

# Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District



## **Board of Supervisors**

Greg Amundson-Chairman

David Burkland

Jeff Clemetson

Ben Draxton

Aaron Smestad

## **2019 SPRING NEWSLETTER**

### **Meet Ben Draxton New SCD Board Member**

My wife Misti and our three daughters have a cow-calf/stocker operation just west of Grand Forks. I've been grazing cattle for the last 7 years in GF county and I wasn't happy with the direction the pastures were going; it seemed like each year the good grasses were decreasing and the poor grasses/weeds were increasing. I started to look for answers, and that led me to the NRCS. I wanted to implement managed grazing, which takes a lot of planning and infrastructure (water tanks and cross fencing). The NRCS was great to work with and I couldn't have implemented the changes necessary as fast as I did without their help.

In the beginning, I was thinking it was all about just getting better grass to feed the cows. Now I see it as a bigger picture, and my hope is that with the changes we made, through time we will be able to bring back native grasses, improve the diversity, increase organic matter, improve the watershed, and create healthier soils, healthier cattle, and healthier people.

Working with the Grand Forks SCD and NRCS was a great experience. I got to see what they were all about. They work hard to conserve our soils and water. It's an important job and something I never thought much about until getting to work with this great group of people. So when asked, I was happy to accept the invitation to be on the SCD board. I'm excited to get to be a part of their mission, and I hope to be able to assist in any way I can.



## **SCD Staff**

*Jill Kvasager - District Clerk*

*Josh Moe - Tree Program Manager*

*Ryan Thorson - District Technician*

*Justin Parks - Watershed Coordinator*

## **NRCS Staff**

*Kevin Gietzen - District Conservationist*

*Lorlie Atkinson - Soil Conservationist*

*Paul Bjorg - Soil Conservation Technician*

*Dan Mager - Soil Conservation Technician*

*Amanda Brinkman-Parker - Wetlands Specialist*

*Sam Tamke - Wetlands Assistant*

Contact us:

Phone: (701) 772-2321 ext. 3

[www.gfscd.org](http://www.gfscd.org)

## **District Grass Drill**

The district has a Great Plains 15 foot no-till drill available for 2019. The drill comes with an operator and fuel. We are contracting with a few producers this year and imagine there will be more calling. Please call soon to get your name on our list.

SCD rates are:

**1-10 acres: \$25.00/acre - 11-39 acres: \$20.00/acre - 40+ acres: \$15.00/acre**



## 2019 Soil Health Workshop

**March 25th:** The Grand Forks County SCD hosted the **Soil Health Workshop**. Local producers listened to a local Red River Valley farmer (**Michael Larson**) speak about his family's operation and their experiences with no-till, cover crops, and how he is managing for soil health. We are all learning what it takes to transition into no-till and how successful this can be in the Red River Valley.

**Russel Hedrick** came to us from North Carolina. At the time of our event, Russel had been on the road for 80 days, traveling the world and speaking about soil health: how he got started, how he markets his farm products, and the steps he has taken on his farm to sustain his operation long term. Staff from the University of North Dakota spoke about the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) and NRCS demonstrated soil health tools, a slake test and a wind erosion simulator. The National Weather Service staff gave a good presentation on this years flood outlook.



**YouTube** - Our district started a YouTube channel and recorded the soil health workshop. If you would like to see what each speaker had to say, open up YouTube and search "Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District."



*NRCS demonstrates a wind erosion simulator*



*Russel Hedrick speaking about a systems approach*

### Farmers Soil Health Team

The district would like to organize a soil health team made up of local farmers in the Valley. This team would consist of those who are interested in learning more about soil health and promoting soil health in Grand Forks County.

If you are interested in joining the team, please call the Soil Conservation District. Together we can host field tours, come up with some unique ways to spread information about soil health, and have some fun along the way!



*UND staff sharing their partnership opportunities*

## New Soil Health Test

After receiving AGVISE laboratories newsletter, we wanted to summarize a new soil health test that is offered at the lab. Overall, soil health depends upon carbon storage in soil along with other factors. When tillage is reduced and crops are rotated with diversity, we expect to see soil organic matter increase. Soil health improves through reduced tillage, but this process can be slow, which makes it difficult to track these changes and adjust your management accordingly. This is where POXC test can really help.

