

SOIL HEALTH MINUTE: HAPPENINGS IN SOUTHERN IDAHO

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Hello! We are Courtney Cosdon (University of Idaho Extension/Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Tasha Paul (Idaho NRCS), bringing you Idaho soil health news and information. In this newsletter, we are sharing resources to encourage the use of soil health practices and working to involve more of our community in soil health events and discussions.



Upcoming Events

Magic Valley Field Day

We are hosting a soil health field day in Kimberly at Todd Ballard's Farm on June 29th from 10-1pm. We will have four demonstrations, taught by local soil health experts: Shawn Nield (Idaho-NRCS), Linda Schott (University of Idaho Extension – Twin Falls) and Nick Sirovatka (Oregon-NRCS), including an infiltration demo with the NRCS rainfall simulator. There will be an equipment expo, educational and partner booths and if you register in advance (before June 22), free lunch. Connect with your neighbors and learn how soil health is applied in this region!

Register here: <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/soil-health>

Soil Keepers BBQ

It is time to get everyone back together and start talking soil health in the Treasure Valley again. We will be hosting a BBQ with Tyson Meeks sometime mid to end of July to share community updates in the world of soil health. Keep your eyes peeled for details.

Get Involved!

Impromptu Field Days

Impromptu field days are not planned much in advance. They are quick, educational field visits to see and discuss how a producer is trying a practice related to soil health on their operation. Back in April we held one of these days at Patrick Farms in Twin Falls. Scott Patrick was no-tilling sugar beets into Teff residue. Scott is combining multiple soil health practices with this planting; limiting soil disturbance, planting into residue which keeps the soil protected until plants emerge and diversifying his rotation with a specialty crop. We got to see the planter in action and Scott was very generous when sharing his experience and engaging with other local growers. Thanks for your time, Scott!

If you have any soil health related practices you would like to share with your community, call Courtney Cosdon (208)364-4692

Resources

- University of Idaho Soil Health: <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/soil-health>
- Idaho NRCS Soil Health: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/id/soils/health/>
- Soil Health YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6g6ZYcM47s9emP2muvDV4yq_FNQwoZoJ



Scott Patrick engages with local producers and NRCS/UI partners

In The Literature

This section is for sharing recent and exciting scientific literature, boiled down to key takeaways that focus on soil health practices relevant to producers in Idaho.

Can cover crops improve soil ecosystem services in water-limited environments? A review
Blanco-Canqui, H. et al., Soil Science Society of America, 2021

Main takeaways:

- Cover crops can reduce weed biomass by about 89%
- One study with cover crop grazing showed no bulk density changes or changes in aggregate stability (no compaction issues)
- Cover crops in arid or semi-arid regions improve most ecosystem services
 - For example: reduced water/wind erosion and nitrate leaching, weed suppression, increased soil organic matter and soil water-holding ability
- Cover crops only reduced soil water in 50% of studies; when it did reduce water it was by about 23%

You can do it too!

With limited water this year, Alex Joslin of Joslin Farms, Twin Falls Salmon tract, has planted oat cover crops on their non-irrigated fields, that they won't be watering. This oat planting will keep living roots in the soil (for as long as possible), which exude sugars that feed microorganisms allowing for continued nutrient cycling and in addition, will help reduce soil erosion, suppress weeds and continue to build organic matter. This practice is much more beneficial for the soil than fallow.

Check It Out

Soil Health Website

We now have a University of Idaho Soil Health website, where we are posting any event that we are hosting as well as information about other projects we are working on. Contact Courtney if you have an event you would like to share. <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/soil-health>

Idaho Soil Health Facebook

Join the Idaho Soil Health Facebook, to get connected with other soil health-minded folks and keep up to date on happenings and conversations. Thanks to Brad Johnson at The Nature Conservancy for creating this communication opportunity.

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