twin problems of polluted water and climate change share a common solution: the building of soil carbon via farming practices that protect the landscape's surface and generate biological activity below. That's why the Land Stewardship Project has developed *Soil Health, Water & Climate Change: A Pocket Guide to What You Need to Know*. [Access here](#).



Corn & Soybean Digest - Take soil and farm beyond conservation

Half a ton per acre per year soil loss, considered good soil conservation by many, is far too much soil loss for Gail Fuller. A national conservation award winner, Fuller is focused on regenerating soil. He tries to farm in nature's image, he says, because Mother Nature always wins. No tillage, 11 to 13 different cash crops in rotation, and 60 to 70 species of cover crops give this eastern Kansas farmer a shot at mimicking nature, but he doesn't stop there. He sees cash crops planted into dormant perennial pastures as the way forward in a water-short future. And he's still experimenting on small plots, but also looking to scale up to plant cash crops into those pastures. [Read more](#).



Brownfield Ag – Farmers face challenge of growing more food, improving soil health

Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty says soil health is necessary to continue feeding a growing population.

She tells Brownfield farmers are doing their part to grow more food, but with lower farm incomes they also need to be able to improve their bottom line.

Read more, and [listen here](#).



National Public Radio – The ground beneath our feet

"Without proper care for it we can have no life." [Listen here](#).

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

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