



Indiana Conservation Partnership Soil Health Philosophy

The Indiana Conservation Partnership (ICP) includes eight Indiana agencies and organizations that share a common goal of promoting conservation. To accomplish this goal, the ICP members provide technical, financial and educational assistance to support and implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices and technologies. The ICP and our primary customers – Indiana farmers – are recognized as national leaders in our collaborative efforts to incorporate soil health management systems into conservation planning, education activities and farm management.

Indiana's soil health strategy and priority focus has achieved tremendous success in addressing the state's primary natural resource concerns. The ICP endorses these four key **Soil Health Principles** for all lands:

- Minimize Disturbance
- Optimize Soil Cover
- Optimize Biodiversity
- Provide Continuous Living Roots

Regenerating soil health is a journey. Meeting the **Objectives of Soil Health Improvement** should be part of an overall approach to management decisions and field operations. To fully implement a **conservation cropping system** that improves soil health we will help farmers understand the importance of continually working toward the following objectives:

- Increasing ing organic matter
- Increasing ing aggregate stability
- Increasing ing water infiltration
- Increasing ing water-holding capacity
- Improving ing nutrient use efficiency
- Enhancing ing and diversifying ing soil biology

The ICP works with farmers to help them implement a conservation cropping system approach to improve the health of their soil. This "system" of practices and management results in improvements to soil health that help to address Indiana's primary natural resource concerns. Although implementing a single management practice may slow the degradation of soil function, it will rarely achieve the broad improvements of our resource objectives.

The elements of a conservation cropping system go beyond the minimum standards. It is critical to emphasize descriptive adjectives associated with each practice element, such as:

- **Quality** No-till/Strip-till
- **Adaptive** Nutrient Management
- **Integrated** Weed and Pest Management
- **Diverse** and **Strategic** Cover Crop Integration
- **Diverse** Conservation Crop Rotations
- **Precision** Farming Technology
- **Prescriptive** Conservation Buffers

These practices when incorporated into a profitable and sustainable soil health system can help farmers go beyond simply maintaining the soil to actually improving its health. Since the benefits achieved through this system can begin to degrade if the application of the system stops, soil health is a never-ending journey towards constantly improving the soil over time.

For many farmers, implementing a conservation cropping system may require significant changes in their operations and management. Building a successful conservation cropping system can take time, even years. The ICP commits to providing support for our customers through ongoing education, support and financial and technical assistance so that soil health improvement is possible across all agricultural sectors and becomes the management system of choice.