Conservation Tillage Demonstration Plot Results

Since October 1, 2005, the Heron Lake Watershed District (HLWD) has received grant funds to implement a Conservation Tillage Demonstration Plot. This field-scale demonstration contained three replications of six tillage treatments — strip-till, one pass, no-till, chisel plow, ridge-till, and chisel plow with an alternative fertilizer program. The cropping portion of this grant ended in the fall of 2011.

The HLWD, in partnership with the University of Minnesota (umn) Extension, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, North Heron Lake Game Producers Association, Mark Pietz, Vern Uit de Flesch, Alba Grain, and Faillard Management, is hosting a workshop to present the yield and economic findings from this research project on Thursday, March 22 at 1:00 p.m.

Conservation Tillage Refresher: Conservation tillage is a system of reduced tillage, leaving increased residue from the previous crop in the field from harvest through planting. This results in a natural recycling of crop residues, due to organisms too small to be seen with the naked eye feeding on the stalks and leaves. Recycling crop residue increases organic matter as well as soil productivity. Conservation tillage can reduce soil erosion by 90%. Soil erosion is one of the top pollutants in the Heron Lake watershed. Keeping the soil on the ground reduces the amount of dirt, pesticides, and nutrients entering lakes and streams. When that happens there is increased oxygen levels for fish and less algae in the water. The conservation tillage system can reduce labor, equipment cost, and fuel use, particularly when no-till, one type of conservation tillage, is used.

Agenda (times are tentative):
1:00 p.m. – Welcome and Introduction
1:05 p.m. – Jeff Coulter, UMN Extension
1:45 p.m. – Jeffrey Vetsch, UMN Southern Research and Outreach Center
2:25 p.m. – Liz Stahl, UMN Extension
3:05 p.m. – David Bau, Regional Extension Education Ag Business Management
3:45 p.m. – Mark Pietz, Land Operator

If you are interested in attending, please register with the HLWD office by Tuesday, March 22 at 507-793-2462 or contact Margaret Peeters at margaret.peeters@roundlk.net. Registration encouraged.

CONSERVATION TILLAGE WORK SHOP
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
The workshop, hosted by the HLWD, will provide an opportunity for interested farmers and agricultural professionals to learn about these conservation tillage practices.

When: Thursday, March 22 Time: 1:00 p.m.
Where: Heron Lake Community Center, 1008 3rd Ave.
Heron Lake, MN 56137

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1:05 p.m. – Jeff Coulter, UMN Extension
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If you are interested in attending, please register with the HLWD office by Tuesday, March 20 at 507-793-2462 or contact Margaret Peeters at margaret.peeters@roundlk.net. Registration encouraged.

About the Speakers...

Lizabeth Stahl is an Associate Extension Professor and Extension Educator in Crops with the UMN Extension at the Worthington regional office. She has a M.S. degree in Agronomy/Weed Science and a B.S. degree in Agricultural Education with a minor in Agricultural Economics from the UMN. Liz’s outreach and research activities focus on corn and soybean management, pesticide safety education, conservation tillage, and weed science, with a particular interest in sustainability. Liz has been with UMN Extension since 2004. Her prior work experiences include working in the seed industry as a Research Agronomist for 6½ years, working with a non-profit in third crop efforts, working as a Crop Production Specialist at a local farmer’s cooperative and serving as a Soil Conservationist Trainee with the USDA Soil Conservation Service.

Jeffrey Vetsch is an assistant soil scientist employed, since September 1993, by the UMN Southern Research and Outreach Center at Waseca. With a B.S. and M.S. in Soil Science from the UMN, Jeff’s responsibilities include coordinating research activities in support of the soil science faculty; supervising field research staff; developing research protocols and procedures; performing field activities; collecting, tabulating, and analyzing research data; writing annual reports; and presenting research findings at meetings. He is also responsible for applied research performed in the areas of nutrient management, tillage, manure management, and water quality, primarily for corn and soybean.

Jeff Coulter is an Extension agronomist with the UMN. He has a B.S. degree in agronomy from South Dakota State University and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in crop sciences from the University of Illinois. His responsibilities include extension and research to increase the productivity and efficiency of corn-based cropping systems while protecting soil and water resources, enhancing nutrient cycling, and reducing pest pressure. His research program is focused on addressing current and future challenges in corn production through field experiments on farms throughout the state and at University of Minnesota Research and Outreach Centers. Current research is focused on: i) planting-related decisions for corn production; ii) nutrient management for corn after alfalfa; and iii) residue and nutrient management for corn following corn. This research serves as the foundation for education of agricultural professionals and growers through meetings, field days, articles, publications, and a website. For more information, visit www.extension.umn.edu/corn.

David Bau received a B.S. in Agricultural Economics and a M. S. in Economics from South Dakota State University. He works with the commodity market trends and price probabilities, land values and rents, conservation tillage practices and strategic planning and cost of production. In the area of agricultural risk management, he also works with, marketing clubs and alternative crops. David has taught Farm Transfer and Estate Planning and Winning the Game workshops and produces and publishes Farm Resource Guide each year since 2005 which includes a wealth of information on farm business management.
What’s Happening?

Heron Lake Watershed District
Board Meeting
March 20, 2012 at 7 p.m.

Conservation Tillage Demonstration
Plot Final Meeting
March 22, 2012 at 1 p.m.

Note that the HLWD board meeting dates and times are tentative.
Please contact the HLWD office for the exact date and time.

Please contact us with your questions or concerns! Telephone 507-793-2462; Email: hlwd@roundlk.net

Map of the Heron Lake Watershed District