



Celebrating One Year

Soil Visions

August 2016 Issue:

Meet the New Coordinator

Josh Lefers is the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition's new Coordinator. His role is primarily board support and representing the coalition in circumstances that the board cannot attend. He works on developing and fulfilling grants and cooperative agreements, promoting and developing of events. Handling the behind-the-scenes correspondence and creating new partnerships to advance the mission of the coalition.

When asked what he hopes to accomplish in his role he said "To see broad and deep appreciation of the role soil health plays in our state. From economics, to society (recreation, clean water and air, beautiful surroundings), to protection of the environment, soil is the base upon which we build. This not only applies to farmers and ranchers, but to every citizen that eats, drinks, and breathes."

Josh lives in Corsica, SD with his wife and three daughters as well as their small herd of cattle. He attended South Dakota State University for Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences. During his time with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, he was able to see first hand what was happening. Lefers states that "There was rapid conversion of grassland to cropland occurring in my area."



It quickly became apparent to him that "we could not focus on an agency to produce our wildlife and a farmer to produce our food. They need to work together to create working lands that provide for human needs while not diminishing long-term ecological value."

From this experience he has gained new perspective "Soil health does not start at my fence and end at the creek, or at the edge of town. It is a mindset that works continually across the landscape. It takes neighbors, government, and organizations like this one to set up a "big picture" approach to improving our lives and families through improving the quality of our soil."

So far what he enjoys most about his position is "the excitement of those I work with. I get to work with passionate people that want to see real change in their operations, county, state, and world." Josh Lefers is very dedicated to improving soil health, he is a great addition to the Coalition.



Soil Health Mentor Network

The NRCS, SDACD, individual conservation districts and the SD Soil Health Coalition have established a **Soil Health Mentor Network for South Dakota**. When they enrolled in Voices, many the now nearly 100 SD Voices for Soil Health indicated they would be willing to be a mentor for soil health management practices.

Angela Ehlers, SD Association of Conservation Districts (SDACD), Pierre, and Al Miron, SD Soil Health Coalition, Sioux Falls, have worked out details for the SD Soil Health Mentor Network. Mentor volunteers can participate as much, or as little, as convenient for them and for specific topics that they are interested in. “We all know that schedules and workload get crazy,” says Ehlers “The initial questions for the mentors includes a category for how much time they are able to commit for mentoring a fellow ag producer. Sometimes, a simple phone call is all that is wanted or needed, or, folks could travel between their farms or ranches.”

The Soil Health PR Intern Rebecca Starkenburg, Brookings, has been contacting volunteer Voices farmers and ranchers. Miron is pleased that the network is becoming a reality. “Managing a successful agricultural operation can be challenging,” says Miron, “people who have questions or need a sounding board can get connected with other ag producers who have faced similar situations.” Miron emphasizes that any information that a mentor or mentee discusses will be confidential between the parties involved.

“The Soil Health Mentor Network is method for people to connect and communicate with other ag producers about their curiosities or challenges with implementing soil health management practices,” says Colette Kessler, Public Affairs, Pierre with the NRCS South Dakota. “It’s great when you have a relationship where you can call someone up and they can help you think things through to see how something might fit your operation.”

A brochure introducing the network is attached. Conservation districts, NRCS, or anyone can use the brochure. Once a person becomes an official Mentor, they will be part of a directory that will not be posted online, but will be shared with the mentees. The directory has enough detail for topic-specific questions, for example, equipment modifications, transitioning to no-till, cover crops, managing residue, etc. The directory will include contact info for agency and university staff specializing in soil health with the mentors with their respective area of expertise.

Anyone interested in becoming a soil health mentor, or being a mentee, should contact their local USDA NRCS, conservation district, or Josh Lefers, Coordinator for the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition at (605) 770-2989 or joshlefers@hotmail.com.

Download the free PDF brochure [here](#). Printed copies of the folded brochure are available by contacting either Josh Lefers or Colette Kessler Colette.kessler@sd.usda.gov or (605) 220-1765



RFD-TV launches the 8th Season of "Out on the Land" starting in July 2016!

In the spring of 2016, the Out on the Land program host Larry Butler and his camera crew visited three outstanding farming and ranching operations: The Cammack Ranch, Union Center, The Rock Hills Ranch with the Perman Family, Lowry, SD, and the Jorgenson Partnership, Ideal, SD. The trip was made possible by the generous support of the SD Grassland Coalition, the SD Soil Health Coalition and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Cammack Ranch	Soil Health Discussion	Jorgensen Land & Cattle	Perman's Rock Hills Ranch
5:30am Fri July 29	6:00pm Tues Aug 2	6:00pm Tues Aug 16	6:00pm Tues Aug 30
6:00pm Tues Oct 25	5:30am Fri Aug 5	5:30am Fri Aug 19	5:30am Fri Sep 2
5:30am Fri Oct 28	6:00pm Tues Nov 1	6:00pm Tues Nov 15	6:00pm Tues Nov 29
	5:30am Fri Nov 4	5:30am Fri Nov 18	5:30am Fri Dec 2

The episodes will also posted on the Out on the Land web page. Go to <http://www.outontheland.com/> and click on "Watch the Show" then select Season 8 and respective Episode number. ***Check your local programming guide.***

RFD TV <http://www.rfdtv.com/>

DirectTV - Channel 345 | DISHNetwork - Channel 231, 9398 and 231 HD | Midco Cable - Channel 131

Out on the Land [View Show Page](#) | [Watch Videos](#) | <http://www.outontheland.com/>

Exploring American landscapes and discovering how ranchers, farmers and other landowners take care of their land is what "Out On The Land" viewers will see with host Dr. Larry Butler. Food, fiber, clean air, healthy soils, clean abundant water, healthy wildlife habitat and more are products of landowners' and managers' conservation stewardship.

Dow AgroSciences is the presenting sponsor of "Out On The Land" as Dr. Butler brings it weekly to the RFD-TV program lineup. Doc's passion for natural resource conservation, on working farms and ranches, was born from more than 35 years of conservation experience. He traveled across the nation experiencing the beauty and benefits of well-managed farms and ranches. He met and worked with some of the finest land stewards and he brings their stories to you each week.

Innovative conservation practices are highlighted and the landowners and managers are showcased. Many episodes contain a land management tip segment and the audience can refer to www.outontheland.com for more details.

The subjects are limitless. Features include; water conservation, grazing management, conservation on croplands, rangelands, pasturelands, and forest lands, wildlife management techniques, prescribed burning to restore lands choked by invasive plants, proper methods to build fences, award winning stewardship of natural resources on working lands, educating leaders of tomorrow, and much more.

Dr. Butler believes farmers, ranchers, and landowners want to hear about other landowners' conservation successes. Out On The Land is the venue for those conservationists to tell others about their successes in an educational, entertaining and professional presentation.



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