



# NACD Soil Health Champions Network



Bulletin #6, September 2016

## NACD Invites Soil Health Champions to Denver, Colorado - January 29—February 1

NACD invites all of the Soil Health Champions to attend its 2017 annual meeting in Denver, Colorado, January 28—February 1 at the [Sheraton—Downtown Denver](#).

As special guests, NACD will be recognizing the Soil Health Champions throughout the conference and will make the following opportunities available to the Network.

### Stipend for Expenses

For the first 30 Champions that register, NACD will provide a \$1,000 stipend to cover some of your expenses. The stipend will be paid after the conference upon submittal of the NACD Expense Form and corresponding receipts. Beth Mason will provide the necessary forms to those individuals who attend at a later date. Expenses that would be reimbursed up to \$1,000 could include your registration, hotel lodging at the [Sheraton—Downtown Denver](#), travel, and meals.

### Conservation Expo Booth Area

NACD will provide a booth area in the Conservation Expo Hall for Soil Health Champions to meet, network, and share information on soil health with others in attendance. This year, we will be expanding to allow for

a more spacious, comfortable, and welcoming area to converse with others.



### Soil Health Champion Coffee

Sunday, January 29 from 9:30—11:00 a.m., NACD will hold an exclusive Soil Health Champion coffee—providing time for our champs to make introductions and get to know one another before the conference goes into full swing.

### Focus Groups

NACD asks that those who receive stipends participate in one or more of the focus groups held during the meeting. Your participation will give NACD and conservation partners an opportunity to hear from you on

important conservation topics and programs. Focus groups will last from one hour to 90 minutes. More information on the focus groups will be provided as the meeting approaches.

### Breakout Sessions

Soil health will be the focus of many breakout sessions as well as a Wednesday Symposium. Be sure to bring your questions as most breakout sessions include a time of Q&A!

### Registration and Hotel

Be sure to go to the [NACD website](#) and register for the Annual Meeting.

To make your reservations, visit the [Sheraton—Downtown Denver](#) website and mention you are with the NACD group and will have the special rate of \$169/night + taxes.

For more information on the meeting, please check the [NACD website](#) throughout the fall and check your email for updates.

**“I thoroughly enjoyed attending the conference, meeting other SHC members, attending different sessions, and especially meeting so many people that hold conservation of our natural resources so dear to their heart. I also picked up many ideas from SHC members and breakout sessions that we can use in our farming operation.”**

**~ Ron Willis, Missouri about the 2016 NACD Annual Meeting**

## NACD and the Network Had a Busy July!

As the Soil Health Champions Network grows in membership, NACD continues to promote opportunities for Soil Health Champions to share their wealth of knowledge through outreach. The month of July proved to be a busy month for some of the Network members and NACD staff, promoting good soil health practices as well as the NACD Soil Health Champions Network itself.

### Northern Seed Trade Association

The Northern Seed Trade Association (NSTA) highlighted NACD's Soil Health Champions Network during its annual meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota, last week. NACD's North Central Region Representative, Beth Mason, along with NACD Soil Health Champions Jack Herricks (right) of Cashton, Wisconsin and Mark Ditlevson (left) of Owatonna, Minnesota, presented at the conference and offered practical perspectives on soil health.



Throughout the conference, Herricks and Ditlevson were able to meet with attendees and tell their conservation stories. Both soil health champs have learned a great deal about cover crops, no-till, and other conservation practices over the years, so they had plenty to share! They answered questions about seeding and seeds, application of fertilizer, cover crops, transitioning between crops, and how to build overall soil health.

### NACD Conservation Leadership Forum and Tour

NACD's summer meeting in Minnesota hosted two panels of guest speakers, several expert presentations, extensive networking opportunities and a full day of conservation tours. Soil Health Champions in attendance received complimentary registration and had a special meet-and-greet that turned into a "Get to Know the NACD Soil Health Champions" session as attendees stopped in for coffee and a chat with the group. Each Champion in attendance shared about their operation and a bit about their passion for soil health.

A special session with the University of Minnesota's Dr. Joe Magner highlighted the research he and his students have conducted across southern Minnesota.

### Soil and Water Conservation Society

Soil Health Champions Jon Bednarski (left) and Kevin Jeffries (middle) joined NACD staff the last week in July for the Soil and Water Conservation Society's national conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Jon and Kevin helped man the NACD booth—introducing themselves to attendees and sharing their story. It was a wonderful

opportunity for NACD to highlight two real-life examples of the kinds of members in our Network and the work that our Soil Health Champions do.

### Soil Health Institute

Immediately following the SWCS meeting in Louisville, Beth Mason stayed for the inaugural annual meeting for the Soil Health Institute. As part of a speaker panel, Mason was able to showcase the NACD Soil Health Champions Network and its activities as well as highlight the unique relationship that conservation districts have with the landowners and operators in their state. Since the meeting, Mason has continued to respond to inquiries about this one-of-a-kind national network.



## Soil Health Resources

### A Soil Owner's Manual: How to Restore and Maintain Soil Health

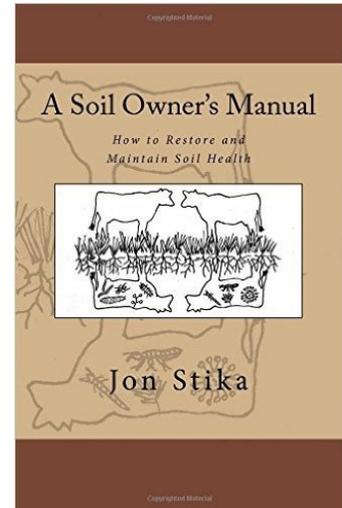
Jon Stika, a former USDA soil scientist and soil health instructor, has recently published a book entitled "A Soil Owner's Manual: How to Restore and Maintain Soil Health." Written in plain language, it outlines how farmers, ranchers, gardeners and others can restore and maintain the health of their soil to be productive, profitable and sustainable.

