



NRCS Soil Health Update

November, 2017

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

the guardian



The Guardian (UK) – UK is 30-40 years away from 'eradication of soil fertility', warns Gove

The UK is 30 to 40 years away from “the fundamental eradication of soil fertility” in parts of the country, the environment secretary Michael Gove has warned. “We have encouraged a type of farming which has damaged the earth,” Gove told the parliamentary launch of the Sustainable Soils Alliance (SSA). “Countries can withstand coups d'état, wars and conflict, even leaving the EU, but no country can withstand the loss of its soil and fertility. [Read more](#).

USDA-NRCS – Farmers urged to ‘keep the stubble’ during ‘No-Till November’

During a special month-long campaign called “No Tillage November,” USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is encouraging farmers “keep the stubble” on their harvested crop fields and improve soil health. The NRCS project is mirrored after the national cancer awareness “No Shave November” campaign that encourages people not to shave during the entire month. The NRCS campaign encourages farmers to keep tillage equipment in their machine sheds this fall and keep the crop stubble on their fields. [Learn more](#).

Farm & Ranch Guide – Soil aggregates found in great soil ‘just like Christmas’

Jay Fuhrer, soil health specialist at the Natural Resource Conservation Service, based in Bismarck, N.D., talked to producers about why cover crops were a vital resource. “I used to think cover crops were important, but now I think they are essential,” Fuhrer said. When production agriculture began, “We converted our grasslands from 50-100 species per acre of perennials into a single annual crop.” [Read more](#).





Corn & Soybean Digest – Living mulch builds profits, soil

Living mulch functions like mulch on any farm or garden except — it's alive. No, it's not out of the latest horror movie; living mulch is a system farmers can use to benefit both profits and the soil. While the system has been around for a while, scientists at the University of Georgia are making it more efficient and sustainable. [Read more.](#)

USDA-NRCS – Soil health improvements yield 'sweet' rewards for first-generation farmers

He wasn't born into farming, but Chris Andre has always wanted to be a farmer. "I knew it was in my blood from the time I was five years old," Andre says, recalling kindergarten memories of he and his best friend playing with toy tractors in the dirt... Brothers Chris and Mike, 33, are identical twins. Both bring unfettered energy and enthusiasm to farming — and to life. It's the type of outlook that has helped them adapt and apply soil health principles in a unique cropping system, which few of their sugarcane-growing contemporaries have even attempted. [Watch the video.](#)

The Gazette – 'Superstar' farmer wows with conservation techniques

Iowa's tile-drained farms are notoriously "leaky systems," by nature unable to contain all the nutrients both applied to them and inherent in their rich soil. But Washington County farmer Steve Berger, through a sustained and disciplined regimen of no-till cultivation and cover crops, has plugged almost all the leaks. "He's got it down. He's a superstar," said Jody Bailey, coordinator of the English River Watershed Management Authority, of which Berger is a board member. [Read more.](#)

Missouri Ruralist – Is there an economic benefit to cover crops?

For three years, Brent Hoerr planted cover crops on his Mississippi River bottom ground. He read magazines, attended meetings and listened to fellow farmers, all saying how it was good for his soil health, and thus good for his bottom line. Still, the Palmyra, Mo., farmer did not have any hard data to back up the claims. Now, that is all about to change. [Read more.](#)

No-Till Farmer – Are your cover crops paying for themselves?

Since 2015, the Soil Health Institute has been working to develop a national strategy aimed at improving soil health on farms across the U.S. Stakeholders involved with the organization — which includes farmers, ranchers, government agencies, scientists, and consumers... In poring over numerous studies during this time on a range of soil health topics, they've reaffirmed that a chief benefit of soil health is the relationship between soil organic carbon and the soil's capacity to hold plant-available water. [Read more.](#)

The Gazette

MISSOURI RURALIST

NO-TILL FARMER

The No-Till Authority Since 1972



NRCS Soil Health webinar series

Raising dairy replacement heifers on pasture and soil health – Nov 14, 2017 2:00 pm US/Eastern

This webinar, presented by NRCS' Adam Abel and Justin Morris, will examine how dairy producers can incorporate rotational grazing of replacement heifers into their operations to save time and money and improve both herd and soil health. **Note:** No advance registration is required and space is not limited, but participants should sign in 15 minutes early. This webinar offers CEUs and will be recorded for future viewing. It is presented by the [USDA NRCS Soil Health Division](#). Contact [Holli Kuykendall, Ph.D.](#), National Technology Specialist, for more information. [Read more](#).



