

# SOIL HEALTH MINUTE: HAPPENINGS IN SOUTHERN IDAHO

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Hello! We are Courtney Cosdon (University of Idaho Extension/Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Tasha Paul (Idaho NRCS), bringing you Idaho soil health news and information. In this newsletter, we are sharing resources to encourage the use of soil health practices and working to involve more of our community in soil health events and discussions.



## Upcoming Events



Soil Health 5 for 5 Roundtable Meetings: December 7th, February 1st, and April 5th on Zoom. All are welcome to join! Presenters give 5-minute presentations on soil health topics of interest and then the floor is open for discussion. Here is the link for the first meeting, occurring Dec. 7th at 10am MST: <https://uidaho.zoom.us/j/4700068861>

University of Idaho Sugar Beet Conference: December 7th. [Register here.](#)

Mini-Cassia SWCD Water and Soil Health Workshop: January 10th. [Register here.](#)

University of Idaho Potato Conference: January 18-19th. [Register here.](#)

Magic Valley Soil Health Forum: January 24th. A gathering for all to share about their year. More information soon.

Payette SWCD Ontario Soil Health Symposium: February 9th

Ada SWCD free speech at College of Idaho for the public with Nicole Masters: February 9th, evening

Ada SWCD Harvest and Hearth Conference: February 10th

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## Event Recap

### Cover Crop Impromptu Field Day

The cover crop impromptu field day on Sept. 15th was a tour of Ballard farms, Patrick Farms and the U of I Kimberly Research & Extension Center, all focused on soil cover. At Ballard Farms, they have planted a 5-way mix, including radish, rapeseed, winter wheat, common vetch, and Austrian winter pea following seed peas which were no-tilled on August 17th. They now have sheep grazing the cover, which they expect to be able to feed for around two months.

## Resources

- University of Idaho Soil Health: <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/soil-health>
- Idaho NRCS Soil Health (**The NRCS has a new website - be sure to bookmark this new link**): <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/conservation-by-state/idaho/idaho-soil-health>
- Soil Health YouTube: [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6g6ZYcM47s9emP2muvDV4yq\\_FNQwoZoJ](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6g6ZYcM47s9emP2muvDV4yq_FNQwoZoJ)



### Event Recap Continued

At Patrick Farms, they seeded a mixture including rapeseed, turnip, annual rye, clover and radish in between corn rows, a practice called interseeding. The corn was planted at 44 inch spacing into a sprayed winter cover of barley and peas.

Rounding out the tour, U of I Extension faculty including Steve Hines, Mario de Haro Martí, Linda Schott and Albert Adjesiwor, gave synopses of their projects at the Kimberly R&E Center.



Checking out the cover crop at Ballard Farms in Kimberly



Corn interseeded with a cover crop at the UI Kimberly R&E Center

## Get Involved!

### Climate Smart Grant

University of Idaho has secured a \$55 million USDA grant to help farmers adopt climate smart practices on Idaho's major commodity crops including potatoes, barley, beef, hops, sugar beets and wheat. Do you grow any of these crops and are interested in practices such as cover cropping, reduced till, or interseeding, and would like to reduce your potential financial risk? Here is your chance. You may be eligible to receive funds to start implementing climate smart practices

if you: 1) grow any of these crops and 2) are growing them on acreage not already in a federal assistance program such as EQIP. More information will be available soon.

[University of Idaho News Release](#)

## Check It Out

### No-till November

Idaho Falls local news channel shared a feature on No-till November: [No-till November feature](#)

### Soil Keepers Forum

The Treasure Valley Soil Keepers is a group and online platform for Treasure Valley producers to connect on soil health topics. Post pictures or ask for advice on the forum from fellow soil health enthusiasts. Look out for information from us about Soil Keepers events.

### Soil Keepers

### World Soil Day is December 5th!

The theme for this year's [FAO World Soil Day](#) is "Soils: where food begins." Soil health is important for producing nutrient-dense foods and is closely tied to human health! This [review](#) published in Nov. 2021 discusses that connection; research shows that cropping practices that build soil organic matter lead to crops with higher levels of micronutrients.



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2. Scroll to the bottom of the email and click "manage subscriptions"
3. Under "subscription topics", scroll down to Idaho, expand and select "ID-State NRCS Soil Health"



### AFT Soil Health Case Study

American Farmland Trust is seeking an Idaho “soil health successful” farmer to feature in the first Idaho soil health case study. Selected farmer will be compensated \$100/hr for their time. Reach out to Courtney Cosdon (ccosdon@uidaho.edu) for more info on how to apply!

[Case study flyer](#)

### ★ Idaho 5 for 5 Soil Health Roundtable Meetings ★

If you would like to present for 5 minutes on a soil health practice or subject that you have experience with for the Idaho 5 for 5 Roundtable zoom meetings, please let us know! Here is a link to check out previous meetings: [Soil Health 5 for 5: February 4, 2021 - YouTube](#)

### Impromptu Field Days

Impromptu field days are quick, educational field visits to see and discuss a soil health practice that a producer is trying on their land. If you would like to host an impromptu field day and have your neighbors out to your place for a couple hours, call Courtney Cosdon (208) 364-4692.

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## In The Literature

This section is for sharing recent and exciting scientific literature, boiled down to key takeaways that focus on soil health practices relevant to producers in Idaho.

### Cover Crops and Carbon Sequestration: Lessons from U.S. Studies (Blanco-Canqui et al, 2022)

This recently published paper looks at the factors that influence how cover crops accumulate organic carbon into the soil. Here are some key takeaways:

- The main factors that correlated to cover crops accumulating more soil organic carbon (SOC) were attributed to increased years of using the practice as well as increased cover crop biomass. It's important to note also that root biomass of living cover crops and their root exudates are also very important for SOC accumulation. While the cover crop is photosynthesizing, it pulls carbon from the atmosphere and pumps up to 30% of its photosynthetic energy through its roots and into the soil.
- This paper reported that cover crops increased SOC more in low carbon soils (<1% SOC) like those found in Southern Idaho, vs high carbon soils. SOC tends to increase more quickly in coarser, degraded soils.
- The rate of SOC increase improves after 5 years of using cover crops; incorporating this practice longer term starts revving up the biological activity of soil and makes the soil more efficient over time at building SOC.
- Cover crops, on their own, are of limited value for building SOC unless incorporated with other soil health practices that minimize disturbance, incorporate diversity, and keep the soil covered.

What exactly is SOC? Soil organic carbon is the carbon component of soil organic matter (about 50% of soil organic matter is composed of carbon). Soil organic matter includes all the organic components of soil: plant, animal, and microbial residues in various stages of decomposition, living biomass of microbes, and organic substances produced by plant roots and other soil organisms. Soil organic matter can be estimated as two times the SOC (SOM = 2 x SOC).

## Get to Know Idaho Soils

Soils underfoot are characterized and classified into named groups called series. Take a tour of some of Idaho's benchmarks soil series at this link: [Explore Idaho Soils \(arccgis.com\)](#)