



Newsletter

December 2018

From the Executive Director:

'Tis the Season of Giving, and We have Much to Share

I can't believe how time has flown! We are wrapping up 2018. There is so much to share – we are completing the collection of our yield data, we have a new Lead Scientist, our new South Dakota/ North Dakota field manager is in place, we announced the expansion of our Associate program, we are counting down to our first-ever public Soil Health Summit, AND we finally have a statistically significant number of farms with year-over-year data! Phew, it's been busy.

Our farmers are facing unprecedented headwinds creating tremendous challenges for many. People have asked me why farmers should think about sustainability in a climate when they are not sure if they can keep their farms afloat to next year. Sustainability means weathering these shocks and ensuring your farm and your land are healthy and viable moving forward. I believe this so strongly that I hired an economist for our Lead Scientist role.

SHP is a science organization, and we just took a significant step by hiring Dr. Maria Bowman. She comes to us with a tremendous background in agricultural productivity, impact and improving farmer economics. SHP now has two bona fide economists, so you will not be surprised to see a significant emphasis on economic viability for farmers. I firmly believe that sustainability must be both economic and environmental.

For us to ensure that SHP provides true value to our farmers, we need a holistic view of sustainability. Over the next six months, we will be sharing our perspective on economic viability. SHP continues to have one the most unique soil data sets in the U.S., and now we have the opportunity to overlay the economic perspective to truly understand how these practices impact active, real-world farms. Dr. Bowman is already making waves and helping us to strengthen our delivery to you.

I am lucky to lead a team of dedicated, passionate and inspiring team members. This month, we expanded our team with another phenomenal hire – Maddy Rabenhorst, who helps us in our expansion westward, thanks to joint collaboration between South Dakota Corn, NRCS and SHP.

We are excited as our yield data rolls in after harvest. We recognize that this was a tough year for harvest and appreciate your commitment and work with our field managers to collect these data despite the weather issues. We are eagerly awaiting these data since this will be the first time in SHP's history that we have a fully analyzable data set of year-over-year data. We have waited a long time for this moment!

We will be sharing these initial insights and our data and analysis plan at our Summit. We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis in January!

Have a happy holiday season!

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



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

Sign up for our digital newsletter at
www.SoilHealthPartnership.org



SHP Celebrates World Soil Day 2018

Most folks don't give much thought to the soil beneath their feet—unless they happen to track some into the house! As farmers, agronomists and others in the ag sector, we think about our soil on a daily basis! We understand its vital role in a successful harvest, clean water and more.

On Dec. 5, we acknowledged World Soil Day—an annual international event set up as a means to focus attention on the importance of healthy soil and advocating for the sustainable management of soil resources.

As part of the worldwide day, we took to social media. Our messages highlighted the launch of our associate program (more below!) and we shared an insightful video from our friends at The Nature Conservancy, featuring some SHP farmers and staff, and the Soil Health Institute.

Visit soilhealthpartnership.org



Don't Miss Out on the 2019 Summit!

Still trying to decide about attending the 2019 Summit? With even more enriching breakout sessions, this year's summit is a can't-miss event to learn the latest in soil health strategies! (Check out the full agenda!) The summit takes place in St. Louis Jan. 15-16. And, for the first time ever, we're opening it up to any farmer, agronomist or educator. Book your room before Dec. 21 for block pricing. We'll see you in St. Louis!

Summit Website www.soilhealthpartnership.org/summit



Maria Bowman Hired as SHP Lead Scientist

The Soil Health Partnership has tapped Dr. Maria Bowman, a notable and experienced agricultural and resource economist, for the new position of Lead Scientist. Her role will be significant, guiding the organization in building a unique and extensive U.S. database of soil health samples from working farms, analyzing them, and drawing conclusions that could impact agriculture for decades to come.

Maria comes to the SHP having worked as an economist for the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service. In that role, she focused on the drivers of farmer adoption of soil health and conservation practices, the economics of antibiotic use in U.S. livestock production, and emerging issues related to food labeling. She holds a Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of California, Berkeley.

"As a scientist and researcher, I have watched the work of the Soil Health Partnership with great interest," Bowman said. "I am enthusiastic to be closely involved in this unprecedented research alongside farmers and field managers. It's truly exciting to be part of the research from start to finish— from the field, to the lab, through data analysis, and communicating results to our growers and the public."

