

Soil Health Symposium 2020: Putting Life Back in Your Soil

Wendy Green

ASWCD Supervisor

How can you increase your crop and livestock production and profitability? Start from the ground up, of course, by improving the health of your soil.

Learn how local producers and leading scientists are “Putting Life Back in Soil” at the 11th Soil Health Symposium, February 13th from 8:30 to 4:30 at the Four Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario. Registration for this full day of valuable insights is just \$25 in advance or \$30 at the door, and that includes lunch. You can register online at <http://www.payetteswcd.org>. Register by phone through the University of Idaho Extension Canyon County office at 208-459-6003.

You’ll find the agenda packed with topics to help you grow your operation, including what your weeds are telling you, cover crops best suited for our region, and producer panel discussions of composting, reduced tillage, and the relationship between soil health and livestock.

Dr. David Johnson, a renowned researcher in regenerative agriculture, will deliver this year’s keynote address, “Regenerating the Diversity of Life in Soils: Hope for Farming, Ranching, Environment, Nutritional Foods and Climate.” If that sounds like a BHOG to you—

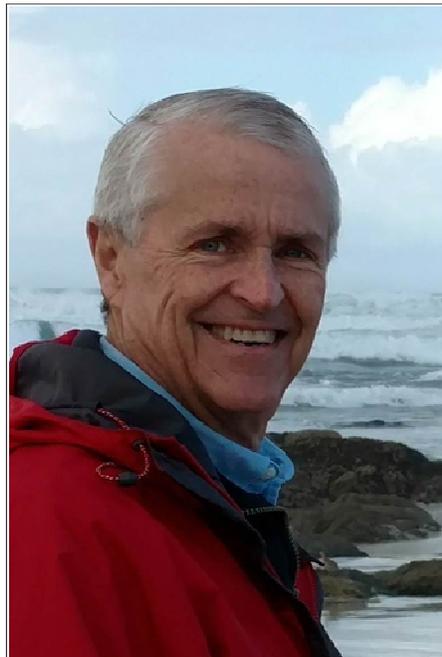
Big, Hairy, Outrageous Goal—don’t be intimidated. You can do this, and it starts with the tiniest of steps. Microbial steps, to be precise.

Dr. Johnson’s research in soil microbial community structure and function has opened a window into the interdependence between plants and soil microbes. Peering through that window can help you see the why and how of improving soil health. Johnson will

explain how optimization of plant-microbe associations promotes the things you want in your farm, ranch and garden:

- Restoration of soil fertility
- Improved growth of crops
- Increased efficiencies in plant water use
- Improved soil microbial carbon use
- Increased soil carbon storage capabilities.

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Dr. David Johnson’s keynote address will focus on restoring and sustaining soil health to improve productivity, nutrition and carbon sequestration.

Help guide soil and water conservation in Adams County

Does this kind of thing appeal you? If you’re a landowner in Adams County with an interest in natural resource issues, consider joining the Board of Supervisors of the Adams Soil & Water Conservation District.

There is a vacancy on the Board right now—a golden opportunity for you to get involved in assisting agricultural producers in caring for our local environment. We would especially welcome a representative from the Meadows Valley area.

The board meets once a month, so it won’t take a big chunk of your time. To learn more, see “Why Serve?” on page 4.

Adams SWCD welcomes two new supervisors

Adams SWCD is excited to welcome two new supervisors to our board. Kris Stone and Judy Dietch, both of Council, bring unique experience and expertise to the District.

Kris is a retired biology teacher who taught junior high and high school students in the Boise School District for 31 years.

"My students and I monitored the water quality of the Boise River and some of its tributaries for several years," said Kris. "The students learned to conduct chemical tests for pH, nitrates, phosphates, temperature and turbidity plus biological tests for the presence of fecal coliform bacteria and macro invertebrates."

Kris took classes that helped her teach students about Idaho native plants and noxious weeds.



ASWCD Supervisor Kris Stone of Council holds a pair of burrowing owls as she assists a raptor biologist from Boise State University in the desert south of Boise. Kris earned a degree in wildlife management from the University of Idaho.

