ACHIEVING WIDESPREAD SOIL HEALTH ADOPTION IN THE NJ HIGHLANDS

Laura Tessieri, Associate Director
North Jersey RC&D
3 MAIN POINTS:

➢ Practices MUST make economic sense
➢ Producers need tools and information
➢ Partnerships are essential
ABOUT NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS

Types of Agricultural Producers:

✓ Conventional - typical corn/soybeans
✓ Livestock
✓ Dairy
✓ Vegetable
✓ Vineyards/Orchards
✓ Equine

= a diversified landscape.
FOR CONSERVATION PRACTICES TO BE TRULY SUSTAINABLE, THEY HAVE TO ALSO BE ECONOMICAL.
LINK BETWEEN SOIL HEALTH AND PROFITS

Soil Health
in field and forage crop production

 Written by Sjoerd W. Buikema, Joel C. Myers, and Lisa C. Blazure

IMPROVE YOUR BOTTOM LINE USING:
- Continuous No-Till
- Cover Crops
- Cropping Diversity

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
PENNSTATE Cooperative Extension College of Agricultural Sciences
SOIL HEALTH IMPACTS FARM PROFITS

Organic Matter

- Stores and provide Nitrogen
- Promotes aeration and infiltration
- Greater ability to hold nutrients
- Increased water holding capacity

Increased Yield
SOIL HEALTH IMPACTS FARM PROFITS

Compaction

- Improves soil tilth
- Promotes aeration and infiltration
- Increased water holding capacity
- Deeper root penetration

Increased Yield
NONETHELESS... CONSERVATION PRACTICE ADOPTION CAN BE SLOW
WHY:

• Producers don’t know how
• Producers aren’t motivated to start
• Producers don’t have appropriate technical assistance
• Practices require a large initial financial investment
MECHANISMS TO IMPROVE CONSERVATION ADOPTION

- Education to Encourage
- Making Starting Easy
- Gateway Practices
- Make Conservation Profitable
Increase awareness of how soil health impacts farm profits

Focus on farmer to farmer led conversations to help farmers succeed

EDUCATION TO ENCOURAGE NO-TILL AND COVER CROP CONFERENCE

NEW JERSEY NO-TILL & COVER CROP CONFERENCE
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2018
Hawk Pointe Golf Club Washington, NJ

LEARN MORE AND REGISTER AT: WWW.NORTHJERSEYRCD.ORG/CONFERENCE
Farmers voiced concern about cover crop application methods.

NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) funding to determine best means of applying cover crop.
MAKE STARTING EASY
AERIAL SEEDING COVER CROP

- Little to no cost
- 3 year sign-up
- Over 3,000 acres seeded

Positive results will encourage continued adoption
GATEWAY PRACTICES
FREE SOIL AND MANURE TESTING

- Low cost service
- Report to producer
- Encourages knowledge of soil organic matter

Creates opportunity for in-depth farm conservation
- Questions by type of production

- Captures farm goals and concerns

  Creates opportunity for in-depth farm conservation
Certifications motivate farmers to alter their operations by providing market-based incentives.
Certification Requirements:
1. Soil Health Management
2. Stream Corridor Protection
3. Nutrient Management
4. Pest Management
5. Irrigation Water Management
MAKE CONSERVATION PROFITABLE
RIVER FRIENDLY FARM CERTIFICATION

Increase profitability through increased sales

Increase BMP implementation as farmers strive for certification
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PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL
HOW A SMALL NON-PROFIT CAN HAVE A BIG IMPACT

• Partner Employees with NRCS
• Shared Staff with Affiliated Non-Profit
• Delaware River Watershed Initiative
To implement conservation practices on a larger scale, organizations must emphasize to producers how conservation practices are in their best interest.

- Education to Encourage
- Make Starting Easy
- Gateway Practices
- Make Conservation Profitable

Questions?
ltessieri@northjerseyrcd.org