The purpose of the new Soil Health Division is to incentivize & facilitate producers in implementing science-based, effective, economically viable Soil Health Management Systems (SHMS) on the nation’s diverse agricultural lands, in collaboration with partner organizations.

Who

The Regional Soil Health Specialist (RSHS) will work closely with:
1) All members of the Soil Health Division.
2) NRCS technical experts (e.g., NHQ, NTSCs, State Offices). Especially with the Soil Science & Resource Assessment Deputy Area.
3) Other USDA agencies, land grant universities, partnership staff, & the private sector.

Other Duties:
1) To lead strategies & priorities by providing technical assistance to: NRCS personnel, Landowners, Conservation partners, & Other interested parties in all phases of SH.
2) To help provide guidance & direction to the Regional SH Team Leader, the other RSHS, & states’ SH points of contact.
3) Foster positive team environments that promote cooperation & trust.
4) Work with teams to develop & implement ways to improve effectiveness, efficiency, & quality of products & services.
5) Support EEO/Civil Rights, team building & management techniques.

Why

1) To conserve & protect our natural resources.
2) To incentivize & facilitate producers in implementing SHMS.
3) To identify issues & research solutions.
4) To be proactive in all issues related to SH within the Region on all agricultural land uses.
5) To facilitate SH assessment (e.g., we will utilize soil analyses such as the SQTK, Solvita test, Slake test, Infiltration test, Soil Fertility test, etc., to advise landowners on appropriate practices to enhance soil health).

Vision Statement:
“Productive Lands – Healthy Environment”

Mission Statement:
“Helping People Help the Land”

Guiding Principles Statement:
“Service, Partnership & Technical Excellence”

How

1) Conduct training needs surveys & analyze data in order to define training needs for moderately complex work.
2) Develop & deliver SH training.
3) Promote & educate NRCS personnel, partners, producers, agriculture industry sectors, & the general public on the benefits of SH by giving expert-level presentations at meetings, symposia, field days, etc.
4) Plan Farm/ranch scale SHMS adapted to local conditions (i.e., utilizing the NRCS 9-Steps of Conservation Planning).
5) Provide assistance for on-the-ground implementation of SHMS (i.e., to address resource concerns, build SH, etc.).
6) Apply agronomic, rangeland, and/or soil management practices that are appropriate to specific soil conditions, production systems, & geographic locations.
7) Utilize NRCS Conservation Programs to help protect and preserve natural resources.
8) Work with state NRCS technical staffs through proper channels to ensure that the States have accurate & appropriate technical information concerning SH for use in the Field Office Tech Guide (FOTG).
9) Prepare written technical guidance for use by field personnel.
10) Work closely with all NRCS entities to incorporate & prioritize SH in all Farm Bill programs.

Where

1) On all agricultural land uses.
2) On a regional basis with other partners, producer groups, & others with similar interests.

When

1) Thru Planned & Scheduled activities throughout the year.
2) As requested by NRCS, Partners & Others.

Regional Soil Health Specialist “to-do-list”

1) Deliver advanced Soil Health (SH) training to: NRCS personnel, partners, customers & diverse audience within the Region.
2) Provide training to keep the staff technically proficient & up-to-date on all SH technology, issues, & concerns.
3) Stay current on the latest technology for SH & assist in incorporating appropriate applied technology into NRCS technical material & programs.
4) Provide SH technical support to states within assigned region.
5) Facilitate the integration of SH standards & specifications in all phases of conservation planning & program activities.
6) Incorporate SH benefits & activities into Resource Management Systems (RMS) activities & programs throughout the Region.
7) Analyze & comment on proposed & current SH policies, procedures & technical standards regarding conservation SHMS & environmental issues; & make recommendations for transferring SH technology to the States.
8) Provide technical direction on the interrelationships of planned conservation measure (i.e., SHMS) to address various resource concerns.

Soil Health Planning Principles for improving Soil Properties/SH:
1) Crop Diversity
2) Living Roots
3) Cover the Soil
4) Less Disturbance (i.e., Biological, Physical & Chemical)
5) Grazing (as applicable)

Planning the management of natural resources using an ecosystem/watershed approach. Focusing on the natural systems & processes that sustain the natural resources, while considering social, cultural & economic conditions; & assessing the Soil, Water, Air, Plants, Animals plus Human & Energy (SWAPA +HE) resource concerns.