

2016 Northeast SARE Cover Crops for Soil Health Training

SARE PROJECT ENE15-141

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Pre-Event Planning

State Team Leaders are Identified who agree to:

- Form and coordinate their teams by the end of 2015 containing at least 1 farmer, NRCS, and Extension Professional, plus others as appropriate
- Meet with their team prior to the training
- Attend the training together with their team
- Participate in follow-up educational activities
- Communicate regularly with the training coordinator

Needs assessment at Winter AC Meeting Feb. 2014

Evidence of strong interest and enthusiasm among farmers and Ag Service Providers based on:

- 2014 National Cover Crops Conference
- Surveys conducted by NE SARE State Coordinators for '14—'17 plans
- Inclusion of cover crops and soil health in NRCS strategic training priorities

Decisions and a Plan for Action

- An AC subcommittee presents a concept for a regional training for Ag service providers
- In early 2015, the AC approves a proposal from Delaware State University and identified Jason Challandes as Coordinator

Planning Committee Forms in 2015

- With Extension, ARS, NRCS, AC Members, SARE Coordinators, and farmers
- The committee developed the format, topics, and agenda and chose appropriate speakers through regular conference calls 2015-2016.

Event

Performance Target

80 service providers and farmers who increase knowledge and skills through the Cover Crops for Soil Health workshop will form implementation teams with competencies and intention to deliver education programs for farmers about cover crops to improve soil health.



The training held in Baltimore March 29-31, 2016 featured:

- 94 diverse participants in 11 teams representing all 12 NE states
- Three half days of presentations and discussion sessions
- One half day field tour of ARS research projects and equipment in Beltsville, MD
- Grain & vegetable relevant topics including species & mixes, establishment & termination methods, fitting cover crops into rotations, and the management of soil health, nutrients & pollinators using cover crops
- A diverse farmer panel session
- A final session devoted to team planning and coordination



Video and Presentations from the training are posted online
<https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Conference-Materials/Cover-Crops-for-Soil-Health-Workshop>



Post-Event

- In Summer 2015, the AC approves additional funding for teams to provide post-event demonstrations and other farmer educational activities
- In 2016, a targeted call for proposals was released immediately after the event and all 11 teams were awarded partnership grants up to \$10,000 each (plus indirect costs)
- The projects are diverse and include topics such as spring burn-down, preventing soil loss in potatoes, suppression of soil born diseases in blueberries and the general promotion of cover crops and soil health practices. They will be completed in 2018.



Keys to Success

- Identifying team leaders early
- Requiring diverse team members from different organizations
- Making commitment and outcome expectations, plus post-a known from the beginning
- Hiring a professional videographer for more usable audio and video