COST-SHARE AVAILABLE

GET SOME MONEY TO IMPLEMENT COVER CROPS AND REDUCED TILLAGE PRACTICES

The Hawk Creek Watershed Project and Renville County Soil and Water Conservation District are offering cost-share programs for reduced tillage practices and cover crops (planted between April 1 and September 15, 2022). These cost-share programs are available to producers in the Hawk Creek Watershed (covering portions of Chippewa, Kandiyohi, and Renville Counties) and all of Renville County.

Contract is for one year with a maximum of three years of cost-share payments.

### Reduced Tillage

- Cost-share up to $20/acre to implement no-till and/or strip till (e.g., labor, equipment use), with maximum payment of $2,000 per farmer per year
- Prior to planting, seed mix must have at least three species pre-approved by Renville SWCD/HCWSP. Seed tags, all invoices, and passed field inspection are required before payment is made

### Cover Crops

- Cost-share up to 75% of costs (e.g., seed, labor, equipment use, seed incorporation), with maximum payment of $2,000 per farmer per year
- Cost-share application must be signed and approved before planting takes place, ineligible for this cost-share if you receive incentive and/or cost-share payment through any other program (e.g., EQIP, CSP)

All invoices and passed field inspection (after spring cash crop is planted) are required before payment is made.

The full agenda will be posted soon at renvilleswcd.com and hawkcreekwatershed.org, as well as the Renville SWCD Facebook and Twitter pages. If you would like to attend the field day, please RSVP by contacting Ethan at the Renville SWCD office at (320) 523-3636 or ethan@renvilleswcd.org.

**THE WHY:** The advantages farmers are gaining from regenerative farming practices

**THREE SISTERS:** Reap the benefits of the Three Sisters planting method when using cover crops

**COST-SHARE:** Get some money for cover crops and reduced tillage

**SUMMER 2022**

**REGENERATIVE FARMING TODAY**

**3 REASONS TO ATTEND THE FIELD DAY SEPT 17**

1. **Hear from local farmers using regenerative agriculture**
   Ask local farmers why they are making soil health a priority and how they make it successful and profitable

2. **Learn from soil health pioneer Gabe Brown**
   Listen to Gabe share how he works with, not against, Mother Nature to make his 5,000-acre farm friendly and Bred
   - Phil Smith has been successfully using no-till for over 20 years and cover crops for eight years in his 800-acre corn, soybean, and small grain operation
   - Phil co-founded 212 Seed & Ag and is also a Pioneer Hi-Bred sales representative. Brian Ryberg, who uses reduced tillage and cover crops on his 5,000-acre sugar beet, corn, and soybean operation near Buffalo Lake, will discuss economics and profitability of implementing soil health practices. The keynote speaker is Gabe Brown, a regenerative farming innovator who uses soil health practices on his 5,000-acre farm and ranch near Bismarck, North Dakota, author of “Dirt to Soil: One Family’s Journey into Regenerative Agriculture”, partner in Understanding Ag LLC, and educator for the Soil Health Academy
   - The full agenda will be posted soon at renvilleswcd.com and hawkcreekwatershed.org, as well as the Renville SWCD Facebook and Twitter pages.

3. **Get the kids outdoors for a day on the farm**
   Bring the kids along for a day full of fun outdoor activities and learning about agriculture.
Regenerative Farming: The Why

BY KYLE RICHTER, RENVILLE SWCD WATER RESOURCE TECHNICIAN

Regenerative farming is increasingly being put under the microscope by the farming community. For generations, conventional farming practices have dominated the way agricultural crops are cultivated and grown. Planting into black fluffy soil was the only way. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to see a planter in a lush green field, green seeding corn or soybeans and observed most small to medium farms applying and thriving with the Three Sisters companion cropping technique. The Three Sisters is a community planting cropping system used by many Native cultures worldwide. This companion cropping system works together to deter weeds and pests, enrich the soil, and support each other. The most common system is corn, beans, and squash grown together. The corn offers support and a place for the bean to climb, the bean provides the corn nitrogen, and the squash arms the soil from erosion and helps prevent weeds from germinating. Together, the Three Sisters provide both sustainable soil fertility as well as a high yielding production.

At its core, it's the same reason many U.S. farmers apply regenerative agricultural practices - not for them, but for the next generation. One Ecuadorian farmer said to me, “Soil health is a global concern and instead of trying our best, we need to do BETTER.”

The sentiment of his words echoes those of Barbara Ward, British economist and writer, “We have forgotten how to be good guests, how to walk lightly on the earth as its other creatures do.”

Soil health is a global concern and instead of trying our best, we need to do BETTER.

~ FARMER FROM ECUADOR

The Three Sisters concept is utilized in this crop field near Mindo, Ecuador where choclo (also referred to as Peruvian or Cuzco corn), pole beans, and butternut squash are growing together to provide sustainable soil fertility as well as a high yielding production.

If one thinks about soil health practices such as no-till and using cover crops in a cropping system, it’s the same concept as The Three Sisters, but on a scale that can be mechanically harvested. The basic soil health principals of armorring the soil, crop diversity, and living roots are being applied. In talking with a farmer in Ecuador, he said he uses The Three Sisters method because that is what his dad did and his granddad did. He then said he does it to protect his soil and keep his farm healthy for his kids and grandkids.

The Three Sisters is a companion cropping system that is used in Ecuador to provide sustainable soil fertility. It is a technique that has been used by Native cultures worldwide to protect the soil and improve its fertility. The system involves planting corn, beans, and squash together, which work together to deter weeds and pests, enrich the soil, and support each other. This technique uses no-till and cover crops to promote soil health and reduce dependence on synthetic chemicals, resulting in a more sustainable and healthy soil. As William S. Burroughs wisely said, “When you stop growing, you start dying.”

Photo by Holly Hatlewick April 2022

The classic milpa with maize-bean-squash by Lopez-Billada, S., Barba-Escoto, L., Reuna-Ramirez, C. A., Sun, C., Palacios-Robles, N., & Gerard, B. P. is used under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).