The goal of this guide is to change the way the reader

thinks about and manages soil—working with, instead of against the processes that naturally govern the soil, increasing profitability and restoring the soil to health.

Ray Archuleta, an NRCS conservation agronomist at the USDA NRCS wrote the book's foreward.

Stika's manual is available in paperback or as an eBook on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



### 2015-2016 Cover Crop Survey

The fourth annual [SARE/CTIC Cover Crop Survey](#) collected data from 2,020 respondents from 48 states and the District of Columbia. The report compiled from this survey was published July 2016. The survey was conducted by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC), USDA's Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Agency (SARE) and the American Seed Trade Association (ASTA) and some of their member companies.

The results are very interesting, and overall, the respondents were considered to be quite enthusiastic about cover crops, including newer trends like grazing cover crops. In the abstract, the report points out that "perspectives [as found in this report] can help policymakers, educators, and conservation advocates chart a course for further adoption of cover crops and even greater success for the farmers who use them." Be sure to click on the link above for both the summary and the report.

## Tennessee and Soil Health

The Tennessee Association of Conservation Districts (TACD) has focused on soil health over the past few years—starting with their state annual meeting, which was followed by six area meetings across the state. Nationally known speakers and advocates such as Ray Archuleta helped rally the troops and get their soil health program off the ground. The Association hired Mike Hubbs as their Soil Health Specialist and expanded the number of soil health resources on their

website to include a FAQ section, which answers common questions about soil health systems, and a place to submit questions to a soil health expert. Other aspects of their website contain soil health videos, documents and also links to other resources on the internet.

Under their Soil Health Program, TACD has created a network similar to NACD's called "[Soil Health Heroes](#)," and that entire group has also

signed on to be NACD Soil Health Champions. This is a total of 23 Tennessee folks who have joined the Network!

A few other states have similar programs as well with some of their participants joining the NACD Soil Health Champions Network. These groups include the [South Dakota Soil Health Coalition](#), [Oklahoma Soil Health Partnership](#), and the [Alabama Soil Champions](#).



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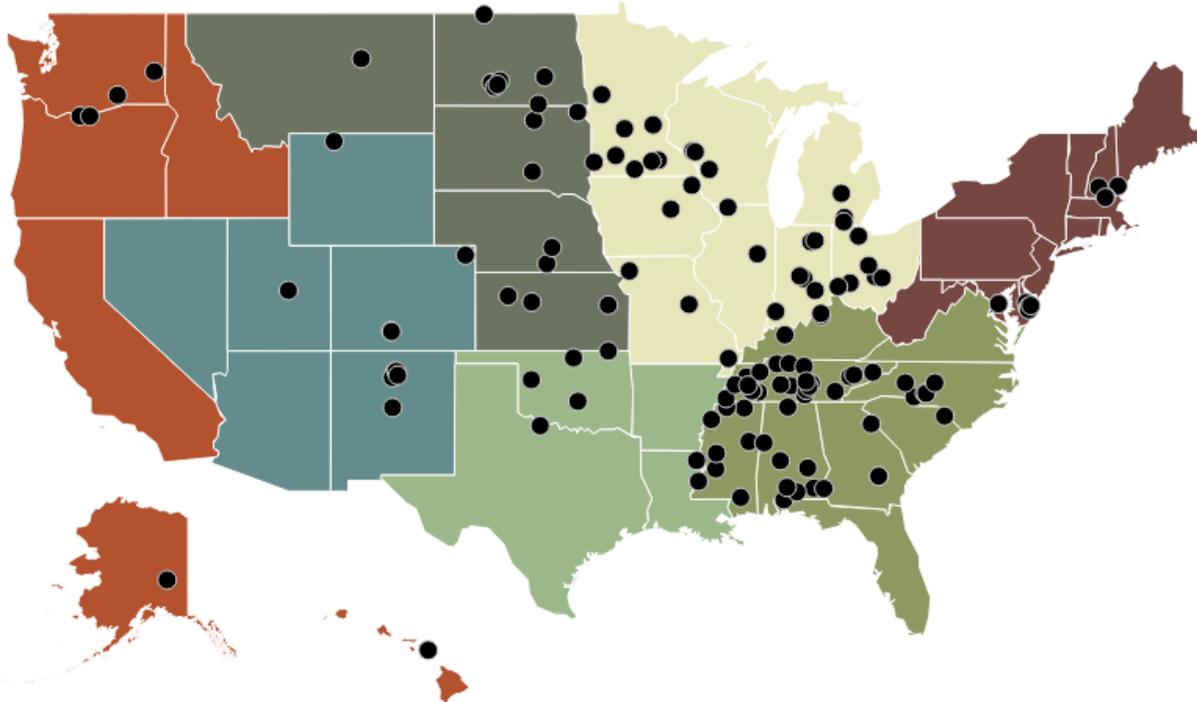
## Upcoming Events

Send us your upcoming national or regional events

### 2017

Jan. 10 - 13: [National No-Till Conference](#), St. Louis, Mo.

Jan. 28 - Feb. 1: [NACD Annual Meeting](#), Denver, Colo.



## Connecting with NACD

NACD has a great team working on your behalf to build and maintain the Soil Health Champions Network. Please feel free to contact any of the staff members below with questions or suggestions.

### NACD Field Representatives

[Click here to see the regional map](#)

Northeast Region—Eric Hansen, Washington, DC, [eric-hansen@nacdn.net](mailto:eric-hansen@nacdn.net), 202-547-6223

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