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Soil Health, It Matters!

Governor Kristi Noem proclaimed Soil Health Awareness Week the week of February 17, 2022. SD Soil Health Coalition and partners shared the importance of the five principles of soil health throughout the week.

Agriculture's success as the number one industry in South Dakota speaks volumes to our residents from young to old and consumer to producer. Knowing the importance of soil health to your land, operation, and South Dakota provides the stepping-stone for success for our state. Soil Health affects everyone and the wide-spread adoption occurs when unified partnerships together amplify the overall importance.

Johnathon Neuharth, son of Levi and Crystal Neuharth and Brian Johnson shared the impact of soil health on their operations after Doug Sieck set the stage of the program at the Capitol. For additional information www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org



Soil Health Conference Photos and Winning Essay

See Page 4 to view photos from the 2022 Soil Health Conference and read Nicole Baumann's student contest winning essay!

Annual awards, student contest winners announced at Soil Health Conference

South Dakota State University Extension Soils Field Specialist Anthony Bly was presented with the 2022 Friend of Soil Health Award during the 2022 Soil Health Conference hosted by the South Dakota Soil Health Coalition, Jan. 18-19, in Aberdeen, SD.

Coalition Board Member Dan Forgey said that Bly's work has touched just about everyone in South Dakota agriculture.

"He has done a tremendous amount for the Coalition," Forgey said. "Every time we turn around and need something, he's always there."

Bly noted that while soil health was a "forgotten science for many years," many people are beginning to recognize its importance. "It's really great," he said. "I'm living the dream!"



Jorgensen Land and Cattle in Ideal, SD, was also announced as the 2022

Legacy Award winner. The Jorgensen operation includes Bryan Jorgensen, his son Nick, his brother Greg, and his nephew Cody. Together they operate a hunting lodge, a diverse cow/calf and bull development operation, as well as a 12,000-acre no-till crop operation growing feedstuffs, feed grains, and certified seed. In addition to no-till practices, the Jorgensens use cover crops, diverse crop rotations, livestock integration on cropland, and minimal insecticide applications. The family has been adept at documenting the benefits of their soil health practices and sharing that information with others.

The Legacy Award was created to honor past board member Al Miron who passed away suddenly in November of 2017. He left behind a lifelong legacy of conservation and commitment to increasing soil health.

Student contests

As part of the Soil Health Conference, the Coalition conducted student photo and essay contests. "Our future relies with our youth, shared Cindy Zenk "keeping the importance of encouraging and educating our youth at the forefront of SDSHC's yearly goals ." Each contest had three categories: post-secondary, high school, and middle school. The awards for the post-secondary category were \$400 for first place and \$200 for second place. The awards for the high school and middle school categories were \$200 for first place and \$100 for second place. All first and second place winners will also receive hoodies.



Matthew Mork



SDSU student Ashilyn Hulstein won first place in the post-secondary student photo contest with this photo of her father walking through a soybean field. "He has taught me so much about agriculture and has shown me that it isn't just about planting a seed and harvesting the crop but it's also about protecting and taking care of the land as well," Hulstein said. Courtesy photo.

In the photo contest, students could submit photos that portrayed one of two different contest themes: diversity and legacy. In the post-secondary category, Ashilyn Hulstein of South Dakota State University, won first place and Riley Leeson of SDSU won second place. In the high school category, Karlie Stiefvater of McCook Central High School won first place, and Kayla Jordan of Clark High School won second place. In the middle school category, Izaac Richards of Bon Homme Middle School won first place, and Addison Timmons of Deuel Middle School won second place.

In the essay contest, students could submit essays to explain how soil health will affect their future careers or how soil health practices make agricultural operations more resilient. In the post-secondary category, Nicole Baumann of SDSU won first place and Ashilyn Hulstein of SDSU won second place. In the high school category, Matthew Mork of Webster High School won first place, and Seth Schoon of Sunshine Bible Academy won second place. In the middle school category, Izaac Richards of Bon Homme Middle School won first place, and Sienna Martinell of Deuel Middle School won second place.

All recognized student contest entries can be found at www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/soil-health-conference/students/.

Membership Minute: Elmer and Jane Burggraff

Elmer and Jane Burggraff farm on a small acreage near Redfield, SD. Their family includes daughter Vanessa, son Lincoln and his wife Erin, daughter Desiree and her husband Ty, and grandsons Clayton and David.

The Burggraffs raise vegetables, pasture pork, broilers, rabbits, and eggs without using chemicals or GMO varieties. They have been using no-till practices for 15 years, and they have been planting cover crops, using soil cover, and operating without chemicals or synthetic fertilizers for 3 years.

Elmer said he decided to pursue soil health practices because "it is a form of agriculture that is close to taking care of God's creation the way I believe is pleasing to him." He enjoys going out into the garden or pasture and seeing all the healthy, happy life.

