Advancing Soil Health in the Red River Valley

Monday, November 25, 2013 (8:00 am – 4:00pm)

Holiday Inn Hotel; 3803 13th Ave S, Fargo, North Dakota

2013 Technical Workshop/Annual Meeting

Presentations:

Dr. Abbey Wick, Assistant Professor of Soil Health-Extension, NDSU
“The Foundation of Soil Health”

Lee Briese, Agronomist, Centrol Inc. of Twin Valley
“Soil Salinity and What You Should Know”

Dr. William Brinton, Founder Woods End Laboratories, Inc., Mt Vernon, ME
“Development of Solvita Soil Tests – Showing Secrets of the Soil”

Mike D. Collins, NRCS Area Conservationist; Alamosa, CO
“Soil Health around the Northern Plains Region”

Mitch & Andy Hoenhause, SE North Dakota Agricultural Producers
“Building Soil Health with a No-till Cropping System in SE North Dakota”

Brendon Rockey, Rockey Farms LLC, Center, Colorado
“Minimum-Till Potato Production in Colorado”

Speaker Panel: Discussions about building and measuring soil health

North Dakota Soil & Water Conservation Society &
Professional Soil Classifiers Association of North Dakota

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Brendon Rockey, Rockey Farms
Center, Colorado

Brendon Rockey is a third generation potato farmer from Center, Colorado. He, along with his brother, raises 250 acres of specialty potatoes for both certified seed sales and for the fresh market. Rockey Farms has always been known for their innovation and leadership. They continue to redefine how potatoes can be raised, by focusing on soil health. They currently rotate their potato crop with a multi-species green manure crop, and they have implemented companion cropping in their potatoes this year. By focusing on the soil health, they have been able to maintain yield, drastically improve the quality of the crop, and they have done it all while decreasing the inputs that are required to grow the crop. They no longer use any commercial fertilizer, and they have eliminated their dependency on toxic chemicals. Their farm has become a regular stop for soil health tours, as they believe strongly in sharing the knowledge they have gained.

Rudy Garcia
NRCS- New Mexico

I have worked for the USDA-NRCS for the past 23-years. For the first twelve-years, I worked on two special projects called the Elephant Butte Irrigation District Water Conservation Project and the Water Quality Demonstration Project. Work included: various types of irrigation evaluations that included subsurface drip, laser leveled field, hi-flow turnouts, irrigation scheduling with tensiometers and electrical resistant blocks, feel and appearance, fertility demos, evaluations of manure and compost and gypsum for the management of salinity and sodium; much work was done on soil, water and plant tissue analyses, soil health and many other agronomic practices. Since then I’ve worked in the Albuquerque and Los Lunas Field Offices as a conservation planner and District Conservationist. For the past seven-years, I have worked as the State Agronomist, with the majority of the technical emphasis being on applying soil health principles through our staff, conservation partners, NMSU, consultants and many others. We have provided over 64 Soil Health trainings throughout the state in the past 5-years and the interest and momentum continue to increase. We have much work to do in this area; this is where we are getting the best results in terms of providing conservation technical assistance.
John Diener, Red Rock Ranch
California

John Diener was born in 1951 in Five Points, a small farming community on the Westside of Fresno County, CA. His uncle Frank first came to the area in 1927 and were followed by John’s parents, Vince and Amelia Diener, in 1927. John grew up working on his father’s and uncle’s farms. John and his oldest sister Margaret attended Westside Elementary School. From 1965 to 1969 he attended Ryan Prep College Seminary in Fresno. In 1974, John graduated from the University of California, Davis with a BS in Agricultural Economics and Business Management. In 1978, John married Georgene Werstler and in 1980 they returned to Five Points. They have four children: Justin, Anne Marie, Mark and Craig.

Farm history:

- Conventional Crops (~5,200 acres): almonds, alfalfa, broccoli, corn, cotton, garlic, wine and raisin grapes, safflower, string beans, sugar snap peas, canning tomatoes, and wheat.

- Organic Crops (~200 acres): dry beans, broccoli, corn, spinach, processing beans and tomatoes and wheat.

John has extensive experience in conservation and reclamation efforts. He developed a pilot Integrated On-Farm Drainage Management prototype (1985 to present). By tiling saline land and recycling water through a series of fields, farmers can reclaim land, harvest runoff water, produce marketable crops, and ultimately mine salts for commercial use. As such, it turns a regional problem into a resource—productively contributing to the health and integrity of regional and state water systems. He has also implemented center pivots for irrigation, thus saving on labor costs, the ability to use water that might not be able to be used with other irrigation methods while still maintaining excellent production.

Jay Fuhrer, NRCS, Burleigh County
North Dakota

Jay Fuhrer is a Conservationist employed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Bismarck, North Dakota. Growing up on a small grain and livestock farm, Jay’s interests have always centered on agriculture. Jay emphasizes Soil Health as a foundation for cropping systems, grazing systems, livestock integration, and cover crops when working with Burleigh County producers. Information and Education activities strive to utilize a team approach with farmers talking to farmers about Soil Health. Jay’s interest in soil health has resulted in numerous speaking engagements within the US and also includes Canada, France, and Russia.
Mike Collins, Area Conservationist
NRCS

Mike Collins is an Area Conservationist for the NRCS in Alamos. Mike works in Area 4 which includes much of southwestern Colorado. Mike works with employees, partners and landowners to plan and implement a wide range of conservation practices on private lands throughout southwest Colorado.
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