



# Soil Visions

## Events

**Nov. 15** - Minnehaha Co. Cover Crop tour-Starts at Lutheran Church 2.25 miles west of Crooks

(Contact Josh Lefers for more info)

**Nov. 21**- Managing Soil, Maximizing Profit-Best Western Plus Ramkota Hotel, Sioux Falls

(Contact Anthony Bly for more info)

**Nov. 29** - Annual Meeting, Ag Horizons Ramkota River Center, Pierre, SD

(Contact Josh Lefers for more info)

**Dec.12-16** - SDGLC Winter Road Show with Dwayne Beck: Belle Fourche, Winner, Watertown, Yankton, Chamberlain

(Contact Judge Jessop for more info)

Josh Lefers - [joshlefers@hotmail.com](mailto:joshlefers@hotmail.com)

Judge Jessop - (605)-280-0127



Thank you to Lizabeth & Steve Sigdestad, Pierpont, SD. for helping present "The Economics of Healthy Soils" at East Dakota Water Conference at SDSU campus in Brookings on Thursday, October 27th. The Sigdestads have transitioned their newly leased land into no-till systems in Day County and are proving success through economics reports and yields.

## Creative Tillage

Anthony Bly, SDSU Extension, Soils Field Specialist, Sioux Falls, SD.

In a number of tilled fields this fall there appears to be an awareness of soil health issues, however incorrect. Creative or recreational tillage has been applied to certain upland areas of the field to possibly control rill and gully erosion while not tilling the drainage ways (photo). The thought process behind the tillage pattern used in the picture assumes that water will run-off the steeper slopes and the absence of tillage in the waterways will slow or prevent gully erosion. This is only a band aide approach to solving a bigger problem with water infiltration into the soil on the hill slopes and the waterways. A correct way to solve this problem would be to stop tillage, let the soil develop structure, allow earthworms and plant roots to form pores and structure in the soil, build soil carbon/organic matter from stopping tillage which also improves soil water storage and stop water run-off by improving water infiltration into the soil. Stopping the tillage is not the total answer either. Improved soil health is achieved by using diverse crop rotations, cover crops when possible, and integrating livestock.

The diverse crop rotations slow and prevent pest resistance, provide different rooting patterns for improved soil structure development, some crops add more carbon while others more N, and it provides crop producers the ability to included cover crops. Diverse cover crop blends provide a food buffet for soil biology while keeping a living root in the soil to promote soil structure formation through root/microbe nutrient and energy exchange. Livestock benefit from cover crop forage and return/distribute nutrients back to the soil. Livestock grazing in the winter provides additional plant residue breakdown and nutrients returned to the soil when soil biology is dormant. For more information about soil health topics visit USDA/NRCS soil health references:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/soils/health/assessment/?cid=stelprdb1237387>

The South Dakota Soil Health Coalition <http://www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/>

or the South Dakota No-till Association <http://www.sdnottill.com/>.



Photo Credit: Sara Berg, SDSU Agronomy Field Specialist, Sioux Falls, SD.

## Weed Control & Soil Health Go Hand-in-Hand

[Gared Shaffer](#)

Want another great article to read see the link below, Gared Shaffer a SDSU weed scientist attended the Soil Health School.

<http://igrow.org/agronomy/corn/weed-control-soil-health-go-hand-in-hand/>

**OUT ON THE LAND**

SEASON 8

EPISODE 96  
CAMMACK RANCH  
6:00 P.M. Tue Oct. 25  
5:30 A.M. Fri Oct. 28

EPISODE 97  
SOIL HEALTH DISCUSSION  
6:00 P.M. Tue Nov. 1  
5:30 A.M. Fri Nov. 4

EPISODE 99  
JORGENSEN LAND & CATTLE  
6:00 P.M. Tue Nov. 15  
5:30 A.M. Fri Nov. 18

EPISODE 101  
PERMAN'S ROCK HILLS RANCH  
6:00 P.M. Tue Nov. 29  
5:30 A.M. Fri Dec. 2

EPISODE 103  
IMPORTANCE OF SD GRASSLANDS  
6:00 P.M. Tue Dec. 18  
5:30 A.M. Fri Dec. 16

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## “BE PATIENT, DON’T TILL COVER CROPS” ADVISES NRCS AGRONOMISTS

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE, Huron, SD, October 26, 2016—“Have no fear, let Mother Nature handle the residue from fall cover crops,” says Jason Miller, Conservation Agronomist, Pierre, SD.

The photos show a prevent plant field with a cover crop mix during the late fall growth period and again in the spring after decomposition. The vegetation produced by the cover crop breaks down over winter. “There is no need to mechanically work the ground,” explains Miller. “The cover crops plants in this field produced a tremendous amount of biomass. With these brassica plants being 80-90 percent water, then, over the winter, they decompose nicely leaving little residue on the soil surface.”

In this particular prevent plant field, the farmer wanted the cover crop vegetation to use the excess water and the protect the soil from erosion for the remainder of the year. “For added soil health benefits, farmers can add other species to the cover crop mix to add diversity in their crop rotation,” explains Miller.

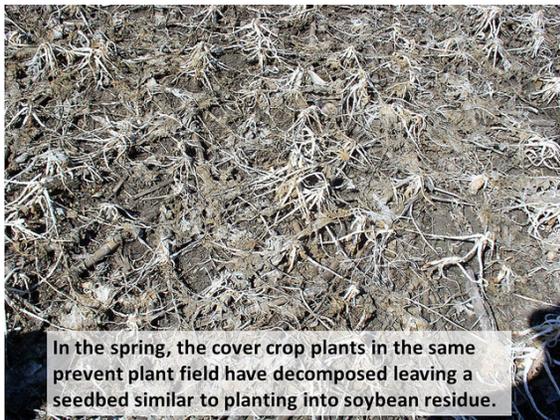
“As the brassicas over winter, they will break down to add organic matter and release soil nutrients which will be available to crops the following year. The spring seedbed will appear similar to planting into soybean stubble,” says Miller. “No fall or spring tillage is needed.”

“Be patient,” he says, “why needlessly spend money on diesel fuel when Nature will do the work for you? And, you’ll reap the benefits of healthier soil with better structure.”

Anyone interested in learning more about cover crops and other soil health management practices should contact their local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for a free consultation.

**Photos can be downloaded from our free [NRCS South Dakota photo gallery](#).**

This prevent plant field has good late fall cover crop growth.



In the spring, the cover crop plants in the same prevent plant field have decomposed leaving a seedbed similar to planting into soybean residue.



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