INDIANA PrairieFarmer



Minnesota Farm Guide – As harvest nears, cover crops come to life in Cotters' operation

Harvest is just a couple weeks away. The crops are starting to turn brown and dry up. The once thick and impenetrable leaf canopy is starting to fall, exposing the ground to sunlight once again. As the rows crops start to die, Tom Cotter's cover crops begin to green up and grow. "Now that we are getting daylight through, that stuff starts coming back alive. Does not take much to get that stuff popping back awake and doing good," said Tom. [Read more](#).

Indiana Prairie Farmer – Watch out for unintended consequences to cover crops, soils

A smart person once said that for every action, there's a reaction. And for every decision you make, there will be a consequence. Hopefully, it's what you intended to accomplish. What you want to avoid are unintended consequences. Don Donovan, a district conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, believes there are a couple of situations related to cover crops and erosion control that could catch you off-guard. [Read more](#). Also from *Indiana Prairie Farmer* – **Know why you want cover crops before you plant them.** [Read more](#).

Indiana Ag Connection – Indiana ag department launches conservation 'one-stop'

Improving water quality and soil health continues to be a priority for farmers statewide, and while data has always been available to support this claim, it hasn't been accessible in one, easily navigable location. To address this issue, the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, using information compiled by the Indiana Conservation Partnership, launched yesterday an online story map, a one-stop shop for Indiana's conservation efforts. [Read more](#).



Stanford | News Service

The Bismarck Tribune



maine public

Rivet & Jeans – Target sets goal of 100 percent sustainable cotton by 2022

Target Corp. is setting a goal to source 100 percent sustainable cotton by 2022 for its owned and exclusive national brands in apparel, home and essentials, and the retailer is introducing a new policy to help guide the way... “To us, sustainable production uses water and chemicals as efficiently as possible, with methods that support soil health and promotes ethical working conditions,” the company said. [Read more](#).

Stanford News Service – Soil holds potential to slow global warming, Stanford researchers find

“Dirt is not exciting to most people,” said Earth system science professor Rob Jackson, lead author of the Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics article and co-author of the Global Change Biology paper. “But it is a no-risk climate solution with big co-benefits. Fostering soil health protects food security and builds resilience to droughts, floods and urbanization.” [Read more](#).

The Bismarck Tribune – North Dakota Leopold Conservation Award winners emphasize importance of living soil

Herds of sleek black cattle graze in the lush green fields and pastures around Ken and Bonnie Miller’s ranch. The yard is tidy, everything in its place. But for everything a visitor can see, the Millers are most proud of what they have done to care for what isn’t seen. “Taking care of the herd below the ground is the most important thing,” Ken explains. [Read more](#).

South Dakota Public Radio – Living roots: A conversation with farmer Bryan Jorgensen

Successful Farming Magazine has released its 10 Successful Farmers list honoring ag professionals who choose to innovate, adapt, and sustain successful ag businesses. One of this year’s honorees hails from Ideal, South Dakota, and his method is simple: Watch how Mother Nature takes care of herself and mimic her ways. [Listen to the full conversation here](#).

Maine Public – Wolfe’s Neck to focus on environment, ‘regenerative farming’

It used to be known as Wolfe’s Neck Farm in Freeport, but from this week on, the 600-acre coastal farm will be known as Wolfe’s Neck Center for Agriculture and the Environment. Underscoring the center’s new name is the advancement of what’s known as “regenerative farming.” These are cutting-edge practices that kick organic standards up a notch. The goal is to train the next generation of farmers to be climate resilient as they reduce their own carbon footprints. [Listen](#) to the story. (4:07)



Tasmanian Country (AU) – Soil health focus pays off at Table Cape Tulip Farm

In the past few years Mr Roberts-Thomson has focused more on what is happening below the soil surface and this approach is now paying off. Ultimately, he said their aim was to continually improve the soil structure and biology across the farm. Some of the key principles behind this are to keep living plant roots in the soils as much as possible and to eliminate fallow periods and maintain soil cover at all times, particularly during the warmer months. He is implementing minimum-till methods and where possible no tilling across the crops. [Read more.](#)

Please share with customers, partners, and others that would be interested. Additional soil health marketing communications materials from the soil health communications team are in development, so stay tuned for further updates. Thanks for all you do on behalf of conservation and American agriculture.

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