A 17-year tillage experiment in Mandan, ND indicated that conversion to no-till had only slightly increased total organic carbon, but they also found POXC increased significantly!

So what is POXC and why should we care? The POXC soil test is a quick, repeatable test that measures the biologically active C fraction. This portion of organic matter is actively involved in nutrient cycling. In the Mandan study, any change in total organic C was difficult to detect, but the POXC test showed a rapid change in the biologically active C fraction and was able to measure improvement in soil quality. With POXC, producers are able to track soil health changes faster and adjust their management. If you are interested in tracking your soil health over a shorter time frame with more sensitivity, this may be the test for you.



## There's Still Time to Prune!

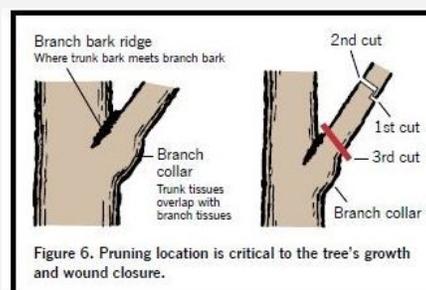
The objectives of pruning are to produce strong, healthy, and attractive plants that complement our property. The main reason homeowners prune is to remove branches that could fall or interfere with the line of sight on driveways or streets. Allow trained professionals to perform pruning on branches that interfere with powerlines. Many issues can be avoided by thinking ahead when planting a tree, being careful not to plant too close to powerlines, structures, or in places that may obstruct your view of traffic.

Annual maintenance pruning, especially on fruit trees, will open the canopy and prevent crowding and branches from impacting each other. This allows better air circulation and sunlight penetration, reduces disease problems, and often results in a better yield of higher-quality fruit.

Newly planted trees should not be pruned immediately. For the first year at least, allow all the branches with foliage to remain; the more branches a tree has, the more carbohydrates it will make during photosynthesis and the faster the tree will recover from transplant shock.

Much of the pruning that landscape plants need can be carried out in late winter or early spring while they are still dormant. This is true for deciduous and coniferous woody plants. Make the cuts just outside the branch collar to avoid damage to the trunk that could lead to internal decay. Do not remove more than 25% of the crown on younger trees, and even less on old, mature trees.

For more information on pruning, check out the NDSU Extension website or our Facebook page.



## English Coulee Project

Going into the spring, we have a surplus amount of water! Eventually, we will dry out and things will become stagnant, and foul smelling algae blooms will return. Across the state, there are several watershed projects going on to address water quality. The SCD along with the ND Dept of Ag has partnered together to help improve the water quality within the English Coulee Watershed.

The types of projects we have worked on over the years has varied. We have assisted ranchers with watering systems and fencing for livestock and also helped cover the cost of replacing failing septic systems. This year we want to provide more assistance to promote the use of cover crops within our watershed and within the county. The project covers 60% of the total cost of qualifying projects. There is no sign up or waiting period for this assistance. Call Justin at our office for more details: 701-772-2321.

## Zero Tillage Community Garden – 2019

By: Lorilie Atkinson

This is the third year for the zero-tillage demonstration garden located in downtown Grand Forks. Zero till is a way to plant and grow plants without disturbing the soil. Minimizing soil disturbance will increase organic matter and microbiological activity, improving soil structure and water use.



We are already seeing soil changes after two years of zero-tillage. Produce is donated to local food pantries. The garden is in downtown Grand Forks, north of the Water Treatment Building on 3<sup>rd</sup> St S between Franklin & Gertrude Ave (see yellow star below).

Watch the GFCSCD Facebook page or call the office to be placed on a contact list to find out about upcoming garden events!

