



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Minnesota NRCS Soil Health Strategic Plan



Minnesota
Natural
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Conservation
Service

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Mission, Vision, and Outcomes for Soil Health:

- Vision: Building healthy soils for current and future generations.
- Mission: Making Minnesota soils healthier and more productive through partnerships, education, technical expertise, and planning to support our diverse landscapes now and into the future.

Minnesota's Soil Health Strategy focuses on the following key Goals:

1. Technical Expertise for Minnesota NRCS employees
2. Education, Outreach, and Communication
3. Cooperation and Collaboration with Partners
4. Conservation Implementation
5. Quantifying Soil Health Benefits

GOAL 1 – Technical Expertise

Minnesota NRCS will establish a system to provide expert technical support, training, and accountability for all employees. The success of Minnesota (MN) farmers' applying soil health systems depends on employees providing sound technical information. Beyond technical understanding, NRCS employees must demonstrate resourcefulness to support farmers in the emerging and complex field of soil health. It is essential that we are a sound technical resource and reliable partner for our farmers and customers.

OBJECTIVES

- Create an infrastructure of technically competent employees and partners capable of providing technical support and guidance to other employees, farmers, landowners, agricultural professional and the general public by standing up the state soil health team consisting of the key members listed below.
 - State Technical Specialist: State Soil Health Specialist, State Agronomist, State Grazing Specialist, State Economist and others as needed
 - Area Technical Specialists: Area Resource Conservationists, Area Grazing Specialists, Area Resource Soil Scientists and others as needed
 - Points of Contact (POCs) from each Customer Service Team. The POC will serve as the local soil health contact for the Customer Service Team (CST) and will have required expectations, skills, and responsibilities in support of the state soil health team and program
 - Representatives from Key Partnerships: Soil Health Division, Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), Minnesota Office for Soil Health (MOSH), MN Soil Health Coalition (MNSHC) and others as needed
- Increase the technical capacity of employees and partners through a strong soil health focused technical training program that has specific training deliverables and accountability metrics.
- Increase NRCS-Minnesota presence at local, regional, and national soil health field days, workshops and conferences

GOAL 2 – Education, Outreach, and Communication

Minnesota NRCS will support education and outreach efforts as key mechanisms to inform farmers, conservationists, and the general public on the benefits of soil health. Effective communication affords employees, partners, farmers, and land managers access to the latest science-based information on soil health, ensuring local resource concerns are addressed through quality technical assistance.

Minnesota NRCS leadership will support collaborative education and outreach efforts for staff.

OBJECTIVES

- Engage in opportunities to support and promote soil health. Employees will engage in opportunities to grow the message of soil health by supporting various aspects of a soil health outreach program.
- Diversify soil health messaging across multiple platforms. Share soil health messaging broadly so employees, partners, farmers, other customers, and the general public can find the resources and information they need.
- Develop a confident and well-trained workforce (NRCS and partner employees) that can effectively deliver soil health demonstrations to all audiences.

GOAL 3 – Cooperation and Collaboration with Partners

Minnesota NRCS will support partnership-building and collaborative efforts to achieve shared soil health goals across the state. The success of soil health hinges on strong partnerships among the diverse conservation and agriculture groups active in MN.

- Conservation and non-profit organizations
- Local government units
 - SWCDs, watershed districts, tribal governments
- Universities, Technical Colleges, and other institutes of learning
- University of Minnesota Extension
 - MOSH
 - County and regional offices
 - Research and outreach centers
 - State and other federal agencies

OBJECTIVES

- Minnesota NRCS will maintain and enhance support of existing partnerships that focus on soil health such as MNSHC, MOSH, SWCDs and others to the extent practical based on their value to the message of soil health, the mission of the agency, and the resources available.
- Minnesota NRCS will expand the development of new and additional partnering opportunities to the extent practical based on their value to the message of soil health, the mission of the agency, and the resources available.

GOAL 4 – Conservation Implementation

Minnesota NRCS will further integrate core soil health principles, practices, and management systems into conservation planning and program delivery. The result will be increased implementation of soil health plans with steps and strategies tailored to the unique farming context of the operation. When designing and planning conservation practices, employees will work to obtain appropriate Job Approval Authority for the core soil health practices that are essential to building a soil health system.

OBJECTIVES

- Increase access of farmer mentors to beginning soil health farmers by better leveraging the partnership with MNSHC.
- Increase awareness of soil health related resource concerns, practices and activities and maximize their use in conservation planning and programs.
- Support technical field staff as they work to obtain Job Approval Authority working with

soil health systems and practices.

GOAL 5 – Quantifying Soil Health Benefits

Minnesota NRCS will seek to measure baseline, transitional, and established conditions across diverse farm management systems to quantify soil health benefits and the effectiveness of conservation practices. Minnesota NRCS will advance the use of practical tools, sound science, and common indicators to demonstrate soil health benefits.

OBJECTIVES

- Support new and existing research and field studies across a variety of soil health management systems in the state. This will result in a better understanding of functional change over time and relate these changes to environmental and economic changes.
- Track soil health outcomes to better understand how cropping systems are changing across the state and better adapt training to employees and partners.



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