Find out more about Maria on our website, and connect with her at the Summit!



Summit Session Highlights

Agriculture is not just changing in the field. The policies surrounding ag are always evolving. Farmers have faced a growing list of challenges, from trade policies to herbicide regulation and more in 2018. If you're interested in an insightful session on how the Farm Bill will affect you, join Nathan Fields of the National Corn Growers Association at the summit session, **From the Hill to the Home**. Nathan will give an update on policy changes in the Farm Bill, and other key state decisions that could impact you and your farm.



In our opening general session, **Connecting the Dots: How Soil Health Adds Value from Farm to Table**, you'll hear how soil health represents one of the single best opportunities to benefit the entire agricultural supply chain, from the farm to the table. Speakers include McDonalds North American Sustainability Manager Kendra Levine, and Cargill Sustainability Director- Row Crops Ryan Sirolli!

Other sessions include the following:

- Healthier Soils, Cleaner Water
- Landowners and Soil Health: How to Have a Productive Relationship
- Learning the Ropes of Cover Crop Grazing
- Using the Soil Health Toolbox to Manage In-Field Variability

Considering a Drone for Your Holiday Wish List?

SHP Field Manager John Steward likes tech toys as much as the next guy. But he is quick to tell you, drones are more than just a nifty gadget.



"It will cut down on scouting time out in the field," says John. "You can view problem areas in the field and walk straight to them."

Hear more from John in our SoilSmart podcast at BrownfieldAgNews.com/soilsmart, and attend Game of Drones at the Soil Health Summit in January.

Welcome Aboard Maddy!

The Soil Health Partnership welcomes a new field manager to the growing staff. Madelyn Rabenhorst joins the SHP team to cover the states of South Dakota and North Dakota as a field manager.

Maddy will work in South Dakota, a state eager to begin enrolling farmers in the program, with funding support from South Dakota Corn, NRCS South Dakota, and SHP. She also is expected to cover future enrolled farms in North Dakota, where SHP is growing its incorporation of wheat farms with support from General Mills and the National Wheat Foundation. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree from South Dakota State University, with a minor in insect pest management. She is currently working toward a Master of Science in Agronomy through Iowa State University's distance learning program.



Jim Isermann Honored with NCGA Recognition Award

Illinois field manager Jim Isermann got some well-deserved praise this week from his colleagues at the National Corn Growers Association and the Soil Health Partnership. The NCGA recognition award is given to employees who go above and beyond.

"Jim has worked to educate new field staff on cover crops and volunteers on many projects," said Jack Cornell, SHP field team director. "We've seen Jim step up whenever we needed, talking to everyone from farmers to state groups to partners, providing input on ad hoc items to extensive programs. Jim is always available to help us and to ensure we keep moving on a positive path forward."

Congratulations, Jim!

National Corn Growers Association
632 Cepi Drive
Chesterfield, MO 63005



Newsletter

SHP Associate Program: Join the Network, Strengthen the Data

A new expanded pilot project will give more farmers access to the soil health network. We're launching phase 2 of our pilot Associate Program and will invite 75 farmers to enroll in 2019. This will enable more farmers to join SHP in its mission of using science and data to support farmers in adopting agricultural practices that improve the economic and environmental sustainability of the farm.



"We've seen increasing demand from farmers who would like to join our network," said Shefali Mehta, executive director of the Soil Health Partnership. "Expanding the pilot phase of our Associate Program provides a greater number of farmers with access to a scientific platform to evaluate soil health as part of a comprehensive management strategy."

A less-intensive version of the SHP's 115 Full Partner sites enrolled in the long-term data project, Associate Program farmers will commit to a 2-year project enrollment. After enrolling 25 farms in the pilot program in 2018, phase 2 will bring the number of associate sites to 100. The SHP plans a full-scale launch of the Associate Program for 2020, when even more farmers can join.

Learn More soilhealthpartnership.org/associate-program

In this issue ..

From the Executive Director
'Tis the Season of Giving, and We
Have Much to Share

SHP Celebrates World Soil Day 2018

Don't Miss Out on the 2019 Summit!

Summit Session Highlights!

Maria Bowman Hired as SHP Lead
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Field Manager, Jim Isermann
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