

Welcome to the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition. It has been quite a year around the meeting table as a team of partners turned a conceptual dream into reality. The combined efforts of the South Dakota Grasslands Coalition, Natural Resources Conservation Service, South Dakota State University, South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources, South Dakota Association of Conservation Districts, South Dakota Cattlemen's Association, South Dakota Department of Ag, Dakota Lakes Research Farm and a number of progressive producers have built an organization with a tremendous, but simply stated mission, "To promote improved soil health."

Alongside the partners listed already, we formed a Board of Directors comprised of volunteer producers. All of whom have generously given of their time and resources to further the effort of transferring the latest information on how to best manage the greatest resource in the world. SOIL. My fellow directors include: Al Miron from Crooks, Bryan Jorgenson from Ideal, Dan Forgey of Gettysburg, Dennis Hoyle of Roscoe, Levi Neuharth from Hayes and Terry Ness of Pierre. As you run into these gentlemen at future events please take a moment to thank them for their efforts and share your ideas.

We have spent a little over a year now working to organize the SDSHC, some of the results of which have been a couple of well attended field tours, a first annual meeting and a soil health workshop series featuring soil health experts as well as leading edge producers. A format we hope to follow in all our events is to include technical experts and producers as presenters of the information we are providing. The technical people bring us some great new ideas for managing our resources and the producers provide the validation that these methods truly work. Look for more of this combination.

In February, we entered into a partnership with the SDSU Extension and SD Association of Conservation Districts to hire a public relations intern who will be mentored by the NRCS SD Public Affairs Officer. The SDSU Extension and University personnel in Brookings, SD are actively supporting us. The Dean of the College of Agriculture & Biological Sciences designated two staff as liaisons with our board. We recently hired a full time operations and events coordinator. You will be seeing and hearing from Josh Lefers of Corsica as we transition to more work on events and information transfer. This new Coalition has greatly benefited from the countless hours SDGC coordinator Judge Jessop has spent guiding us thru the process of organizing our meetings and events and he is another on the long list of people to whom we are grateful.

Congratulations to all of you for being members of an organization with the vision of, “A collective effort to increase sustainable ag production through diversification and improved soil health.” If the SDSHC can do something to help with activities in your area, please let us know. I look forward to visiting with each of you as we work together.

Doug Sieck

Chairman, South Dakota Soil Health Coalition