He hopes more people learn about the health benefits of eating rabbit meat and how easy it is to raise rabbits. Rabbit meat is rich in high-quality proteins, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin B12, calcium and potassium. It is also lean and low in cholesterol.

Elmer said the most important lesson he has learned has been that healthy food can be raised without large amounts of fossil fuel inputs by using cover crops and proper rotation of grazing animals.



Elmer and Jane Burggraff raise broilers and eggs in addition to vegetables, rabbits, and pasture pork near Redfield, SD. Courtesy photo.

2021 Coordinator Comments

2021 SD Soil Health Coalition reached thousands of producers, students, professionals, influencers and partners promoting our mission of improved soil health. Reflecting back although circumstances changed how we messaged we still worked hard for SDSHC members and agriculture. Snapshot of our undertakings! Contact me if you would like the 2021 Calendar of Activities list or Financial report.



SDSHC would like to thank you for your support, working for our vision of a collective effort to increase sustainable ag production through diversification and improved soil health. Watch for upcoming sitdowns and field tours. Want to host one?

Reach out to share ideas and what you are doing on your operation! 605-280-4190

Best regards,
Cindy

Keep those resolutions! One step forward at a time is improvement!!



Events

March 1

Crop Hour
SDSU Extension
Precision Ag - Managing
Soil Moisture

March 2

Crop Hour
SDSU Extension
Precision Agriculture and
Sustainability

March 3

Crop Hour
SDSU Extension
Precision Profitability
Analysis and Carbon
Conservation

March 8-9

Sioux Empire Water
Festival

Sioux Falls SD

March 10

Board of Directors
Meeting
Pierre, SD

March 25-26

Ag Friday Ag Day
Sioux Falls SD

May 12

Dakota Lakes Tour
1:00pm Pierre, SD

June 21-23

West River
Grazing School
Wall, SD

July 12-15

Young Producers
Ranching for Profit School
Huron, SD

July 26-28

East River
Grazing School
Marvin, SD

Aug. 31-Sept. 2

South Dakota
Soil Health School
Garretson, SD

Access Our Events

Calendar [HERE](#).



2022 Soil Health Conference Photos



The South Dakota Soil Health Coalition thanks all sponsors, speakers, panelists, attendees, and viewers for making this year's conference a success.

The 2023 Soil Health Conference will be held Jan. 24-25, 2023, at the Best Western Plus Ramkota Hotel in Sioux Falls, SD.



How do soil health practices make agricultural operations more resilient?

South Dakota State University student Nicole Baumann won first place in the 2022 Soil Health Conference student essay contest post-secondary category with this essay.

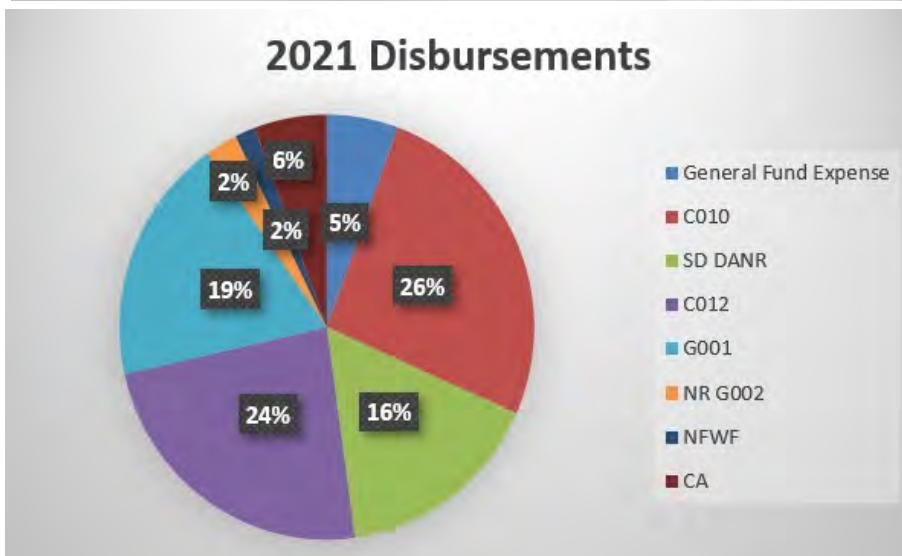
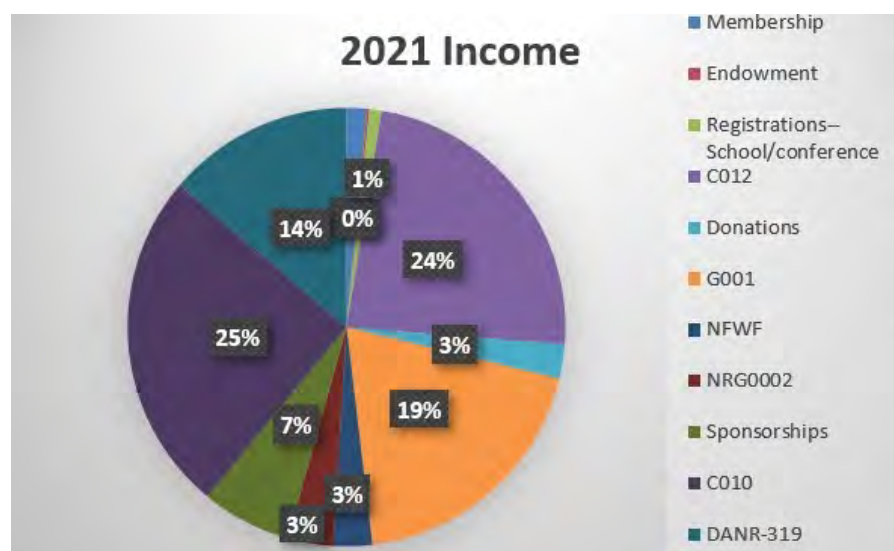
This past summer I had the opportunity to participate in an internship where I worked closely with a soil and water conservationist. Every day I worked one-on-one with producers improving their grazing and cropping systems through their management of the land and soil — mainly through implementation of the soil health principles. Each individual I worked with was at different stages in their management goals. In a less-than-ideal summer for growing conditions due to the severe drought, I was able to witness firsthand how implementing soil health practices leads to an overall more resilient farm operation.

