

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WITH SFA

### SFA Trains 53 People at MSHS, Dirt Rich

SFA hosts the yearly Midwest Soil Health Summit conference as well as unique summer “Dirt Rich” events that include both a classroom portion and a field segment.

The Midwest Soil Health Summit yearly convenes around 150 farmers, ag professionals and educators to learn from nationally renowned soil health experts and local farmer presenters.

At the 2016 and 2017 Midwest Soil Health Summits, scholarships are distributed to ag service professionals to attend the summit. These include lodging and allow these professionals to develop a deep knowledge of soil health, from basic principles to advanced techniques.

Scholarships to attend Dirt Rich are also given, and dozens of farmers, experts and others attend each site.

Scholarship recipients, once educated, host a soil health education event in their area to share their knowledge downstream.



### Soil Health Professionals Host Events

These professionals hosted 31 events that ran the gamut from webinars to field days to classroom seminars.

One example of this was when Rock County SWCD and NRCS sponsored a Cover Crop and Soil Health Field Day from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sept. 5, 2017, at Tom Fick’s Family Farm, 1157 110th Ave, Luverne.

This free event featured several expert producers and scientists, including SFA Livestock & Grazing Specialist Kent Solberg, SFA pasture research farmer Allen Deutz, soil scientist Jennifer Hahn, agronomist Liz Stahl, and farmers Tom Fick, Terry Aukes and Brent Fluit.

Rock County SWCD’s Michael Walgrave was awarded a scholarship to attend the 2017 Midwest Soil Health Summit, and produced this event in return for his scholarship.

Walgrave’s event drew 85 people to this sparsely populated, ag-centric corner of Minnesota, making it one of the most well-attended field days we’ve helped produce.



The SFA Midwest Soil Health Summit unites farmers and ag professionals for education and development, and includes the opportunity for direct interaction with experts like Dr. Allen Williams, pictured at above center.



The Rock County field day was featured on the cover of local farm publication Ag Mag.

### Online Tools: Soil Health Portal, Network

Over the past few years, thanks to funding from NCR-SARE, the Sustainable Farming Association has been working to build a network of soil health-focused farmers, ag service professionals, and public employees. This network, which numbers over 1,000 people in and around Minnesota, was created to help share knowledge about soil health principles and drive turnout to events and field days hosted by network members.

As part of this project, SFA has also created a resource-heavy web portal, [sfa-mn.org/soil](http://sfa-mn.org/soil) (shown below in cropped screenshot), that includes various document downloads, video reports, and event promotion, led by Communications Director Jason Walker. This portal and its resources help soil health professionals capitalize on the SFA Soil Health Network to host successful downstream events.

As Michael Walgrave of Rock County said, “Jason was great to work with and it made advertising and outreach a lot easier.”

Welcome to the SFA Soil Health Portal

Soil Health Network Event Calendar

- **Jan. 19, 2018 – Bringing Livestock Back workshop** | 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Sacred Heart Catholic Church, 122 1st St NW, Glenwood | Cost is \$25. RSVP to [bsimon@landstewardshipproject.org](mailto:bsimon@landstewardshipproject.org) or 320.492.2526.
- **Feb. 1, 2018 – Crow Wing River Basin Forage Council Winter Meeting** | 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Central Lakes College, 26505 Co. Rd. 2, Staples | Cost is \$15/single or \$25/couple. | [REGISTER](#)
- **Feb. 14-15, 2018 – Midwest Soil Health Summit** | 1-8 p.m. Feb. 14; 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Feb. 15 | \$100 SFA members; \$150 nonmembers | [Learn more.](#) | [REGISTER](#)

Submit Event

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Other SFA Resources

Midwest Soil Health Summit

Soil Health and Main Street Vitality: A Paradigm Shift in the Making

SFA Soil Health Webinars

Cropland Grazing Exchange

Cover Crop Fact Sheet

Beginning Grazier Handbook