

## Delay the Burn

See More Benefits by Keeping Your Cover Crops Alive Longer

*A Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Demonstration Project*

### **We are looking for 4 grain farmers willing to demonstrate the benefits of cover crops.**

No farmer wants their cover crops to grow big enough to interfere with their planting operation, but there are some big benefits still to be had from as few as two more weeks of growth past the average burn-down date. These include moisture retention during dry spells, more organic matter, less compaction, more rainwater infiltration, and an increase in the amount of Nitrogen that stays in the soil profile. Most recent model planters can easily handle up to several additional weeks of grass cover crop growth.

This project will select 4 farmers from across Maryland who are willing to show other farmers the difference between a normal cover crop burn-down date and a late burn-down date. These farmers will work with project staff in the fall to select one of their fields as a demonstration field. Demonstration fields will be divided into strips the width of a sprayer boom. Some strips will have no cover crops, some strips will have cover crops with a normal burn-down date, and other strips will have cover crops with a late burn-down date.

### **Demonstration farmers agree to:**

- Participate in NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant research project (Mirsky et al.)
- Designate 1 grain field (at least 5 ac.) per year as a demonstration area for 2 years
- Delay cover crop termination until after May 1 one third of the demonstration field
- Pay for normal operating expenses
- Host and attend a spring planting demonstration and a summer workshop (all costs and planning covered by project staff)

### **Demonstration farmers will receive:**

- **\$1000** (\$500 per year for 2 years)
- The entire harvest from the demonstration field
- Technical support and assistance
- Interesting data and results about their field

### **Maryland target areas:**

- West Central (Frederick or Carroll Counties)
- Southern (Prince George's or Anne Arundel counties)
- Upper Shore (Cecil or Kent counties)
- Lower Shore (Dorchester, Talbot, or Caroline counties)

## **Interested? Questions? Contact Project Team Leader:**

**Nevin Dawson**  
**Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator**

### [Caroline County Office](#)

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- **Project Team**

- Nevin Dawson (Team Leader/PI), University of Maryland Extension, Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator: SARE Building Soil Health PDP PI, SARE state coordi
- Rachel Yeatman, NRCS, Soil Conservationist: County level technical assistance for producers
- Christy Brown, NRCS, Conservation Agronomist: state level agronomy assistance programs; farmer
- John Johnson, Johnson Farm, Farmer: several decades of cover crop experience
- Dawn Bradley, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Cover Crop Program Administrator: runs state cover crop incentive program
- Ben Hushon, The Mill, Agronomist: advises producers, sells cover crop seeds
- Weida Stoecker, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Education Coordinator and Agriculture Outreach: runs educational programming for public and producers; vegetable farmer
- Travis Martin, Dawn Biologic/DAWN Equipment Co., Territory Representative: sells cover crop equipment

- **Additional Advisors**

- Raymond Weil, University of Maryland, Soil Scientist: cover crop research experience
- Steve Mirsky, USDA ARS, Soil Scientist: cover crop research experience
- Michel Cavigelli, USDA ARS, Soil Scientist: cover crop research experience
- Nate Richards, University of Maryland Extension, Kent Co. Ag Educator: cover crop research experience, county-level educator