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Stakeholders converge to explore soil health solutions
Minnesota Office for Soil Health develops vision for public-private partnerships at stakeholder forum

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St. Paul, Minn.—Conservation and agricultural professionals from the public and private sectors gathered Tuesday at the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus to discuss soil health solutions at the Minnesota Office for Soil Health’s (MOSH) first stakeholder forum.

“BWSR and local conservation staff have long appreciated the work of our farmers, ranchers, foresters, and urban landowners to protect and conserve our soil and water resources, and we continue to strive to find ways to help them grow their soil health practices,” BWSR Executive Director John Jaschke said. “That is why we are investing our money, time, and energy into this effort to further develop expertise on soil health, which can be shared with Minnesotans across our state’s diverse landscape.”

The Minnesota Office for Soil Health is a collaborative program created in 2017 by BWSR in partnership with the University of Minnesota Water Resources Center (WRC), a department housed in the College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). MOSH strives to build local expertise to promote soil health and water conservation by developing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of local conservationists to promote sustainable soil and land management.

“Improving soil health will benefit farm profitability and the environment,” said Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Commissioner Thom Peterson. “The MDA fully supports the Office for Soil Health’s commitment to increase awareness of these benefits and to promote the importance of soil health.”

“The Minnesota Office for Soil Health seeks to provide practical, science-based information to help farmers manage their soil and water resources,” Water Resources Center Director Dr. Jeffrey Peterson said. “The goal is to find site-specific practices that lead to economic as well as environmental sustainability.”

Forum attendees explored the development of a state Soil Health Action Plan and engaged in small-group discussions on a range of soil health issues.

“We appreciated the opportunity to attend the forum and discuss the many ways corn growers are investing in soil health with the organizations who share our goal of increased sustainability on the farm,” said Bryan Biegler, a board member with the Minnesota Corn Growers Association. “We look forward to working with the Minnesota Office for Soil Health and support their mission of promoting soil health and water conservation through local expertise statewide.”

“The Minnesota Office for Soil Health has truly been a collaborative effort since its doors opened in 2017,” said Brian Buhr, Dean of the University of Minnesota’s College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences...
(CFANS). “CFANS and the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station are proud to play a key role in MOSH’s mission to build expertise from a variety of stakeholders to promote soil health and further conservation efforts across Minnesota.”

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*BWSR is the state soil and water conservation agency, and it administers programs that prevent sediment and nutrients from entering our lakes, rivers, and streams; enhance fish and wildlife habitat; and protect wetlands. The 20-member board consists of representatives of local and state government agencies and citizens. BWSR’s mission is to improve and protect Minnesota’s water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners.*