During her teaching career, she continued her own education, earning a Master of Science in Biology and Geology from Boise State University and a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Idaho to complement her bachelor's in wildlife management from UI. She's got her Broncos and Vandals bases covered!

When she retired two years ago, Kris and her husband moved to Council, where they bought a small farm.

"We raise hay and we have two wildlife ponds and Camp Creek runs through our property," Kris said. "We are looking for ways to enhance our property for wildlife and increase our hay production. I am interested in learning how to improve water and soil conservation on our farm, as well as helping others who have the same interests."

Kris now teaches biology part-time for the College of Western Idaho. In the summer, she works with science teachers conducting research at Idaho and Washington colleges and universities through the Partners in Science Program.

Judy Dietch recently retired after a 42-year career as a practicing psychologist.

Throughout her career, Judy made time to actively engage in civic life. For 16 years, she served on the Community Services District for Templeton, California, dealing with infrastructure and services, including fire, water, sanitation, recreation, and sewer.



Supervisor Judy Dietch of Council with one of her buddies.

She also spent time as a housing commissioner in Santa Ana.

When she was getting ready to retire, Judy decided it was time to leave California.

"I lived in small towns in California, but those areas have changed from the lovely places where I grew up," she said.

She and her partner searched from Texas to South Dakota, Nevada to Montana, looking for the right place to settle down.

"We were looking for a place to raise our longhorn cattle and the hay to feed them, and I liked Idaho best," Judy said.

They bought acreage near Council where they raise hay and a ranch in Indian Valley for grazing their livestock.

"We are happily ensconced and enjoying life in Adams County," she added. "I'm an avid gardener and have always been interested in natural resources. I look forward to working with landowners to learn and implement best management practices to sustain our working landscapes."

Putting Life Back in Soil: Tiny organisms can boost long-term benefits

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“These benefits provide a path to significantly increase farm and ranch productivity and profitability while also promoting the development of soil carbon as a new agricultural commodity,” said Johnson. “This will provide a robust and practical mechanism to begin reducing atmospheric CO₂ within regenerative agricultural systems.”

Dr. Johnson is a molecular biologist conducting research as an Adjunct Professor at the Center for Regenerative Agriculture and Resilient Systems at California State University, Chico, CA <https://www.csuchico.edu/regenerativeagriculture/>, and as a researcher at the Institute for Sustainable Agricultural Research at New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM.

He works with growers and researchers to explore paths to improve food security, reduce atmospheric CO₂ concentrations, and increase farm and rangeland productivity and profitability through the development of beneficial soil microbial communities.

“During the winter months, agricultural producers attend many conferences and workshops related to specific crops they grow or livestock they raise,” said Jo Anne Smith, chair of the Payette SWCD and member of the symposium planning committee. “As community members representing the soil and water conservation districts, rather than focusing on particular crops or livestock, our goal is to promote conservation of our natural resources for use today and for future generations.

“Through our annual Soil Health Symposium, we are working to assist the agricultural producers in our region with practical information about the importance of life in soil which benefits all crops and livestock,” Smith said.

One method of enhancing life in the soil is to incorporate cover crops in your rotation. If you want to know more about including cover crops that are best suited for our climate, you won’t want to miss Mary Wolf’s presentation, “Cool Season Cover Crop Varieties for the Intermountain West.”

Wolf is the agronomist at the USDA-NRCS Idaho Plant Materials Center in Aberdeen, ID. She previously served for eight years as an NRCS Soil Conservationist in Canyon and Ada counties.

The Soil Health Symposium is presented annually by the Payette, Canyon, Ada, Malheur, and Adams



Mary Wolf, agronomist with the USDA-NRCS Idaho Plant Materials Center in Aberdeen, will share evaluation of cool season cover crop varieties well suited for our region.

Soil & Water Conservation Districts with technical assistance by USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, University of Idaho Extension and Oregon State University Extension.

For more information, contact Payette SWCD at 208-642-6129 or visit payetteswcd.org.

