



Greetings,

August 24, 2018

Last October the American Farmland Trust (AFT) was awarded a Northeast SARE Grant to develop and implement Practical Soil Health Specialist Training which is an advanced training program for agricultural service providers in New York State. Our partners in this project include Cornell University, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell Small Farms Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Soil & Water Conservation Districts, agri-businesses and farmers.

This unique training will provide you with the knowledge to understand the physical, biological and chemical characteristics of soil and the management systems that farmers can employ to improve soil health. We have recruited a diverse cadre of trainees (cover crop specialists, farmers, farm managers, agricultural retailers, agency experts, crop consultants, etc.) to enhance the learning experience and provide the opportunity for you to establish a network of peers with similar interests.

This opportunity is limited to just 20 individuals. Selection of trainees was competitive; you were selected for your prior experience and ability to provide outreach and education to the agricultural community. Please note that the time commitment for this program is significant and will require travel. As previously stated, AFT will provide reasonable travel reimbursement and overnight accommodations for participants over 60 miles away (one way) from the workshop site and lunch at all sessions. However, funds are not available to compensate for your time away from work and you will need to provide your own breakfasts and dinners.

AFT will host five in-person workshops over a 12 to 18-month period, with the first workshop scheduled for September 24-25 in Cortland. The second workshop is scheduled for October 23-24 in Ithaca. The remainder of the workshops will take place at locations across New York, to expose you to multiple cropping systems and soil types. Each workshop will include programming for trainees on day 1, and field visits on day 1 or 2. Guaranteed dates and locations for workshops 2-5 have not yet been set, and trainees will have input into dates and locations for sessions 3-5. Our tentative schedule is as follows:

1. Project Orientation and Soil Health Principles: Orientation to the project and expectations. Soil health principles, functions, and indicators; assessment methods; soil biology and ecology; soil health demonstrations; and resource concerns. Confirmed -September 24-25, 2018, Cortland.
2. Cropping Systems and Cover Crops: addressing field crops and vegetable systems on crop rotation; benefits of cover crops; cover crop characteristics and seed mixes; adapting cover crop management for differing purposes, soils, and farms; planting dates and methods; harvesting/grazing options; weed control/pest management; and termination. October 23-24 (tentative) 2018, Ithaca.
3. Adaptive Nutrient Management for Soil Health: nutrient cycling; how soil biology impacts nutrient management; nutrient scavenging; fertilizer recommendations; modeling and tools; manure management and application. Late Winter 2019, site TBD.



4. Eliminating, Reducing, or Modifying Tillage for Soil Health: benefits of less tillage; no-till systems; planting green; tillage equipment; manure application equipment; equipment field demonstrations. August 2019, tentatively at Empire Farms Days, Seneca Falls.
5. Customizing Soil Health Systems to the Farm and Farmer: the economics of soil health; grazing systems; communication skills and storytelling; preparation for participant education and technical assistance activities. November 2019, site TBD.

This program is the first of its kind in New York State and thus, we will seek input during and after the workshop series to modify and improve the curriculum. The training is progressive, and we will require trainees to attend at least four of the five workshops. For workshops missed, trainees are expected to review the materials covered (recorded presentations/demonstrations, handouts, etc.) Trainees will receive a certificate certifying completion of practical soil health specialist training and CEU's are available.

In addition to attendance requirements, your participation will require several activities on your part to complete the training. It is essential that you are committed to completing the course and associated tasks. Please consider them carefully, they are on the following page.

We realize this is a significant commitment of your time, but this training is designed to give you an in-depth look at practical ways to help farmers manage for healthy soil in New York. You were selected as someone who is already helping farmers and clients with these issues, and we believe this training will take you beyond soil health and cover crops 101, both for your benefit and for your client's, or your operation's benefit.

To affirm your commitment to attending the workshops and fulfilling your obligations, please sign below and return this letter to Aaron Ristow by **August 31, 2018**. Once signed, please email it to [aristow@farmland.org](mailto:aristow@farmland.org). You may also send it to Aaron at 606 Keith Street, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Do not hesitate to contact Jeff Ten Eyck ([jteneyck@farmland.org](mailto:jteneyck@farmland.org); (607) 423-4892) or Aaron Ristow ([aristow@farmland.org](mailto:aristow@farmland.org); 607-745-7165) with questions, concerns or suggestions.



In the space below please provide your current contact information:

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First and Last Name

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Mailing Address

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Contact Phone Number

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Email address

By signing below, I agree to:

- Pay the \$100 participation fee by September 12, 2018 (payable via check or credit card)
- Attend the first project orientation and introductory workshop on September 24 and 25 in Cortland
- Attend at least three of the four remaining workshops which will be held between October 2018 and December 2019 (tentative schedule above).
- Administer at least one farmer soil health related event or provide one on one soil health technical assistance to at least five farmers by December 31, 2020.
- Complete initial and close-out surveys along with workshop evaluations
- Track and file quarterly reports on educational and technical assistance activities
- Develop an outreach plan (AFT format and assistance provided)
- Develop a teacher tool kit (AFT assistance provided)

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Signature

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Date



Lastly, please let us know below if you will require one overnight room and mileage reimbursement for workshops 1 (Cortland) and 2 (Ithaca).

**Cortland, New York. September 24 and 25, 2018**

I will require one overnight room in Cortland (circle one): YES NO

I will require mileage reimbursement for travel to Cortland (circle one) YES NO.

Approx. Mileage Roundtrip\_\_\_\_\_

**Ithaca, New York. October 23 and 24 (tentative), 2018**

I will require one overnight room in Ithaca (circle one): YES NO

I will require mileage reimbursement for travel to Ithaca (circle one): YES NO.

Approx. Mileage Roundtrip \_\_\_\_\_

Once again, congratulations on your acceptance into the program!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ristow".

Aaron Ristow  
Agricultural Stewardship Program Manager  
American Farmland Trust  
[aristow@farmland.org](mailto:aristow@farmland.org), 607.745.7165