So many farmers and ranchers across the Midwest watched helplessly while their work and livelihood shriveled in the field. Farming is inherently stressful, and a crisis like we saw with the summer drought only increased the stress farmers faced. Taking the initiative to invest in your soil is a direct investment to the profitability of your farm and its future. A healthy soil, when taken care of, protects you no matter what mother nature decides to throw your way. Farming systems that work to build soil health through diversity and

continuous living cover provide multiple benefits. These systems restore nutrient and water cycles, reducing the need for chemical inputs and irrigation. They improve wildlife habitat, restore landscape hydrology, and return carbon to the soil. They provide a greater diversity of food that is more nutrient-dense and provide greater resilience in response to stressors, be that natural or man-made. Locally derived soil nutrition and locally distributed food keeps money in our community, builds economic resilience, and restores food sovereignty — farming in a way that builds soil health fuels abundance.

A recent mentor of mine has a saying that “agriculture, done well, heals.” The drought brought many frustrations. When everyone seemed to be at wit’s end, “agriculture, done well, heals” was the mantra. Healthy soil is defined as the ability of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem. Nature is resilient, as are farmers. It just took a reminder that it will rain again, and when it does, those soils supporting a vital living ecosystem will drink and breathe. Then they will go to work. After this past summer I believe this to be true. I believe that agriculture done well heals the soil, heals the land, heals the economy, heals the community, and heals the farm for hopefully many generations to come.

2021 Financial Statement



Registration is officially open for the 2022 Soil Health School!

The 2022 Soil Health School is already shaping up, and space is limited, so don't wait to sign up for this excellent combination of field exercises, classroom instruction, and discussions led by soil health experts and producers! The School will be hosted **Aug. 31-Sept. 2** on the farms of Anthony Bly and Bruce Carlson near **Garretson, SD.**

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Quality Inn in Brandon, SD, at a rate of \$98.10 per night for attendees. Learn more about this event at www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/event-calendar/soil-health-school/.



Membership elect 2022 Board of Directors

During the SDSHC annual meeting, three seats were elected to three year terms. Reelected to the board include Terry Ness, Pierre and Shawn Freeland, Caputa. Dan Forgey announced that he would not run for another term on the SDSHC Board of Directors. SDSHC Chairman Neuharth recognized Dan for his years of service to the coalition. David Kruger was elected to fill the open spot on the Board. He and his wife, Nancy, grow corn, soybeans, spring wheat with the occasional winter wheat and rye near Twin Brooks, SD, with their daughters, Maggie and Katie.

Kruger attended Milbank High School and graduated from Lake Area Technical College in 1991 with a degree in ag production. He is a township supervisor, a Gideons International member, and serves on the Lake Area Technical College No-till Demonstration Farm Advisory Board and the Grant County Weed Board. He started using no-till practices in 1993 and began incorporating cover crops in 2010. He used strip tillage in the early years to help make the transition to no-till. He has also experimented with 60-inch corn.

Kruger's goals include focusing on the long-term picture of soil health and reducing wind and water erosion while increasing water infiltration rates. He believes the best definition of soil health is "increased yields and profits while reducing inputs." Further information on the board of directors can be found <https://www.sdsoilhealthcoalition.org/board-and-staff/board-members/>



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