### Soil from Tilled Plot

(Sept 26, 2018)

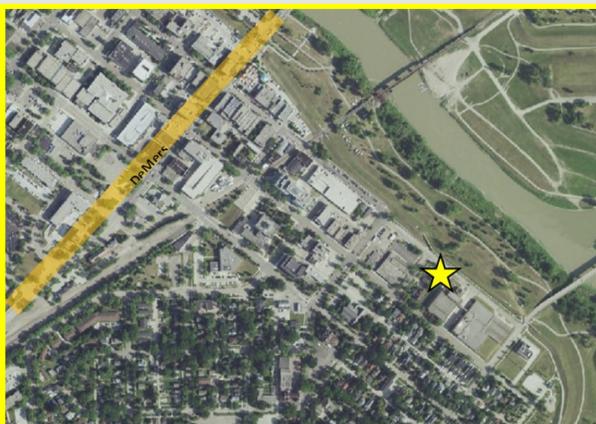


### Soil from Zero Till Plot

(Sept 26, 2018)



### Community Garden Location



## Tree Planting Preparation

Spring is upon us and hopefully we will start to dry out soon. The District has another very busy field season planned. With the delayed spring, we are receiving our trees May 1st and hope to be planting soon after that. It is important for our customers to have their site preparation done as soon as possible, so that we can get to work without making multiple trips.



The soil should be worked up thoroughly, getting rid of any large dirt clumps or grass. This provides better penetration for our tree planter and helps with compaction. The seedlings will die from any air pockets, thus making soil compaction a key to tree survival. Prior to planting, we will be staking tree plantings at your site.

If we are no-till planting your site, the grass needs to be cut very short beforehand. This helps the sod split apart and reseal easily.

For those of you receiving fabric this year, site preparation is even more important. The site needs to be worked well, otherwise the back disks will not be able to pull soil across the edges evenly. Don't be alarmed after we plant trees and you don't get your fabric right away. We have deadlines to get trees in the ground, and we will be back to lay fabric once all the trees are in the ground.

It would also be a **huge help** if our customers can give Josh Moe a call to let him know your site is dry enough and ready to be planted! It is hard to keep track of all the sites and know which ones are ready.

Once the trees are planted, they will need some attention. Watch for weeds and keep track of watering needs. Keep an eye on the first 6" of topsoil, if the soil is dry to the touch, you probably should water. Keep in mind, overwatering can also be detrimental to the seedlings.

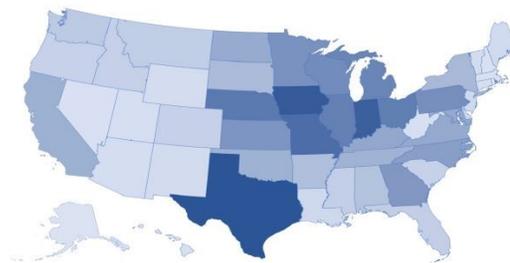
A PRELIMINARY LOOK AT STATE RANKINGS FOR COVER CROP ACREAGE

Tables and figures prepared by Rob Myers, Ph.D.

University of Missouri and NCR-SARE Program

**Table 1. Planted cover crop acres reported in the Census of Agriculture in 2017 and 2012.**

Rank	State	2017 Acres	2012 Acres	% Increase
1	Texas	1,014,145	911,061	11.3%
2	Iowa	973,112	379,614	156.3%
3	Indiana	936,118	596,062	57.1%
11	Minnesota	579,147	408,190	41.9%
<b>18</b>	<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>404,267</b>	<b>213,810</b>	<b>89.1%</b>
23	South Dakota	281,649	149,383	88.5%



**Map representation of the cover crop acres planted by state in 2017.**

Census of Agriculture data can be found at: <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>



**How well is your Septic System working?**

The English Coulee has high levels of nutrients and bacteria. One way to reduce these contaminants is to have an updated, operational **Septic System**. If your system is failing or no longer functioning, and you live within 1 mile of the Coulee, please contact us to see if you qualify for the 60% cost share assistance. Last year, we helped two customers replace their systems which saved them thousands of dollars!

Please call Justin at (701) 772-2321 to talk about the program.

**Managing Saline Sites on your Farm**



NDSU is looking at using cereal rye interseeded in corn and broadcast into soybeans as a management tool on marginally saline soils. They have sites in Aneta, Northwood, and Jamestown. They will continue seeding full season or interseeding cover crops at salinity demonstration sites in Grand Forks, Hillsboro, Wahpeton, DeLamere, and possibly some new locations.

Each project will likely have a field day or bus tour associated with it, so watch for those by visiting the NDSU Soil Health webpage ([ndsu.edu/soilhealth](http://ndsu.edu/soilhealth)). They plan to do a two-day bus tour in northeastern North Dakota to check out the SHARE Farm-Logan Center and various other sites in that area.

