



Agriculture Newsletter
Fall – 2017



In this Edition:

**The Importance of Soil Health
on the Farm**

**Overview of ACT 49:
Commercial Manure Hauler &
Broker Certification Act**

REAP Status

**Northwest PA Grazing
Conference Committee (NW PA
GCC) Seeking More Farmer
Members**

Soil Health Field Day

**District's Free Soil
Sampling Service**

**2017 District Annual
Birdseed Sale**

**The Importance of
Soil Health on the Farm**



A healthy soil is one that can efficiently sustain life both above and below the ground. It is composed of a diverse collection of organisms that are intertwined in complex relationships that keep processes within the soil functioning.

Organisms play crucial roles in a plant's survival. Some examples include worms enabling better water infiltration through their channels and burrows, bacteria transforming nitrogen into a usable form for plant uptake, mycorrhizal fungi attaching to the roots of plants and scavenging water and nutrients for plant uptake that the plant roots could otherwise not access, and many organisms, from worms to protozoa, aiding in the break down of organic material.

Using conservation practices on your farm helps create a desirable environment for these beneficial organisms. Using cover crops, no-till, integrated pest management, diversifying your crop rotation, and managing your manure are just a few ways that you can improve the health of your soil over time as beneficial organisms establish and relationships are developed.

Resources

- Soil Health in field and forage crop production by Sjoerd W. Duiker, Joel C. Myers, Lisa C.
- www.soilhealth.com



Overview of ACT 49: Commercial Manure Hauler & Broker Certification Act

Created under Act 49 of 2004, (the Commercial Manure Hauler and Broker Certification Act) the Commercial Manure Hauler and Broker Certification Program requires all owners and employees of a commercial manure hauler or broker business, that commercially haul, land-apply, or broker manure in Pennsylvania to hold a valid certificate issued by the Department in order to provide their services in PA. The intent is to insure that manure generated by agricultural operations is transported and applied in a safe manner.

Commercial manure haulers or brokers handling or applying manure on behalf of agricultural operations in Pennsylvania must do so according to an Act 38 nutrient management plan, nutrient balance sheet or other manure management plan developed for the operation.

Commercial manure haulers or brokers can obtain the necessary certification by completing the appropriate training program for the activity level.

Hauler Level 1

Persons only transporting manure must review a workbook and complete a checklist verifying their understanding of basic manure handling principles.

Hauler Level 2

Persons employed and supervised to haul and apply manure must review a workbook, fill out a verification form and pass a short examination.

Hauler Level 3

Persons hauling or applying manure independently (without supervision) must attend a 1-day classroom training and pass an examination.

Broker Level 1

Person arranging for the transport or application of manure must attend a 1-day classroom training and pass an examination.

Broker Level 2

Person arranging for the transport or application of manure and interested in developing nutrient balance sheets must complete the Broker Level 1 training, nutrient balance sheet training, P-Index training and pass the nutrient balance sheet exam.

Certification & Examination Fees

- Manure Hauler Level 1 - \$10 annually
- Manure Hauler Level 2 - \$60 every 3 years
- Manure Hauler Level 3 - \$300 every 3 years
- Manure Broker Level 1 - \$325 every 3 years
- Manure Broker Level 2 - \$350 every 3 years

Note: This information is derived from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Website, at www.agriculture.pa.gov

The District can administer exams upon request for the Manure Hauler Level 2 only.

If you are interested in becoming certified or would like more information, contact Mike Aucoin, Program Manager, at: (717) 772-5218 or maucoin@pa.gov.

Resource Enhancement And Protection Program Status

Applications for the Resource Enhancement And Protection (REAP) Program are now available for the 2017 Fiscal Year. However, applications will be processed on a provisional basis, meaning that approved applications will be dependent on the level of REAP funding in the final FY 2017 PA Budget that has yet to be determined.

REAP, administered by the State Conservation Commission, allows farmers and businesses to earn PA state tax credits in exchange for implementing best management practices on agricultural operations that will enhance farm production and protect natural resources.

For assistance with an application, contact the District.



NW PA GCC Seeking More Farmer Members

The NW PA GCC organizes the annual NW PA Grazing Conference each March in Clarion, PA. The Conferences provide educational information on a variety of grazing topics to help area farmers maximize production while conserving their farm's resources. The committee includes members of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Penn State Extension, local County Conservation Districts (Jefferson, Clearfield, Clarion), several local farmers, and is led by Headwaters RC & D Council.

The Committee is looking for a few more farmer members (of any background/animals raised) to gain additional perspectives and input on what you, as a farmer, would like to see at a Grazing

Conference; including what challenges you face on the farm, and/or what practices you use to keep your farm sustainable.

The Committee meets once a month in Clarion to discuss and plan the Conference. Those who can't meet in person have the option to participate over the phone. If you are interested in becoming a member, contact Headwaters RC & D Council at 814-503-8653. We look forward to hearing from you!

Save the Date! The 21st Annual NW PA Grazing Conference is planned for March 22, 2018.



Soil Health Field Day

When: Wednesday, October 4, 2017
10:00am – 2:30pm

Where: Mike Kennis Farm
585 Haag Rd, DuBois PA 15801

This event is hosted by the Penn State Extension. Here you will see the results of an interseeding demonstration of annual ryegrass and clover seeded into corn and will learn how to select cover crops and time seeding dates to ensure a successful stand without affecting the cash crop. In addition, Dr. Sjoerd Duiker will lead sessions on soil physical properties, carbon and nitrogen cycling and soil fertility. In addition, representatives from the Clearfield Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide the latest information of programs that can help farmers implement soil health practices.

Admission is free but attendees are asked to register by contacting Clearfield County Extension at (814) 765-7878. A light lunch and refreshments will be provided.



District's Free Soil Sampling Service

Fall is a great time to start soil sampling in preparation for next year's crops to determine lime and nutrient needs. If you are short on time or just need help doing it, the District is available to take soil samples for you free of charge!