

HANCOCK COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Residue Management Field Day July 16, 2013



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The Greater Bear Creek Area Watershed Planning Committee, in an effort to implement education towards natural resource conservation, holds an annual '*Hancock County Residue Management Field Day*' for growers and interested citizens in Western Illinois. The goal of this field day is to promote public understanding and encourage public and private participation of residue management and cover crop usage.

The Greater Bear Creek Area Watershed includes portions of Adams and Hancock Counties. Like other watersheds it has a management plan with a mission to foster cooperation from landowners and stakeholders within the watershed to improve and protect the natural resources of the watershed. Information learned during this field day will be used by all landowners and land stewards to improve and protect the natural resources of any watershed area.

Attendees are able to get up close to the soil to learn how proper residue management reduces erosion, maintains soil health, conserves soil moisture, manages snow, improves water quality, provides wildlife habitat, and improves profits - all while following their conservation plan! If properly managed, crop rotation, soil conditions, equipment selection, and weed control, will improve yields and soil productivity for future generations. Any tillage not accounted for in a conservation plan may put a farmer out of compliance with erosion provisions. The demonstrations are just representative examples – every location, soil type, crop, and field moisture will produce different results for all the equipment. This event is based on residue management and does not endorse any particular tool.

The excellent discussions and demonstrations of strip-till and vertical-till equipment easily compares tillage to help farmers choose the piece of equipment that best fits into one's conservation system. Attendees of this unique and beneficial event have a chance to interact with others, talk with industry professionals, and gain new information or new contacts that they can use to advance conservation on their land and protect the natural resources for future generations.

The Soil and Water Conservation District and Natural Resources Conservation Service are on-site to take crop residue measurements with a line transect and explain what is required for compliance, how to measure residue, equipment usage and timing, and answer questions.

In addition, emphasis is now being placed on cover crop education which adds relevancy to residue management. A cover crop display and discussion explains about the cover crop plots and products, on-farm usage, and knowledge and experience with cover crops.

The sponsors of this program, the Hancock County Soil and Water Conservation District, Hancock County Farm Service Agency, Hancock County Farm Bureau, and University of Illinois Extension stress that tillage operations are not approved substitutes for no-till systems. To truly slow down the erosion process and stay in compliance, a combination of practices, such as no-till, contour farming, contour buffer strips, terraces, grassed waterways, field borders, and cover crops need to be established. Farmers need to routinely review and update conservation plans to assure they are in compliance. Properly managed conservation systems will result in improved soil quality, water quality, residue management, sustainability, and profitability. Conservation experts stress that vertical tillage is NOT no-till!

A complimentary meal is provided with assistance from the Pork and Beef Producers. Much appreciated help from the local FFA Chapters and 4-H Clubs is always utilized. Many local businesses and individuals contribute financial support to make this event possible. The event is always free and open to the public. Plans are currently being made for the next annual Hancock County Residue Management Field Day.