



### **GREAT IDEAS FOR BEGINNER OPERATORS:**

Try cereal rye after corn with thoughts on the termination method in the spring. If planted early enough, oats can be used, but will winter kill and make spring work easier.

Try cover crops on end-rows only to alleviate compaction issues; radish and turnips will winter kill and leave voids as if an Aer-Way was used. The long tap roots help carry water and oxygen down through the soil profile.

Rapeseed can be used prior to soybeans to help prevent Sudden Death Syndrome.

Experiment with cover crops only on a small area, or in strips as wide as your combine so that you can watch the yield monitor the following year.

# PROMOTING COVER CROPS

## TIPS FROM KARA DOWNIN

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[PHOTO COURTESY OF THE REGISTER-MAIL]





# PROMOTING COVER CROPS



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WATER,  
HEALTHY  
SOILS.**

## NEW TO PROMOTING COVER CROPS? HAVE COST-SHARE TO SPEND?

### This was me last year. Here's what I learned, and a step-by-step process that can help you too ...

Our SWCD Board decided to promote cover crops in our high nitrogen priority watershed. This is our flat, black part of the county. We never see these owners/operators unless they sign up for a well sealing. I decided to hold a cover crop workshop at a town hall in the watershed. No one came.

Following this, I researched operators in this watershed and searched for emails in SCIMS/Toolkit and sent them a short email on the available cost-share for "first time cover cropped fields". I immediately had some takers and they gave me more emails of their friends. Progress!

Once I had interest, I had each applicant give me the exact Farm/Tract/Field portion of the field/number of acres that they were interested in planting cover crops. After learning the exact number of acres (\$1,600 is the max cost-share per applicant), I took each applicant to the next board meeting for approval. The SWCD Chairman signed the Agreement Form ESC-1A. More progress!

I next clipped their soils for this exact area. I printed out the NRCS Job Sheet 340: Cover Crop and 340 Practice Standard and called each applicant for their goal(s) for using cover crops (See the Job Sheet Purpose). I inquired with them if they already had in mind what they wanted to plant. Most already decided that they wanted to plant cereal rye after corn. One applicant wasn't sure what to plant.

Either way, you next go to the Midwest Cover Crop Council (MCCC) website [mccc.msu.edu](http://mccc.msu.edu) and use the selector tool. Inputs include; state, county, cash crop prior to cover crop, date planted, expected harvest date, soil drainage class (determined by taking the predominant soil of the cover crop area and looking up its drainage class in your county soil survey), presence of tile and flooding, and then list up to three goals. The resulting chart will let you know what is recommended to be planted, and when, for the goals and inputs you listed. Making headway!

Once the applicant decides what they want to plant (using your recommendation, hopefully), you can select that plant species (or mix) from the MCCC chart and the plant information sheet will open in a new tab. Click on each heading to expand and print this page. This sheet has lots of information that you will use to input on the NRCS Job Sheet. Review the 340 Practice Standard for each applicant's specific goals to make sure you cover any and all exceptions. Almost there!

Finally, complete the NRCS Job Sheet using info that the operator has given you, from the MCCC Information Sheet. Mail the operator an Approval Packet with; approval letter, Agreement Form to sign, W-9 form, completed NRCS Job Sheet, self-addressed-stamped-envelope. Follow-up to; receive signed forms, document planting with photos after germination, receive bills and seed tags to document that enough Pure Live Seed was used. Done!