South Dakota Soil Health Producer Profiles

The South Dakota Voices for Soil Health are a group of people who share an understanding and respect for the soil resource. The 90+ Voices part of USDA NRCS’ Earth Team volunteer network, but a step more advanced because they actively advocate on behalf of the soil. Their focus is amplifying the voices of farmers and ranchers who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences regarding managing their agricultural operation for healthier soil. Please enjoy each of the first 20 completed Voice profiles listed below or download the combined set of Voices Profiles (this PDF has all profiles combined into one set) at www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov, under “Soils,” then “Soil Health.”

**Bryan Jorgensen; Ideal, SD**
“Look at that,” Henry says with a smile. Whether you’re a backyard gardener or a big crop farmer, earthworms tend to mean one sure thing: healthy soil.

**Chad Kehn; Bonesteel SD**
Chad Kehn, a 4th generation rancher, and his wife Cindy operate a diversified ranch in south central South Dakota near Bonesteel. With cattle the primary focus, his farming choices support livestock development.

**Henry Roghair; Okaton SD**

**Mark Weinheimer; Pierre, SD**
Mark Weinheimer, a second generation farmer near Pierre, SD, read about cover crops for years. He knew benefits like reduced soil erosion and increased yield production sounded good. But, a farm tour in Burleigh County, North Dakota in 2009 made him act.

**Lawrence Woodward; Dupree, SD**
When the 1985 Farm Bill began requiring American farmers to maintain at least 20 percent cover on their crop land, Lawrence “Woody” Woodward made a decision. “I thought the easiest way to do that was to go no-till,” he says. He’s never looked back.

**Weerts Family Farms; Kingsbury Co. SD**
“We started no-tilling 20 years ago because I knew we had to retain whatever moisture possible in our fields,” Reimer said. “We had put in grass waterways and terraces, but erosion was still a concern. When it rained, all you could do was watch the muddy water run out of the fields and head to the dugouts. We don’t have those same problems now.”

**David Kruger; Twin Brooks SD**
Nestled in the slow rolling hills of Grant County, east of Twin Brooks, SD is the family farm owned and operated by David Kruger and his wife Nancy. David Kruger farms 1,700 acres of land with varying levels of soil capabilities.
Johnson Farm; Frankfort SD
Brian Johnson (left), with his children and father, Alan Johnson, farm near Frankfort, SD, in Spink County. It was Brian’s father Alan who implemented use of no-till practices decades ago to help retain moisture during dry cycles. Together Brian and Alan have worked toward the best possible seed bed preparation and planting methods to manage crops during periods of greater moisture.

Troy and Jackie Roth, Shannon County, SD
“We began no-till farming in 1987,” Roth said. “Moving that direction was a necessity for soil health and production simply because of our area’s limited moisture.

Dan and Kris Nigg, Sisseton, Roberts County, SD
“These days, advances in planters, row cleaners, and combine chaff spreaders, make the residue much more manageable,” Nigg says. Nigg farms ground that’s spread out over 15 miles and deals with a variety of soil and moisture conditions.

Bill Nelson, Lake County, SD
A few in the area have started to ask Nelson to share how he’s getting the excellent results he does. With his encouragement, they’re following in his footsteps and have already made similar changes to improve the soil health on their farms.

Erickson Family Farm, Langford, SD
The Ericksons added cover crops 10 years ago to help their no-till system handle heavy rains. “Our no-till fields can take, and keep, six inch rains that run off tilled fields,” he says.

Brett Nix, Murdo, SD
To Brett Nix of rural Murdo, SD, sustainability is not enough. The progressive rancher believes rebuilding and regenerating the land is crucial in order for his family’s operation to be relevant for the next generations.

To learn more, contact your local USDA NRCS office or contact the NRCS State Office at (605) 352-1200 or send an email to colette.kessler@sd.usda.gov.


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