Rangeland Ecology: Pass It On

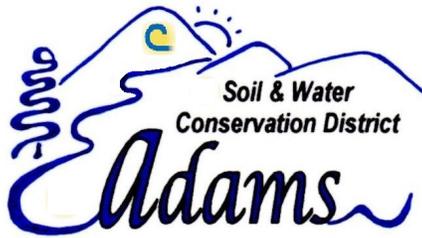
If we want our kids to become good stewards of the land, we need to give them the proper tools. That includes making sure our ag teachers have the training and resources they need to teach Idaho students about rangelands.

With those goals in mind, ASWCD is proud to support the Idaho Rangeland Ecology Camp for Teachers this summer, presented by the Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission and the University of Idaho.

This unique learning opportunity for Idaho ag and science teachers will be held June 29th through July 2nd at the McCall Outdoor Science School. The schedule includes workshops and field trips to rangeland sites near McCall for hands-on learning.

In addition to providing teachers a solid foundation in rangeland science, the camp will help them prepare their students for the FFA Rangeland Career Development Event next fall. The one-day annual CDE competition tests high school students’ knowledge of rangeland plants, soils, wildlife habitat evaluation and livestock grazing challenges.

Rangeland Ecology Camp organizers are putting the finishing touches on the curriculum and hope to include a track for students to participate alongside their teachers. To learn more or for registration details, visit the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission website, idrange.org.



Visit our web site at
adamsconservationdistrict.org
 or follow us on Facebook.



Visit us at 203 South Galena St., Council
 By appointment
 P.O. Box 26
 Council, ID 83612
 208-253-4668

Adams County students can earn scholarships to “go on”

Stipend can help pay tuition for technical certificate or college degree

Do you have a student in college or getting ready to enroll? It isn't easy for families to send kids to college these days. A recent report from the Idaho Department of Education found tuition and fees at Idaho's four-year colleges and universities rose 47% since 2008. Maybe we can help.

Adams Soil and Water Conservation District will award up to two scholarships of \$1000 each to Adams County students who are planning to earn a degree or certificate in an agriculture or natural resource related field. Those who are graduating from high school this year and those who are already enrolled in college are eligible.

To apply for a scholarship for the 2020-21 school year, students should write a letter to the ASWCD Board by March 27, 2020. Tell us a little bit about yourself and why you believe we should invest in your future. Here are some pertinent details to include:

- Your GPA and other evidence of academic achievement
- Where you plan to “go on” for education beyond high school
- What you plan to study and your career goals
- Why you're interested in agriculture or natural resources
- Any work or volunteer experience you've had in ag or resource conservation
- Your anticipated costs for the academic year and how you plan to pay for school

The board will review the applications and select finalists based on qualifications and need. Before awarding the scholarships, we will ask the recipients to show that they have been accepted or enrolled in an accredited institution.

Send your letter to ASWCD Scholarship, P.O. Box 26, Council, Idaho, 83612, or email to aswd@ctcweb.net. If you have questions, please contact us.

Why Serve on the ASWCD?

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What are the benefits of being a District Supervisor?

- Being a voice for conservation in our community
- Satisfaction of making a difference in resource health
- Providing conservation guidance and information to ag producers and others
- Helping people understand that ranches and farms can be prosperous and also contribute to healthy resources
- Having a say in how local resources are managed
- Learning ways to improve your own operations profitably and sustainably
- Helping find and coordinate programs and funding to assist local landowners practice voluntary conservation

If you have an interest in good stewardship, understand conservation issues, and enjoy working with people in your community, come check it out. The ASWCD meets February 4th at 7:00 p.m. at the Extension building in Council.

Call or email to learn more: 208-253-4668; aswd@ctcweb.net.

Help conserve our valuable resources for future generations.

The Adams SWCD is made up of a five-member board of local landowners who are unpaid elected officials who volunteer their time to help conserve the area's natural resources: soil, water, air, plants and animals. The District does this through educational outreach, technical assistance and financial incentive programs. ASWCD is an equal opportunity, non-regulatory entity. Your participation in conservation programs is 100% voluntary. Please let us know what we can do for you.