



Grass Roots for Conservation



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Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District

17746-B County Rd. 34 ~ Goshen, IN 46528 ~ Phone: 574-533-4383 ext. 3 james.hess@in.nacdn.net

Elkhart County Soil and Water Conservation District 2017

Make Your Soil Great Again FIELD DAY

**A meeting and field demonstration on
decision making in cover crop management**

Thursday, September 7, 2017

8:30 AM—3:30 PM

On Farm

21476 County Road 46 • New Paris, IN

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

James Hoorman

(NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist)

Dean Baas

(Michigan State University Extension)

Zach Bolla

(Seed Sales and Consulting)

Demonstration fields include no-till corn and beans planted into 14-way cover crop mix, test strips of cover crop mixes varying in kind and application, and soil pits to inspect root activity and soil health under no-till/cover crop management practices. Sessions will aim to answer your questions on cover crop management decisions, including grazing cover crops.

— THIS IS A FREE EVENT —

Lunch will be provided.

**To register contact the SWCD office at 574-533-4383 ext. 3
or register online at www.elkcoswcd.org**

Make Your Soil Great Again Field Day Meeting Agenda

A meeting and field demonstration on
decision making in cover crop management

September 7, 2017 • 8:30 am - 3:30 pm

21476 County Road 46 • New Paris, IN

- 8:30-8:45** **Welcome** • Jim Hess, Elkhart County SWCD
- 8:45-10:00** **Managing Cover Crops and Cover Crop Residue for Soil Health**
James Hoorman, NRCS Regional Soil Health Specialist
- 10:00-10:20** **Soil Your Undies** • Elkhart County SWCD
- 10:20-10:35** **Break**
- 10:35-11:45** **Managing Cover Crops for Field-Scale Farm Health**
Dean Baas, Michigan State University Extension
- 11:45-12:00** **Available Programs**
Jim Hess, Elkhart County SWCD; Amanda Kautz, USDA-NRCS;
Phil Barker, Elkhart County Surveyor
- 12:00-1:00** **Lunch**
*Special thank you to the Elkhart County Cattlemen's Association
and Kercher's Sunrise Orchards and Farm Market*
- 1:00 - 1:30** **Managing Cover Crops for Grazing**
Zach Bolla, Seed Sales and Consulting
- 1:30-2:00** **Soil Pit #1** • Residue Decomposition: Where does all the residue go?
- 2:00-2:30** **Soil Pit #2** • Root Zone Processes: What's happening near the roots?
- 2:30-3:30** **Soil Pit #3** • Soil Nutrients: What's available to the cash crop?

Dean Baas, Michigan State University Extension

Dean Baas is an Extension Educator in Sustainable Agriculture for Michigan State University Extension. Dean is involved in cover crop, soil health and organic agriculture research and education. Farmers and commodity groups are an integral part of his projects and programs. He is a member of the Midwest Cover Crops Council Executive Committee. He is the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Coordinator for the state of Michigan.

James Hoorman, USDA-NRCS

For the last 15 years, James Hoorman has taught soil health and cover crops at The Ohio State University as an Assistant Professor and Extension Educator. Currently, he works for the USDA-NRCS as the Northeast Region Soil Health Specialist, traveling throughout the region teaching and training professionals and farmers about a wide range of soil health topics, including the effects of management practices on soil compaction.

Zach Bolla, Seed Sales and Consulting

Zach Bolla is a seed and cover crop consultant from LaGrange County, Indiana. Zach is the owner/operator of a grain and cattle farm. He utilizes cover crops as graze and forage for his cattle operation.

Considering Winter Cover Crops

Indiana has become a national leader in utilizing cover crops. Survey information from 2015, the latest available, indicates over 1.1 million acres were planted in Indiana at that time. There are indications from the current survey that this old practice is enjoying a resurgence in popularity, with more cover crops being planted the last couple of years.

Cover crops are something green that's planted after the regular grain crops have been harvested. This keeps a live root continuously growing in the soil, which helps the soil in many ways. The reasons they're planted are to improve soil health, to decrease soil erosion, to increase soil organic matter content and to repair soil compaction problems.

The most commonly used cover crops are grasses, brassicas or legumes, and what's used depends on the goals for your cropping system. Fall seeded plants include wheat, cereal rye, annual ryegrass or sometime oats that winterkill. Radishes help with compaction issues, and Nitrogen-fixing legumes such as clover, winter peas and vetch provide nitrogen are also used. These "downtime" crops protect the soil from wind and water erosion, and enhance soil properties for the following cash crop.

To maximize productivity, and improve the quality and quantity of production, a winter cover crop could be considered. New York State has some interesting results from Triticale. This wheat/rye hybrid has been around since the 1880s. Traditionally, it's used as a forage for

beef cattle, but Dairymen too can receive benefits from forage and silage. It comes on fast like wheat, but overwinters like rye. Since it has some chemical allelopathy, soybeans or corn for silage should be the next crop. It also stops some weed species as another benefit.

Nitrogen, either as fertilizer left over from the previous crop, or as manure or compost added during the warm season, slows its release when the weather cools. Fields that are left with nothing growing, lose that nitrogen to the atmosphere, or worse, to the rain water running off the fields.

This has negative implications for the bottom line and the environment. Nitrogen lost this way impacts water quality in a negative way, and won't be available for the next crop.

These cause summer-time algal blooms from nutrient-rich runoff, and results in closed lakes and beaches. Algae removes oxygen from the water, making it uninhabitable for aquatic life. Fish kills, along with the loss of other species, do a tremendous amount of harm to the ecosystem. This is a driving force of The Dead Zone that occurs in the Gulf of Mexico, which is expected to be larger this year than previously.

One preventive measure is adding cover crops to complete the cropping system. They scavenge nitrogen and other nutrients, keeping them in the field, where they were paid to be. This can also be used in a vegetable garden. The same principals can be used, just scaled down to fit the size. You've paid for the fertilizer, it's best to keep it in place so you get the benefits.



Cover after corn



Oats and radish cover crop close up

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Upcoming Events!

- August 21 SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
- August 26 Middlebury Riverfest:** 9:30 am – 2:00 pm ~ Middlebury Riverfest is a family fun and educational event that celebrates the importance of fresh water and the value of the Little Elkhart River. Family fun events such as games, crafts, a live animal show, kayaking, and nature education can be found at Riverfest.
- Sept. 7 Make Your Soil Great Again Field Day:** 8:30 am – 3:30 pm ~ The Elkhart County SWCD will be hosting a meeting and demonstration on decision making in cover crop management. On Farm 21476 County Road 46, New Paris, IN. ***This is a free event, lunch is provided... To register contact the SWCD office at (574) 533-4383 ext 3 or register online at www.elkcoswcd.org
- Sept. 14 Pasture Walk:** David Miller – 2325 S State Road 5, Topeka, IN (260) 593-0288 Starts at 1:00 pm at the farm.
- Sept. 18 SWCD Board Meeting:** 7:00 PM, SWCD Office, Elkhart County 4-H Fairgrounds, Goshen
- Oct. 12 Pasture Walk:** Larry Yoder – 4370 W 200 N, LaGrange, IN Starts at 1:00 pm at the farm.

SWCD - NRCS CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP DIRECTORY

17746-B County Road 34, Goshen, IN 46528-9261
Ph. (574) 533-4383, ext. 3 • Fax: (855) 408-4690
www.elkcoswcd.org www.stormwaterelkco.org

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Amanda Kautz, District Conservationist

All programs and services of the Conservation Partnership and the Soil and Water Conservation District are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.