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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Despite slight decrease, long-term no-till trends prove strong

More than 60,000 train cars of soil prevented from entering waterways

INDIANAPOLIS (March 2, 2018) – Indiana farmers are once again leading the nation in building valuable topsoil by using soil health management systems in their operations. According to a recent [survey](#), farmers saved nearly 6.3 million tons of valuable top soil from erosion last spring as a result of no-till farming, a conservation practice known for improving organic matter and soil health.

The spring conservation transect report shows a small decrease from 2015 in both no-till corn acres (8 percent decrease) and no-till soybean acres (5 percent decrease). Despite this reduction, Indiana has seen a 379 percent increase in the amount of no-till corn and soybean acres in the last 25 years.

“There are many variables, such as a mild winter and heavy rainfall, that can impact a farmer’s decision to no-till, and no two years are alike, which is why it’s important to look at these trends over time,” said Bruce Kettler, Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director. “According to this data, Indiana remains a leader in conservation, and Hoosier farmers, on their own volition, continue to take steps to conserve our vital land and water resources.”

The transect is an on-the-ground survey conducted every other year by members of the [Indiana Conservation Partnership](#) (ICP) that identifies the types of tillage systems farmers are using after crops emerge in the spring. The ICP has been tracking trends since the 1990s.

The ICP wants to see more no-till acres across Indiana, as it can reduce soil erosion by 75 percent compared to a conventional (chisel-disk) tillage system. The savings were not only in the soil, farmers who used reduced tillage systems also required fewer passes across the field, and they used less fuel that resulted in over 12 million gallons of diesel saved.

“Although all types of conservation tillage help keep the soil on the field where it belongs, no-till is the only method that actually builds soil health and retains soil structure,” said Jill Reinhart, acting state conservationist for Indiana’s Natural Resources Conservation Service. “If you are serious about making your land more adaptive to extreme weather conditions and improving the function of your soil, we encourage farmers move to a combination of no-till, cover crops and other conservation practices such as nutrient management, integrated weed and pest management, and diverse crop rotations.”

In addition to no-till, the transect also captures data from other conservation tillage methods, such as mulch-till and reduced-till, that leave at least 30 percent residue cover, which can help reduce soil erosion by 50 percent or more compared to bare soil.

“Crop residue keeps the soil from washing off the field, which is good for farmers, soil productivity and

our drinking water,” Kettler said.

The transect shows that farmers used reduced tillage methods on more than 680,000 corn acres and close to 1.1 million soybean acres last spring.

It’s important to Reinhart that people know Indiana farmers are doing good things on a voluntary basis especially with reports of agriculture’s role in the Gulf hypoxia and Great Lakes issues. “A great example in the transect report is the over one million acres of cover crops planted, which when combined with no-till keeps even more nutrients out of our water,” she said. “Taking the time to observe, track and report helps us document efforts like these.”

The ICP is wrapping up the fall cover crop transect and that data will be available later in the spring. ISDA maintains tillage transect reports on their website at <http://www.in.gov/isda/2383.htm> including the most recent results. To learn more about the tillage transect for your county, visit your local Soil and Water Conservation District office found here: <http://www.in.gov/isda/2370.htm>.

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About the Indiana Conservation Partnership

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.
<http://icp.iaswcd.org/>.

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