

## **Creating the New Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference and Trade Show**

### ***The Situation***

Direct seed cropping systems can effectively control Pacific Northwest cropland soil erosion and associated water and air quality problems, and potentially increase growers profitability and competitiveness. While the regional research and grower experience with these production systems has been expanding in the 1990's, there was still limited grower access to the research technology and experience base that is critical to the development of successful direct seed cropping systems. Previous PNW Conservation Tillage Conferences in the 1990's only attracted audiences of 200-300. A new conference approach was needed to provide a larger number of PNW growers with access to new management strategies and technologies.

### ***Our Response***

A new series of annual conferences was initiated in 1998 as the Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conferences and Trade Shows. Several new conference organizational features dramatically improved the potential to attract much larger audiences and improve technology access than in the past. These included: 1) inviting five to eight international and national speakers; 2) increasing the number of Northwest grower speakers to 16, compared to an average of 4 in past years; 3) publishing detailed conference proceedings (never published before in 22 years of PNW conservation tillage conferences); 4) producing videos of the conferences available for loan and sale two weeks after the conferences; 5) involving more than 10 agricultural companies as financial co-sponsors to cover additional costs of speakers, proceedings, videos and expanded promotion (no financial co-sponsors in past conference); 6) adding a new commercial Trade Show on direct seed

systems equipment, products and services; 7) utilizing extensive direct mailing of conference brochures and paid Ag media advertisements; and 8) more active involvement by PNW grower commodity and conservation district associations, agricultural industries and other groups as cooperators in helping develop and promote the Conferences.

### ***Achievements***

#### First Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference

The first Conference was held January 7-8, 1998 at the DoubleTree Inn in Pasco, WA. It was co-sponsored by 12 other Ag service and equipment companies in cooperation with 10 PNW grower associations and other Ag support groups and agencies. Publicity included distribution of over 20,000 brochures and 5 news releases.

The program, arranged in seven 2- to 3-hr focus sessions, featured 48 speakers who included: 16 growers from PNW, Australia, and Canada; 11 Ag industry representatives; and 13 researchers and Ag organizations from the PNW, South Dakota and Indiana.

A 150-page Conference Proceedings was published and distributed at the Conference, and put on the conference Web site (<http://pnwsteep.wsu.edu/conf98>). Over 170 were also sold after the Conference.

Conference videos were available for loan or sale two weeks after the Conference. The availability of the tapes was added to the Web site and was promoted with the Proceedings throughout the region. Over 45 videos were loaned and 105 purchased.

#### Second Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems

### Conference and (New) Trade Show

The second Conference was held on January 5-7, 1999 at the International Ag Trade Center / Convention Center and DoubleTree Hotel-City Center in Spokane, WA. The Conference was co-sponsored by 10 Ag support companies in cooperation with 11 PNW grower commodity and conservation district associations and other Ag support groups and agencies. Nearly 25,000 brochures and seven news releases were widely distributed. A Conference Web site was also established for promotion and later access to the Proceedings and video information.

The program featured 37 speakers, including 14 researchers and 7 industry representatives and 16 growers from across the Pacific Northwest, Northern Great Plains, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. Presentations were arranged in seven in-depth focus sessions 2-3 hours in length.

At the request of growers and Ag industry in the 1998 Conference evaluation, a new commercial Direct Seed Systems Trade Show was added as a special feature of the 1999 Conference to provide growers, Ag industry and researchers more opportunities to discuss technology needs and share new innovations. It featured 27 commercial exhibits of equipment, products and services related to direct seed cropping systems. The Trade Show also included a Research Poster Exhibition featuring nine posters on research related to direct seed cropping systems from the Northwest and Canada.

A 225-page Conference Proceedings was provided at the Conference and put on the Conference Internet site (<http://pnwsteep.wsu.edu/conf99>). Print copies were also available for sale and over 50 were sold after the Conference.

A series of 10 digital-quality videos were available on loan and for sale two weeks after the Conference. A detailed description of the videos and order forms is available on the Web site. There were 10 video loans and 30 purchases after the Conference. The availability of the Proceedings and videos were promoted through the PNW Ag media and over 12 national / international publications and Internet Web sites.

**Impacts** -- Conference attendance grew from the typical 200-300 in previous PNW Conference Tillage Conferences to 900 at the first NW Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference at Pasco, WA in 1998, and 940 at the second NW Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference and Trade Show in Spokane, WA in 1999. These

Conferences helped to demonstrate how new technologies for direct seed systems and more intensive crop rotations are revolutionizing farming systems across the Northwest and around the world.

Based on survey evaluations of the Conference attendees, over 99 percent of the 1998 and 1999 Conference respondents felt that the Conferences will help increase the success and adaptation of direct seed systems in the Northwest. Significant increases in the adaptation of direct seed systems are being reported in the Northwest in the past two years and this trend is expected to grow rapidly into the next decade.

## *Cooperators and Co-Sponsors*

USDA-CSREES PNW STEEP (Solutions To  
Environmental and Economic Problems)  
conservation research and educational program  
USDA-CSREES Columbia Plateau Wind Erosion / Air  
Quality Project  
Washington State University  
Oregon State University

## *The Future*

Direct seeding and more intensive cropping systems are relatively new and rapidly evolving farming systems in this region. To facilitate the continued growth and success of direct seed cropping systems in the Northwest, there will be an increasing need for accelerated research and extension efforts on developing and providing access to new technologies. This new conference series will provide effective technology access into the new decade.

## *For More Information*

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