

# Soil Health Strategy

## Summary



In early 2020, the Soil Health Strategy Action Team (SHSAT) was convened by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) leadership in Montana. The team was tasked with developing a soil health strategy and vision tailored to meet the needs of NRCS Montana. The expected outcome of the strategy is elevated delivery of the soil health principles across the state in conjunction with program delivery through Montana Focused Conservation. This summary provides a short, consumable document well-suited to public information and outreach.

## Purpose Statement

The Montana Soil Health Strategic Action Plan provides NRCS a path toward elevated delivery of the soil health principles resulting in healthy, functioning soil as the foundation for all working lands in Montana.

## Goals and Action Objectives

**Goal 1:** Demonstrate agency-wide commitment by integrating the soil health principles into all NRCS Montana functions.

*NRCS in Montana is committed to integrating soil health principles across all disciplines and into all agency functions.*

### Action Objectives

- Establish a Soil Health Specialist position to lead NRCS's soil health priorities as outlined in the action plan.
- Establish an NRCS Soil Health Action Committee to assist with accomplishing the soil health action objectives.
- Prioritize soil health training for NRCS Montana staff.
- Explore establishment of a Montana soil health learning center.

## Soil Health Principles

Mix and match your favorites or collect them all.

- Armor the soil
- Minimize disturbance
- Keep a living root in the soil
- Increase diversity
- Integrate livestock

Healthy soil promotes crop, livestock and human health, biodiversity, and economic resilience of our agricultural communities.

## More Information

Get to know your local NRCS district conservationist for help reaching your management goals and to participate in the local working groups that drive Montana Focused Conservation.

[www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.mt.nrcs.usda.gov)



Cattle grazing cover crops.

**Goal 2:** Implement soil health principles and promote soil health innovations on all land uses according to best science and practice.

*Successful and widespread, yet targeted, implementation of soil health principles on all land uses is the ultimate expression of elevated delivery by NRCS. Implementing soil health principles according to best science and practice gives customers assurance that NRCS assistance is technically sound, responsibly delivered, and provides the greatest opportunity for achieving desired conservation objectives.*

#### Action Objectives

- Support and develop soil health demonstration projects
- Promote implementation of soil health principles through Montana Focused Conservation
- Develop readily accessible technical guidance to expedite delivery of soil health principles by NRCS staff at all agency levels

**Goal 3:** Develop and strengthen partnerships to increase the adoption of soil health principles on all land uses.

*Partnerships play an important role in delivery of NRCS assistance and will be strategically pursued to elevate delivery of soil health principles in Montana.*

#### Action Objectives

- Strategically prioritize soil health-focused partnerships in Montana to form the backbone of a “Soil Health Coalition”.
- Develop and execute soil health-focused partnership meetings throughout the state.

- Support a grassroots-driven soil health training in each area.

**Goal 4:** Provide education, communication, and outreach to employees, producers, and partners for advancing knowledge and adoption of soil health principles.

*NRCS will be a leader in efforts to deliver relevant, science-based soil health information into the hands of present and future practitioners.*

#### Action Objectives

- Promote adoption of soil health principles through NRCS Montana communications.
- Annually convene a Montana Soil Health Symposium
- Support outreach to local schools and youth organizations to raise awareness of soil health.



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