

# Soil Conservation News

March 2014

## ***Soil and Water Annual Meeting Celebrating 30 Years***

### Dates to remember

March 11th—Cover Crop Meeting at 6:00 PM at the Hunter Civic Center

March 18th—Annual Meeting Rolling Hills Country Club 6:30 PM

The Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District cordially invites you and your family to help us celebrate our 30th birthday at our Annual Meeting on Tuesday evening March 18th, 2014. This year's meeting will be held at the Rolling Hills Country Club on Hwy 5 north of Versailles. The meeting will begin with a meal, provided by the district, being served at 6:30 pm.

Following the meal we will have a presentation by Sgt. Jason Clark of the Mo. Highway Patrol Crimes Unit. Sgt. Clark will talk about rural crimes and his job with the Rural Crimes Task Force.

The cooperator of the year for 2014 will be named. There will be drawings for door prizes donated by area businesses.

So that we will know how many dinners to plan for, please contact our office no later than March 13th with the exact number in your family that will be attending. Please return the bottom portion of the newsletter or phone 573-378-5822 ext. 101.



### Inside this issue:

*Healthy Soil for Life* 2

*Conserving Soil and Water for Future Generations—The Parks and Soils Tax* 3

From: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_ number attending dinner. Please include both adults and children. To participate in the dinner we must have your reservation no later than March 13th, 2014.

# Healthy Soil for Life

Soil health, also referred to as soil quality, is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. This definition speaks to the importance of managing soils so they are sustainable for future generations. To do this, we need to remember that soil contains living organisms that when provided the basic necessities of life—food, shelter and water—perform functions required to produce food and fiber.

Only “living” things can have health, so viewing soil as a living ecosystem reflects a fundamental shift in the way we care for our nation’s soils. Soil isn’t an inert growing medium, but rather is teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of an elegant symbiotic ecosystem. Soil is an ecosystem that can be managed to provide nutrients for plant growth, absorb and hold rainwater for use during dryer periods, filter and buffer potential pollutants from leaving our fields, serve as a firm foundation for agricultural activities, and provide habitat for soil microbes to flourish and diversify to keep the ecosystem running smoothly.

Healthy soil gives us clean air and water, bountiful crops and forests, productive grazing lands, diverse wildlife, and beautiful landscapes. Soil does all this by performing five essential functions: Regulating water—Soil helps control where rain, snowmelt, and irrigation water goes. Water and dissolved solutes flow over the land or into and through the soil.

Sustaining plant and animal life—The diversity and productivity of living things depends on soil.

Filtering and buffering potential pollutants—The minerals and microbes in soil are responsible for filtering, buffering, degrading, immobilizing, and detoxifying organic and inorganic materials, including industrial and municipal by-products and atmospheric deposits.

Cycling nutrients—Carbon, nitrogen, phosphorous, and many other nutrients are stored, transformed, and cycled in the soil.

Physical stability and support—Soil structure provides a medium for plant roots. Soils also provide support for human structures and protection for archeological treasures.



## Conserving Soil and Water for Future Generations—The Parks and Soils Tax

The Soil and Parks tax was first passed in 1984, and then renewed by almost two-thirds of Missouri voters in 1988 and 1996 and again in 2006. The parks-and-soils tax is a one-tenth of one percent sales tax. Funds are divided equally between soil and water conservation and the state park system.

**Soils points:** The sales tax is the sole source of funding for the Soil and Water Conservation Program. It does not receive any general revenue. If the tax is not renewed, the department would not have a funding source to continue conserving Missouri's soil and water for future generations.

The sales tax supports several voluntary programs that reduce soil erosion and improve water quality. This is accomplished on a local level, working with soil and water conservation districts to put conservation practices on the land and provide education, information and technical assistance to the public.

Soil erosion claims 70 million tons of Missouri top soil each year. Sediment is the number one pollutant of Missouri waters and each grain of soil washed from the land can carry pesticides, fertilizers, and other chemicals.

It takes 500 years to produce one inch of top soil, but at an erosion rate of 5.6 ton per acre, an inch of top soil erodes in less than 30 years.

Erosion rates in Missouri have decreased by half, more than any other state, since the sales tax was first passed. It is estimated that our programs have helped save more than 148 million tons of soil.

**Parks Points:** The sales tax provides three fourths of the Missouri state parks systems budget. The other main source of revenue is the earnings fund. However,

without the sales tax, the facilities that produce earnings (campgrounds, etc.) would not be possible.

The Missouri state parks system does not receive any general revenue from the state. The only federal funds come from specific grants that are applied for and received. If the sales tax is not renewed, the Department of Natural Resources will need to compete with other state agencies for general revenue funding.

The main priority for the sales tax has been to take care of the state park system and provide quality visitor services.

The state park system has been recognized nationally as one of the best state park systems in the nation; it has been one of the top four finalists in the national Gold Medal State Park Awards Pro-



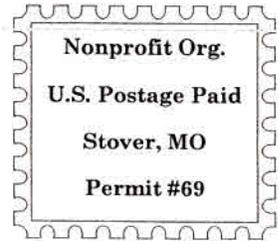
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tionist

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**Soil and Water Conservation  
Annual Meeting  
Tuesday March 18th, 2014  
RSVP TODAY!**

# Cover Crop Workshop

**WHEN:** Tuesday, March 11th, 6:00 PM

**WHERE:** Hunter Civic Center, Corner of  
Krekel Street and Jasper Street,  
Versailles, MO

## **TOPICS TO BE COVERED:**

- \* Economics of Cover Crops
- \* Grazing Cover Crops
- \* Germination Dates
- \* Cover Crops and Soils

A light meal will be served. Please RSVP to  
573-378-5822 ext. 101 by March 8th so we will know  
how much food to purchase.



*This meeting is being provided by University of Missouri Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District.*

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