Letter from Executive Director

Spring showers bring May flowers... but this past Spring we were left wondering, “when will the rain stop? And can it come back in July?” As we go into summer, SHP continues to learn and update our processes. This wet spring taught us a lot about the variability in our soil sampling processes through the 15 states where we work. Variable weather and a tough winter meant each area experienced its own unique challenges. I am hoping you had a positive planting season despite some of the curve balls thrown by Mother Nature.

Agriculture fits the mantra “think globally, act locally” well. Agriculture ties us together, not only across the world, but across generations that span time. But one size does not fit all as the specific nuances of an area and the individual needs drive choices. As SHP continues to learn from our network, we are capturing and sharing these localized stories. In them, we see the unique circumstances facing each farmer. The localized nature of agriculture is why we have the field team model we have.

However, we also know trends matter, and exist, for agriculture. Complementing these individual perspectives and knowledge, we continue to look across the network for systemic information and impact. Our blog, Digging In, continues to showcase individual stories as well as trends. Our upcoming Summer Research Meetings will do likewise.

You will find more details about the Summer Research Meetings in this newsletter, but I wanted to note how excited we are to host these meetings this year. They will be the first for many on our team, including myself and Maria. We are currently drafting the research reports. During the meetings, we will have a chance to cover the state of our data, what we can share today and where we could use your support for future insights.

Shefali V Mehta, Executive Director
Soil Health Partnership

Summer Research Meetings

Written by: SHP Field Managers

Our Field Managers are busy planning the 2019 Summer Research Meetings. Please be on the lookout for your personal invitation to these farmer meetings from your local Field Manager.

The team is actively analyzing the 2018 yield and soil data to prepare farmer reports. We have heard you and are extracting as much as we can from our existing data set.

During the meetings, SHP will review individual and group insights from the farm, state, region and national levels and provide an update on the overall program. We will also discuss the state of the current data set and how you can help up to get more value from it. You will also have the chance to network other SHP farmers, ask SHP staff questions and learn how you can get involved in other SHP projects.

We hope to see you there!
Corn associations commit to soil health

“Think globally, act locally” is a mantra we use for agriculture. Few things exemplify this mantra like the Soil Health Partnership’s relationships with individual states and their associations. Each state faces unique issues and questions specific to their geography and environment. SHP’s core mission is to partner with farmers as they try new soil health management practices with the goal of improving soil health. However, we know that that mission translates differently depending on the geography. Since our larger goal is to support adoption and understanding of varied conservation practices, these state-level relationships and knowledge are key.

Thanks to creative partnerships with the states, we have been able to explore and define ways to increase our impact, build our network and strengthen our ability to work with more farmers across the US. Four corn associations have recently increased their commitment to soil health.

Iowa Corn Promotion Board® has stepped up as our first Data Supporter. Not only will we leverage these funds to ensure we are more effective and efficient with our data processes, but we will match these funds to recruit a data specialist for SHP and increase our analyses.

South Dakota Corn and South Dakota NRCS worked together to secure funding and support to hire a SHP Field Manager for the state. These collective efforts will provide the opportunity for SHP to collaborate with local soil health initiatives and work with South Dakota farmers to implement soil health practices on working lands.

Minnesota Corn Research and Promotion Council granted SHP a 3-year grant to build out four more Minnesota SHP sites. This gracious support will help establish a strong soil health network in one of the largest corn-producing states while bolstering the SHP program.

Michigan Corn has jointly funded a research position that will focus on building research partnerships to address key research questions in the state, such as the role of soil health practices in promoting improved water quality. The position will also lay the groundwork for expansion of the Michigan SHP network and support analysis of data already being collected throughout our multi-state network.

“Our state partnerships are critical. SHP works on the ground and these partnerships are what enable us to ensure that the farmers have the localized knowledge and support that is needed to make effective decisions each year,” SHP Executive Director Shefali Mehta said. “The state agencies have demonstrated their commitment to supporting their farmers, supporting a myriad of practices and the focus on soil health.”
Under construction – SHP website

The first half of 2019 was spent updating many different parts of the SHP. Soilhealthpartnership.org is the next major project for our communications team. Many of you have provided great feedback about how we can develop our website into a better resource for you and the soil health community.

The communication team will be working on the website in segments to limit user disruptions. Online field day registrations will not be changed. If you are having trouble finding something on the website during this period of rebuilding, please don’t hesitate to reach out!

Welcoming New SHP Faces

The Soil Health Partnership welcomes a new employee and two summer interns.

Tracy Rose was selected to serve as the SHP Program Specialist. In this role, Tracy will support the SHP team, especially the National team, on scheduling, coordination and connecting with external partners. Tracy is also the main support for Executive Director Shefali Mehta and Lead Scientist Maria Bowman.

Communications Intern – Emily Keiser is from Gothenburg, Nebraska, and this fall she will be a senior at South Dakota State University. Emily enjoys riding on the SDSU Equestrian Team, participating in the Agriculture Communicators of Tomorrow Club, as well as being an active member on the Little International Staff. Emily is most looking forward to traveling and new experiences she will gain throughout this summer, along with learning from the staff at NCGA and the Soil Health Partnership.

Data Intern – Originally from Virginia, Margaret Lindsay is a rising senior at Washington University in St. Louis. She studies mathematics and statistics and is looking forward to supporting the SHP science and data team. Margaret enjoys running and tutoring local middle schoolers in math.
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More updates are on your way!
We will be contacting you more with data results and insights. Please add these emails to your account so you don’t miss an update! soilhealth@ncga.com mehta@ncga.com

Summer calendar
See soilhealthpartnership.org for a full list of upcoming events.

Notable dates:
  - Late July: Aerial imagery

Events:
  - Summer Research Meetings – see website for schedule

Webinars:
  - June 25: Soil Sampling
  - July 30: Crop Update and Scouting Tips
  - August 27: Rooted in Data: What’s in our Data?

Soil Health Partnership – a data-driven, on-farm effort to support more productive and sustainable agriculture through soil health
soilhealth@ncga.com
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soilhealthpartnership.org

We are increasing our communications – follow us on your favorite channel. Be sure to use the hashtag #SoilHealth or #SoilSmart, and tag us!

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