



Learning Circle #1: On-Farm, October 26 2022

Hosted by Gay Rodgers at Hameau Farm, 6365 SR 655 Belleville, PA 17004

9 AM to 3 PM

By the end of the session, participants will:

- ✓ Connect with one another and with local service providers
- ✓ Review properties of soil
- ✓ Review key traits of healthy vs. unhealthy soil
- ✓ Understand life underground and the food web
- ✓ Learn about on-farm and laboratory assessments of soil health
- ✓ Create a plan to assess the health of their soil

9-10 AM: Welcome, introductions: tell us your name, describe your operation, and share your answers to the prep questions:

1. Why is soil health integral to the future of your farm?
2. What are you hoping to try in the next 1-3 years?
3. What challenges do you anticipate facing?
4. What are you starting to think about as possible indicators for measuring success?

10:00-11:30 Technical Discussion 1: Introduction to Soil Health: Principles, practices and benefits

Discussion leader: Lisa Blazure, Stroud Water Research Center and PA Soil Health Coalition

11:30-12 :30 Lunch, Networking, Farm Tour

12:30-2:00 Technical Discussion 2: Soil Health Assessment:

- Why assess the health of your soil?
- What are your goals with your soil health assessment? Your goals will impact what type of assessment you choose and which indicators you are looking at.
- When will you do your assessment? Timing can impact some soil health indicators
- What are key indicators of soil health (i.e. what are you measuring with your chosen assessment)? What is worth measuring? Which indicators are most responsive to measurement?
- Types of assessment:
 - In-field: NRCS Soil Health Card, NRCS Pasture Condition Scorecard
 - Lab tests: Cornell Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health, Haney Test
 - Long-term study in PA: Soil Health Benchmark Study

Include a field walk for this discussion - evaluate/compare field soils, nearby hedgerow/undisturbed soil, and degraded soil (may need to be collected prior to the event from another farm)

Discussion leader(s): Madeline Luthard and Zoelie Rivera-Ocasio (PSU), Suzette Truax and Melissa Erdman (NRCS)

2:00-3:00 Review & Wrap-Up

- Tie together themes: Based on what you have learned, have any of your answers to the prep questions changed?
- Discussion among participants regarding lessons learned: how do you plan to assess the health of your soil? What methods are you most likely to use?
- Set a date and time for our next virtual soil health learning circle!

Homework: Use one or more methods you learned today to assess your farm's soil health. Be prepared to share what you did and what you learned at our next meeting.

Adjourn



QR Code for Learning Circle Evaluation