

Two Farmer's Toolbox Field Days Held in April

The Snyder County Conservation District (SCCD), in cooperation with Penn State Extension and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) held two field day events in April titled "Farmer's Toolbox Field Days." One was held at the Beaver Community Fairgrounds in Beaver Springs on Thursday, April 10, 2014. The other was held where the Middlecreek Valley Antique Association hold their events on grounds managed by the SCCD near Selinsgrove on Friday, April 11, 2014. Twenty farmers and staff members from neighboring conservation district and other cooperating agencies attended the field days.

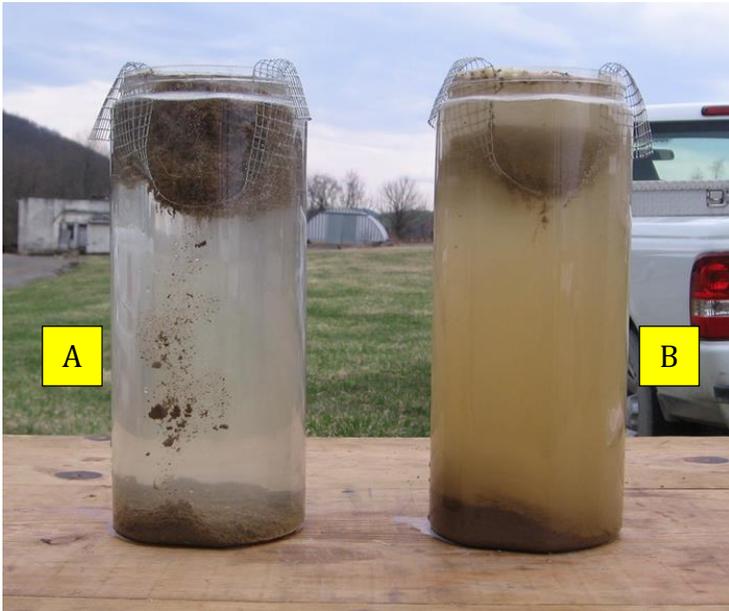


Above: Standing, Cadie Pruss, Acting District Conservationist, NRCS Middleburg Field Office, prepares her audience to observe water runoff and infiltration from five different tillage, vegetative & crop residue management combinations during the rainfall simulator demonstration.

Topics and demonstrations during each of the field day were:

- Using your manure management and conservation (agricultural erosion & sediment) plans as tools to help farmers manage their manure resources, prevent soil loss, keep records and identify needs for improvement
- A presentation on the importance and value of cover crops in a farmer's rotation.
- Soil health demonstration by comparing soil taken from a continuous tilled farm field and a continuously no-tilled farm field.
- A rainfall simulator (imitating a 10 in./hr. rain event) demonstrating the importance of reduced tillage, living ground cover (ex.: cover crops) and crop residue in relation to water runoff and retention.
- Go over the procedures and importance of calibrating your manure spreader.
- A NRCS soil scientist explains what the soil can show us and its capabilities by examining a soil test pit.





***Above Left:** A soil health demonstration comparing continuously no-tilled soil (left, “A”) and continuously conventionally tilled soil (right, “B”). Notice that A’s soil clump on the wire mesh on top is still holding together due to the soil organic matter allowed to accumulate over time. While in B, the soil clump has lost its shape at the wire mesh on top due to lower organic matter content. Tillage allows the air’s oxygen to burn the organic matter and the lost carbon is released into the air instead of binding soil and becoming a source of plant nutrients and other soil organisms’ feedstuff. The water’s coloration differences between the two should also be noted. The cloudy jar B indicates water easily breaking up the soil clump while the clearer water in A shows that the soil clump is more resistant to degradation by water.*

***Above Right:** Jill Weaver, Acting Supervising District Conservationist, Lewisburg NRCS Field Office, performs another soil health demonstration with similar soil types managed differently.*

***Below Left:** Chris Houser, Agronomy Educator, Penn State Extension-Mifflinburg Office, talks about the value of cover crops.*

***Below Right:** Aron Sattler, Soil Scientist, Mill Hall NRCS Soil Survey Office, discusses what soils can tell us in regards to prior management, drainage, compaction and tillage conditions, plant rooting depth and other factors.*



Contact [Barry Spangler](#), Agricultural Conservation Technician, at 570-837-3000, extension 118, for more information about these field day events.

For more information about the following topics, please contact:

- Snyder County Conservation District (570-837-3000)
 - Manure management plan requirements
 - Agricultural erosion requirements
 - Manure spreader calibration
 - Soil & manure test kits
- NRCS-Middleburg Field Office (570-837-0007, extension 3)
 - Conservation plan writing
 - Technical assistance for pasture management, barnyard improvements, etc.
 - Understanding your soils and improving soil health
- Penn State Extension-Mifflinburg Office (570-966-8194)
 - Agronomic crop recommendations
 - Soil test kits and understanding your results

Financial support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) through the Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant, the Clean Water Fund, the Chesapeake Bay Regulatory and Accountability Program (CBRAP) and a Growing Greener Grant.

USDA and Snyder County Conservation District (SCCD) are equal opportunity providers and employers.

Penn State is an affirmative action equal opportunity university. Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Pennsylvania Counties cooperating.

###

Version: 4-22-2014