

Climate Resiliency: Building Healthy Soils

2023 Proposed Funding

In 2021, BWSR received \$1.35 million in general fund dollars to develop a new cover crop and soil health program. The program is part of a statewide effort to mitigate negative impacts of climate change. In 2023, BWSR is requesting an additional **\$27 million** from the general fund to fully implement this programming and make these funds available to more Minnesota landowners to derive soil productivity, water management and carbon sequestration benefits.

What is soil health?

It is the soil's ability to sustain agricultural crop productivity while providing essential functions such as regulating water, filtering and buffering pollutants, and cycling nutrients without resulting in soil degradation or otherwise harming the environment. A long-term strategy to build soil health will foster more productive crops, improve water quality and create better resilience during extreme weather events.

Principle activities to improve soil health

Increasing adoption of these five principles will build soil by protecting it from erosion and providing a constant food source to the microorganisms that play an essential role in soil health.

- Keep the soil covered.
- Minimize disturbance.
- Keep living roots in the ground.
- Diversify rotations.
- Integrate livestock.

Soil Health improvement is a process

Improving soil health on ag land is a process that takes time to see success. Financial assistance, technical support, agronomic support, and farmer-to-farmer information exchange are just some of the key aspects needed for a robust soil health program. Providing these supports will build farmers' confidence in adapting their operating systems around soil health principles, resulting in large-scale changes over time. Providing these support components to build farmers' confidence as they adapt their operational systems to incorporate soil health principles is a key to seeing systematic, large-scale change over time.

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Top: Cover crop mix growing under corn near Faribault, MN. **Photo credit:** Rice SWCD

Bottom: A field day participant examines a strip tilled field in Grant County. **Photo credit:** Traverse SWCD

