



Horse Creek Watershed News

Wisconsin Farmer Led-Watershed Councils: Putting farmers in the lead to improve water quality in the Saint Croix and Red Cedar River Basins

Hello!

This is the first edition of a quarterly newsletter intended to keep you updated on the activities of the Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council. The council is a voluntary, producer-led, performance-based farm and watershed environmental management program to improve soil health and water quality in the Horse Creek Watershed. We offer incentives to try new management practices as well as farmer-to-farmer education and outreach. Our meetings are open to all producers in the watershed, and we invite you to join us if you haven't already.

Andrew Johnson, Chair

Horse Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council



photos by Julia Olmstead

Haney Soil Health Test

This year we are offering you the opportunity to try out a new soil health test that goes beyond standard NPK and soil organic measures and recommendations. The Haney Test, developed by NRCS scientist Dr. Rick Haney, tries to mimic in-field conditions in the lab. Rather than extracting nutrients to measure them using chemicals, the Haney Test uses a repetitive wetting and drying extraction process to examine not only nutrient content, but also microbial activity, which is a good indicator of soil fertility, and water extractable organic Carbon, which tells you how much food is available for soil microbes. In total, five different measures of your soil's biological and chemical properties are taken into account to calculate a soil health number, which can range from 1 to 50+.

The Haney Test can be useful in a few ways. Along with the soil health number, which can help you track your progress on improving soil fertility, the test results will indicate how much N and P the soil microbes will make available to your crops based on microbial activity, the dollar value of nutrients per acre, and fertilizer recommendations. Many farmers that use cover crops have found that they are able to apply less fertilizer than standard recommendations based on Haney Test results because the test shows how much "food" is actually available to your crops from biological activity.

Sign up for a FREE Haney Test

To learn more, sign up for a free Haney Test. Then bring your test results to our July 15 field day (see info in this newsletter) to learn how to interpret results and put them to good use.



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Soil Health and Cover Crop Field Day

Wednesday, July 15 • 10am

Join us at 10am on Wednesday, July 15 at the site of our cover crop/tillage trials for a presentation from UW-Madison soil scientist Francisco Arriaga about soil health and cover crops, information from Polk County and NRCS to help you plan for fall cover crops, and a presentation on the Haney Soil Health Test – bring your soil health test results if you've got them!

The test plots are located across the road from 79 217th St., New Richmond, 54017 on the north side of the intersection of 217th St and 10th Ave.

PLEASE CONTACT:

Eric Wojchik at the Polk County Land and Water Resources Department at 715-485-8644.



Cover Crops, Un-Covered

“Our soils are too cold.” “The growing season is too short.” “I don’t want to lose valuable soil moisture.” These are just a few comments heard from agricultural producers when discussing the feasibility of planting cover crops. However, in spite of the perceived challenges, the topic of cover crop use and their benefits always tend to linger in the minds of curious producers. In an effort to address some of the questions that surround cover crops, the Horse Creek Watershed council has secured funding to install a cover crop test plot, with the hope of answering some of those looming questions.

The test plot is located on 2 acres on the north side of the 10th Avenue across from fire number 79, in the Town of Alden. Various cover crop test replications will be implemented with different tillage systems. Specific trials will include: no till system without a cover crop, no till system with an 8 species cover crop, no till with cereal rye cover crop, conventional tillage with cereal rye cover crop, and conventional tillage without a cover crop. Throughout the growing season each plot will be intensively monitored to gather as much information as possible. Yield response, water infiltration and retention, and soil biological activity will be the some of the information collected on each test plot. **Please join us at our July 15 field day to see the plots and learn more.**

Polk County
Land and Water
Resources Department



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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