



APRIL 29TH, 2020 BY AARON RISTOW

AFT Graduates 16 Practical Soil Health Specialists to Support Regenerative Farming Practices on New York Farms



Farmers care deeply about the land they manage. The health of their soil, maintained through regenerative farming practices, is paramount in supporting a farm's economic soundness and resiliency to weather extremes in the face of a changing climate.

However, many farmers struggle with integrating new practices, such as cover crops, reduced tillage, or nutrient management, into their systems. Every farm is unique both in landscape and



Extension, and Soil and Water Conservation Districts, along with field and crop advisors – have participated in an intensive training program led by American Farmland Trust in partnership with Cornell University’s Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health Laboratory.

The 16 Practical Soil Health Specialist trainees completed a five-part series of workshops and field days, with topics such as “Cropping Systems and Cover Crops,” “Adaptive Nutrient Management for Soil Health,” and “The Economics of Soil Health and Communication Skills.” Designed to strengthen the network of public and private agricultural professionals across New York state, the in-depth workshops have prepared these professional to better support farmers in making important decisions for the health of their soil and their farm operation’s bottom line.

“What a gem!” says recently trained Soil Health Specialist Clifford Love, crop consultant with Nutrient Ag Solutions. “I look forward to applying what I have learned from these workshops and the resources they have provided. Personally, I find it astounding. Coming from the background I have, and with what I am learning, I see many opportunities, many challenges; and I am now more aware of how our historical and current practices interact with the soil.”

In January, the participants in the Practical Soil Health Specialist program wrapped up their training. They are now putting their experience into action, sharing their knowledge with farmers in their service region of New York over the course of the next year. Through one-on-one consultations and soil health workshops of their own, Practical Soil Health Specialist participants anticipate reaching 400 farmers operating 80,000 acres of farmland through field days. They expect to engage with 50 farmers to conduct soil health assessments, develop soil health plans, or implement soil health practices such as cover cropping, reducing tillage, rotating crops, and more efficiently managing nutrients.

For more information and to learn about events coming up in your region later this year, visit the [Practical Soil Health Specialist](#) page on American Farmland Trust’s website.

And please join us in congratulating these Practical Soil Health Specialists for completing the training and venturing out to offer localized support across New York:

- Debbie Aller, PhD, ag stewardship specialist, Suffolk County Cornell Cooperative Extension, da352@cornell.edu
- Lorie Ames, CCA, junior crop technician, Western New York Crop Management Association, lames@wnycma.com
- Lynn Bliven, ag and natural resources issue leader, Allegany County Cornell Cooperative Extension, lao3@cornell.edu



- Daniel Eggert, commercial farmer sales rep, High Mowing Organic Seeds, deggert@highmowingseeds.com
- Matthew Entwistle, CCA, agronomist, CaroVail, mentwistle@carolina-eastern.com
- Corey Ernisse, sales/marketing, Liquid Products, LLC, cernisse@carolina-eastern.com
- Tucker Kautz, CCA, water resource technician, Ontario Soil and Water Conservation District, Tucker.Kautz@ontswcd.com
- Darleen Krisher-Meehan, owner, Country Crossroads Feed and Seeds, darleenK@frontiernet.net
- Patricia Larkin, consultant, Agricultural Consulting Services, Patty.Larkin@acscrops.com
- Paul Loomis, Growing Family Organic Farms, seek4earth@gmail.com
- Heidi Lott, consultant, Blowers Agra Services, Inc., hllott93@verizon.net
- Cliff Love, branch manager, Nutrien Ag Solutions, Clifford.Love@nutrien.com
- Rod Porter, northern region sales and support coordinator, Kings AgriSeeds, rodporter@kingsagriseeds.com
- Katherine Vail, field crop specialist, CaroVail, kvail@carolina-eastern.com

Program development for the Practical Soil Health Specialist training is guided by a steering committee comprised of representatives from American Farmland Trust, Cornell University, Cooperative Extension, Cornell Small Farms Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, New York State Ag and Markets, and representatives from the agribusiness community.

This program is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number ENE18-153-32231, and with support from the members of American Farmland Trust and New York State Ag and Markets.



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