



# Newsletter

August 2018

**From the Executive Director:**

## Harvesting New Opportunities and Results

Hello! I am elated to join the Soil Health Partnership as its new executive director. It is an honor to have the opportunity to serve such an important mission and an organization dedicated to sustainable agriculture production. I recognize I am taking the reins at a pivotal time, and I look forward to the prospects ahead for delivering the data insights to our farmers and partners, fostering growth and spreading the word on soil health.

We are at an interesting juncture in agriculture. We face mounting challenges, and we will have to roll up our sleeves to address them while growing food sustainably. I firmly believe sustainability is about more than resources – it must include the economic component to be truly sustainable and viable into the future. This is one of the things that drew me to SHP, an organization I first became impressed with last year during my agricultural work in Minnesota. My goal is to support farmers in achieving this broad range of sustainability.

Agriculture has long been a passion of mine, and I am equally passionate about data! In fact, with a background in economics and statistics, you could say I am a “data nerd.” It’s another thing that drew me to SHP. The use of data helps us make better decisions. In ag, we face many complexities and trends, which makes it hard to see the forest for the trees. Data allow us to step back and see the big picture while putting emotion aside to assess the real impact of our decisions.

Speaking of data, as you are preparing for harvest, we are actively preparing our data analyses to share back with you. Several of you have already shared your energy and hopes for the SHP with me. This includes getting the most out of the data that we have collected so far. I have not had a day go by when someone hasn’t asked me when we will begin to see insights. My near-term goal is to quickly process what we have so far, digging into the analyses and sharing information on things like how we see aggregate stability changing over time and how specific choices are impacting economics. We also want to ensure you know our timeline of data collection and release of insights over the next year. This is my number one priority.

Looking forward, by 2019, we will have a solid set of year-over-year data to look at what trends we’re seeing. We continually improve our data collection and insights so we can answer our farmers’ questions. We already know there are things that will surprise us on the positive side – and maybe some things we don’t like. That’s the beauty of data. It helps to see past the noise to the truth.

My first two weeks have been action-packed as I have learned about the immense work that the SHP team, the farmers and our partners have accomplished so far. I continue to be impressed by the quality, dedication and passion of the SHP team, its enrolled farmers, and its partners. I see great potential in what the future holds for us. Over the coming months, I will be visiting farms, field days and other events, and hope to meet many of you in person.

My predecessor, Nick Goeser, established and built a great organization with an impressive vision. I aim to build on this and help this partnership grow sustainably and effectively into the future.

Have a safe and prosperous autumn!

Shefali Mehta, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Soil Health Partnership



*Shefali Mehta, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Soil Health Partnership*

## Field Days on the Ground Now!

As summer comes to a close, our SHP farmers and field managers are busy sharing the story of soil health with others. Field days and other events are in full swing, hosted by SHP, or co-hosted with local partner organizations. But the best thing about them, says SHP farmer Deb Gangwish, is the opportunity to share and learn with others.

“We enjoy hosting our SHP Field Day because folks in agriculture are born observers and learners,” Gangwish said. “Sharing information from our no-till trial field adds to the local body of knowledge regarding soil health practices in the area. They say it takes a village to raise a child – farmers know it takes an army to raise a crop, and a good share of that army lives in the soil! We love hosting our field day because it provides such a great way to bring farmers together and discuss the foundation of everything we do - the soil.”

If you're one of our SHP farmers and want to plan a field day, contact your field manager. Or, if you'd like to attend one, check out our new map of field days and other events at [www.SoilHealthPartnership.org](http://www.SoilHealthPartnership.org).



## #SoilSmart Campaign Gets Underway

The Soil Health Partnership has launched a social media campaign to spread the word about soil health and the innovative management practices that make a difference, but we need your help to maximize it. #SoilSmart is a high-volume, maximum-impact social media campaign from Soil Health Partnership designed to build the following on Soil Health Partnership's social media channels, reach new farmer audiences and provide helpful content to spread awareness of soil health on a deeper level.

Content will focus on creatively sharing information on the benefits of practices that promote soil health, including reduced tillage, growing cover crops and engaging in advanced nutrient management. We need your help! The campaign is featured on our Facebook and Twitter accounts, and also on our newly launched LinkedIn and Instagram accounts (see below). Please follow/like our account and then like, share, retweet and comment on our content.

Charleston Orwig, an agency based in Wisconsin, won the bid for the campaign. Missouri-based Rose Media, which has led SHP's communications efforts since 2015, is overseeing the effort along with the #SoilSmart committee. Committee members include SHP farmer Brian Corkill, SHP's Elyssa McFarland, herself a farmer and former field manager for the program; and Becky Frankenbach, director of communications for Missouri Corn.

Have you received a #SoilSmart hat? Send us a photo of you in it!



## Join us on Instagram and Get “LinkedIn”

Thanks to the start of our 2018 social media campaign, you can now find SHP on Instagram (@SoilPartners). The page will be used to supplement content on the existing channels as well as highlight our extensive photo library. Give us a follow and look for some familiar faces!

Are you on LinkedIn? Follow our new page for timely updates and information!



## SHP Farmer featured in Farm & Ranch Living

Have you ever tried to keep a daily journal? How about one for publication? It takes a lot of energy, but SHP Farmer Mark Mueller of Waverly, Iowa, was up to the challenge for Farm & Ranch Living. He shared insights into day-to-day life on his farm, including his efforts to protect his land with cover crops and no-till practices. Thanks, Mark, for sharing your farming story.

With permission of Farm & Ranch Living, check out Mark's story at the SHP website.



## Website Under Construction

The Soil Health Partnership website is getting a whole new look! As the partnership has grown, our website content and traffic have increased. We're revamping the site to make it more user friendly, including a member farmer-only portal for sharing information and a discussion forum.



The new site launched in August. Watch for our new portal for farmers.

You'll be able to create an account, view your profile, view your test field information, and more. We're also building discussion boards and an Ask-the-Expert feature.

Visit the new website at [www.SoilHealthPartnership.org](http://www.SoilHealthPartnership.org)

## New faces at the Soil Health Partnership

It's been a busy year as the Soil Health Partnership has expanded and grown. As you've seen, the SHP is under new leadership with Shefali Mehta. We now have 7 field managers helping farmers implement practices and collect the data for our research. Most recently, we've welcomed John Stewart, a field manager covering central and southern Indiana. He graduated from Iowa State University with a Master of Science in agronomy and holds a Bachelor of Science in agriculture economics from Purdue University. From 2012 until joining SHP, John worked as a research associate for Beck's Superior Hybrids in Atlanta, Indiana.

We're hiring more field managers, including Kansas/Nebraska and North Dakota and South Dakota!



*John Stewart  
Field Manager - Indiana  
Soil Health Partnership*

National Corn Growers Association  
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Chesterfield, MO 63005



## Newsletter



### Mark Your Calendar for the 2019 Summit!

We're closing in on the planning of the 2019 Soil Health Summit. Mark your calendars for **January 15-16, 2019 at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at the Arch, St. Louis, Missouri!** Join us for high-energy sessions, enhanced breakouts and time for peer networking on the latest soil health strategies and benefits to your farming business.

Registration and more details coming soon at [www.SoilHealthPartnership.org](http://www.SoilHealthPartnership.org).

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