They look at some really interesting practices and share valuable research results on their field tours. The use of collaboration and finding out what is working and what isn't is what they are digging into. If you are interest in changing how you manage your saline sites, please contact our office or NRCS staff and we can get working with you on a plan.

# **Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District**

## **Cover Crop Cost-Share Program**

### **2019 Program Overview**

#### **PURPOSE**

The Cover Crop Cost-Share Program will provide a one-time grant award to landowners to conserve, protect, and enhance soil health.

#### **ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Limited to private land managers who have not previously received this grant award. Successful applicants will be those with projects that incorporate cover crops into their current operations (examples include post-harvest or interseeding) OR those that incorporate a diverse cover crop mix (cool and warm season species) in acres that were unable to be planted. Planning assistance is available by the Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District. All are encouraged to apply, but priority consideration will be given to projects that contain the following in a **minimum three year plan**:

- a.) At least 2 out of three years with cover crop incorporation
- b.) Diverse primary crop rotation
- c.) Reduced tillage
- d.) Use of three out of four of the crop types (cool season grasses and broadleaves and warm-season grasses and broadleaves)

#### **FUNDING AVAILABILITY**

A land manager is eligible to receive 50% of the total cost up to a maximum of \$1000.00. Grant funds will be distributed on a reimbursement basis to the land manager. Not every application will be funded, as sufficient funds may not be available to meet the need. Land managers are NOT eligible on NRCS program acres. *Only one award will be given per land manager.*

#### **DEADLINES**

Submit the 2019 Cover Crop Cost-Share Application by **August 20, 2019**.

Paperwork for reimbursement MUST be submitted to the office by **October 31, 2019**.

#### **PROJECT COMPLETION**

Seeding must be completed by **September 10, 2019**.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I am agreeing to the terms stated in the approved application. I understand the award granted is for the year 2019, and seeding must be completed by September 10, 2019. If seeding is not completed by the designated date, I forfeit my award.

GF County SCD programs are available to all residents of Grand Forks County regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical handicap.

The Soil Conservation District works in partnership with a variety of agencies, organizations and individuals. The views and opinions of authors or speakers; educational materials, articles; and presentations are provided for educational purposes. This information may not necessarily reflect the opinions of Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District. Individuals are encouraged to develop their own opinions.

## Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District 2019 Cover Crop Cost-Share Application

Landowner Information		
Landowner name:		
Mailing Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Home Phone:	Work/Cell Phone:	Email:
Project Information		
Legal Description of Property Quarter _____ Section _____ Township _____ Range _____		
Acres:	Soil Type(s):	
Cover crop species:		
Seeding Rate:	Seeding Depth:	
Please describe the <b>THREE</b> year management plan for the proposed project area:		
Estimated Project Cost		
Total Project Cost:	Grant Funds Requested (50% up to \$1000.00 of total cost):	
Please return completed form to the <b>Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District, 4775 Technology Circle STE 1C, Grand Forks, ND 58203</b> or email <a href="mailto:justin.parks1@nd.nacdnet.net">justin.parks1@nd.nacdnet.net</a> .		

## Grand Forks County Soil Conservation District

4775 Technology Circle, Suite 1C,  
Grand Forks, ND 58203



Don't forget your Plantskydd REPELLENT!

Pick some up next time you're in our office.

**Most Effective! Longest Lasting!**

Protect your valuable plantings against deer and rabbits.

### SCD Calendar

April 22nd: Earth Day

April 26th: Arbor Day

May 8th: SCD Board Meeting

May 27th: Memorial Day-Office Closed

June 12th: SCD Board Meeting



Can you name that insect?

### *Spring Surplus Tree Sale!*

*Coming in early June.....*



Phone: 701-772-2321 Ext 3

Webpage: [www.gfscd.org](http://www.gfscd.org)

Like us on Facebook!

Subscribe to our YouTube Channel

### Mission:

*To provide local leadership in the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources through partnerships with individuals, businesses, organizations and government.*

GF County SCD programs are available to all residence of Grand Forks County regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, sexual orientation, mental or physical handicap. "The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer."