



## **PMC Cover Crops Project Highlighted at Conservation District Tour**

The Rose Lake Plant Materials Center has been evaluating cover crops for three years, focusing on the growth attributes of oilseed radish and other brassicaceous cover crops. In August 2012 the PMC established a trial on the Larry Lee farm near Laingsburg, MI. The trial is intended to demonstrate the effect of annual ryegrass, oilseed radish, red clover, and combinations of these cover crops on corn yield the following year. Dr. Dale Mutch, Michigan State University cover crop researcher, provided the seed for this trial.

Plant growth measurements will be taken at 15-day intervals throughout the growing season in 2012 and before termination in 2013. Soil samples were also taken to determine the initial levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium as well as soil characteristics such as pH, organic matter, and textural components. The PMC staff was assisted by specialists at the National Technical Center in Fort Worth, TX and NRCS-IN soil health team members to develop sampling protocols.



Brassicaceous cover crops starting to green up.

Work at Lee Farms was facilitated by NRCS-MI District Conservationist Tina Tuller. Tina, in partnership with the Shiawassee County Conservation District, conducts a field tour of innovative conservation projects in the county each year. The cover crop plot was one of the stops on the field tour in September. About 90 people attended the tour, including NRCS and District employees, District board members, farmers, other conservation partners and elected officials. John Durling, PMC Agronomist, developed a poster highlighting some of the cover crop work done at the PMC in previous years. Participants had many questions about cover crops, especially with regard to the economic return on the practice. The yield information to be collected in 2013 should help address those questions.



Tour group arriving at Lee Farms.



John Leif (PMC manager) discussing the Brassicaceous cover crop study being done at the Lee Farm.



Group viewing the poster designed by the PMC providing information on cover crops.

## Rose Lake PMC Hosts Trainings and Tours in 2012

The Rose Lake PMC hosted a number of tours, MSU (Michigan State University) classes, and training sessions in 2012. The PMC served as the host location for the NRCS-MI Civil Rights Advisory Committee in June. Committee members participated in a tour of the PMC and were given a soil health characteristics demonstration. Technical specialists from the NRCS-MI Ecological Sciences staff also conducted training at the Center. Grazing lands specialist Betsy Dierberger conducted training on pasture health and forage plant ID, and State Forester Andy Henriksen conducted forest stand improvement training. The classes utilized the conference room at the PMC for the classroom component of the training and used the PMC grounds for hands-on activities.



L-R John Durling (Rose Lake PMC Agronomist), John Leif (PMC Manager) and Alasdair Guide, a visitor from Cumbria, England, who spent the day at the Rose Lake PMC. Alasdair works for England's government agency comparable to USDA.



Group viewing the observation boxes at the Rose Lake PMC.

Dr. Rich Leep, MSU Forage specialist, brought the Forage Management class to the PMC for a tour and plant collection exercise. About 25 students toured the facility and collected plants for their forage plant collection assignment. This has been an annual tour event since 2002.



The Michigan State University Forage Management class with professor, Dr. Rich Leep, (third from right) and John Leif, PMC Manager, (second from right).



Student trainee Caitlain Wagner from the Owosso field office spent the day at the PMC learning about our program and also helping out with some seed cleaning.



Dayna Schoenmaker from the Shelby field office and Bryan Zabel from the Tawas field office spent the day at the center learning more about the PMC and its programs. They are shown here looking at some equipment with Sergio Perez, Biological Technician at the PMC.

Staff from the Mt. Pleasant and Midland NRCS offices spent the day at the Rose Lake PMC learning more about our program. In the afternoon they helped the PMC staff take down the shade house for the season. Guests included Tim LeQuier, District Conservationist; Will Sears, District Conservationist; Conrad Hayes, Soil Conservation Technician; and Brent Wolschlager, CTAI technician.



After taking down the shade cloth, they rolled it up and got it ready to put in storage for the winter. Their help was greatly appreciated.

# Plant Materials Center Undergoes Facility Assessment

The Plant Materials Program has been undergoing facility assessment at many of the Plant Materials Centers across the country. The Rose Lake PMC had a facility assessment and energy audit conducted in September. Elaine Gerona, PMC Office Assistant, compiled a number of reports, invoices, and documents required for the assessment.

The assessment report will comment on the current condition of the buildings at the PMC, projected lifespan of the various buildings, and some of the maintenance considerations for the next few years. The energy audit report will provide recommendations for improving energy efficiency at the PMC and will also give estimates of costs. A timeline on cost recovery due to energy savings will also be included. The report is expected in late October or November.

**Rose Lake Plant Materials Center**  
**7472 Stoll Rd., East Lansing, MI 48823**  
**Phone: 517-641-6300**  
**Fax: 517-641-4421**  
**Manager: John W. Leif**  
**[john.leif@mi.usda.gov](mailto:john.leif@mi.usda.gov)**



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