

**The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources and
the University of Minnesota launched a new healthy soils initiative**

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Clean water depends on healthy soil – soil that supports plant growth and can absorb, hold and filter water. Healthy soil, in turn, depends on how people manage the land. The Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) and the University of Minnesota’s Water Resources Center (WRC) have committed to expanding the science of soil health and sharing practical information with farmers, conservationists and others who manage our state’s soils.

Today BWSR and WRC announced a new collaborative program, *the Minnesota Office for Soil Health*. The program will help build local expertise to promote soil health and soil and water conservation. The focus will be on research and outreach to expand the tools and skills of Minnesota’s local conservation delivery community, as well as understanding the economic impacts of land applied soil and water management practices.

The goal is to protect and improve soil resources and water quality by developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of local conservationists, farmers and their advisers.

“Both water quality and agricultural production can be enhanced by innovative soil management practices that result in economic and environmental benefits. This new partnership with the University of Minnesota will deliver applied research and technology to on-farm practices to assure that one of Minnesota’s critical natural assets, its soil, is well-managed for generations to come,” said John Jaschke, Executive Director, BWSR.

"We continue to understand more about soil health as a foundation for thriving farms and quality water resources. This initiative will serve as a conduit that connects the latest soil health research to develop solutions and tools for Minnesota producers, their advisers, and conservation professionals," said Jeff Peterson, University of Minnesota Water Resources Center Director.

Key components of the Minnesota Office for Soil Health include:

- Building knowledge of the importance of soil health in achieving the state’s goals for clean water
- Strengthening networks for sharing information
- Conducting tillage, cover crop, and erosion surveys to measure our progress
- Building workforce technical capacity through training and professional development
- Developing conservation tools and analyzing watershed health impacts and cost effectiveness of soil health practices

Program activities will be guided and advised by a leadership group consisting of university and state staff along with key stakeholders including the United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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BWSR is the state soil and water conservation agency, and it administers programs that prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and protect wetlands.

The 20-member board consists of representatives of local and state government agencies and citizens. BWSR's mission is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.