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SHP celebrates five years!

Founded in 2014, SHP was developed by a diverse group of organizations that had a shared vision of developing a farmer-led research network to measure the impacts of implementing soil health practices on working farms. The Nature Conservancy (TNC), Bayer, and the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) – alongside the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) – came together to see this vision through.

The SHP network spans across 16 states and includes partner organizations at the federal, state and county levels. SHP has grown from 17 research sites in 2014 to a network of 200+ research sites and represents over 7,000 acres.

SHP currently has a team of eleven regional field managers that work alongside farmers to design and implement experiments in fields across North America.

*Fiscal Year is Oct 1, 2018 - Sept 30, 2019.
Our growth over five years

Foundational collaborations

SHP has been fostering transformation in agriculture through improved soil health since 2014. This year, SHP celebrates its fifth anniversary and the foundational collaborations that developed the program.

By building a peer-to-peer network, the Soil Health Partnership partners with farmers to explore the financial, economic, and environmental benefits and risks of soil health practices.
Looking toward the future

In today’s competitive agriculture – where “feeding the world” means different things to different groups – would a partnership between farmers, environment-focused nonprofits, multinational agribusinesses, and commodity groups succeed in understanding and promoting something as complex as soil health and its impact on farming and rural communities? Well, that partnership is exactly the context in which the Soil Health Partnership was founded and has grown over the past five plus years. Starting a new organization from scratch involves developing a work plan, building a staff of people who are all focused on the plan, and executing that plan with precision, while at the same time remaining flexible and nimble enough to change direction when needed, and taking advantage of opportunities when they arise.

The groups contributing to our formation and growth, including the Environmental Defense Fund, The Nature Conservancy, Bayer, General Mills, the National Corn Growers Association, and the National Wheat Foundation, have checked their individual agendas at the door and have worked collaboratively to help make SHP a success. As a true partnership, we’ve engaged dozens of other collaborators along the way to share in the work, including the Soil Health Institute, USDA-NRCS, state commodity associations, universities, and many others. Together, we are deep in the soil health revolution.

Building diverse alliances

Over the past five years, as SHP has been diligently collecting data and information from our on-farm network over 16 states, many groups have joined us in this work and have added much needed support to the work of spreading resilient farming practices across our commodity-producing acres in the US. As we move toward the next five years and beyond, our goal is to remain a leading organization, working with long-term and new partners to reach more farmers with the tools they need to understand the impacts of various practices on their soils and on their farming operations.

We are also making the most of our information by reaching out in more focused communications. Our Soil Sessions webinars provide in-depth and visual updates on technical information...
and our research findings. I am excited about the new podcast we will be adding soon, as I have personally had a long-standing desire to reach new audiences with audio and conversations with leaders in soil health. Launching in April 2020, *The People of Soil Health* podcast will spotlight the soil health professionals who are focused on the farm, especially regarding economic and environmental benefits of soil health.

Finally, we are unique among our peer organizations in that we have an on-the-ground field team dedicated to working with farmers to understand soils and impacts, and sharing that understanding across geographies and farming systems. We are proud to have local and regional experts as members of this team.

This is SHP. On-farm engagement, data, science, communication, outreach and impact. All focused on bringing national emphasis to on-farm adoption of soil health practices.

I hope you enjoy this annual report.

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**Making sense of five years of data**

Our short term challenge is to make sense of the data we’ve collected on farms over the past five years. We want to be able to stand behind the recommendations we make to our farmers and to the broader community at large. One thing we have learned in this journey is that we didn’t know all the right questions we should have been asking of our soils and our farms five years ago. Going forward, we are restructuring our resources to make sure we have the analytical horsepower to provide definitive answers to the important questions concerning soil health building practices.
Building a strong foundation
We began 2019 by releasing preliminary findings at the 2019 Summit (see Figure 1), and in the fall we delivered our first SHP Farmer Reports. As we head into 2020, my hope is that SHP continues to be more rigorous, relevant and timely with our analysis and outputs.

Beginning in 2019, a number of new partnerships and projects centered around expanding SHP’s capacity for data management, integration and analysis. We formalized a partnership with the University of Minnesota GEMS initiative to move toward securely storing and integrating all data. We also began actively working with OpenTEAM, which is dedicated to using open source technology to effectively and efficiently gather and integrate data. Both partnerships are driving us to improve how we collect, store, and manage historic and future data at SHP, which is critical to unlocking the potential of SHP’s research collaborations and partnerships. We need to pair our rich dataset of how soils are changing over time on farms within the network with the corresponding information on management, input costs and other variables in order to understand how soil health practices and management systems truly impact farmers.

Incrementally building a better system for how field managers and farmers gather and record other types of data, such as management data and field check data, is the next hurdle.

In November, we learned that SHP was one of nine groups selected to receive a Conservation Innovation Grant from NRCS as part of the Soil Health Demonstration Trial program. In partnership with the Precision Conservation Management (PCM) Program of Illinois Corn, this project will focus on helping farmers understand and implement new soil health practices and connecting those practices to farm profitability. SHP will collect soil health data on a number of new sites in Illinois, and SHP and PCM will also work together to collect financial and socioeconomic data on the farms.

Assembling a strong team
Thankfully, 2019 also meant more support for Science and Research at SHP. Over the summer, Tricia Verville transitioned to full-time project management and support for Research at SHP. Also during that period, we...
were excited to begin working with Michigan Research Manager Kristin Poley, who works with SHP through her role at Michigan Corn. In 2020, we will be adding a Data Management Specialist to the team. Jacob Ness will be transitioning to providing additional support for data processing, cleaning, analysis and management. We aim to increase our capacity for data analysis and modeling both in-house and through strategic partnerships.

Focusing on farmers’ bottom lines
We also completed the first of several planned SHP business cases. Our goals for these business cases are to provide a unique opportunity to highlight how soil health practices can be feasibly implemented on different operations, to provide a glimpse at some of the challenges of implementation, and to paint a realistic picture of the soil health journeys of the farmers with whom we work. This initial business case, a profile of Mike Buis’ experience with cover crops on his Indiana farm, highlights the weed control benefit Mike has experienced by planting a wheat cover crop on several hundred acres of his operation.

When it comes to Science at SHP, we are only beginning to deliver on our potential for research and scientific insight, and we are headed in the right direction. Thank you for following our journey and for your continued support.

New research partnerships
We aim to increase our capacity for data analysis and modeling both in-house and through strategic partnerships.
2019 was a year of expansion for SHP, and the same goes for the SHP Field Team. We added four additional field staffers this year to accommodate the growing number of sites, to diversify SHP areas of specialization, and to better serve our farmers. Our Field Team works hand-in-hand with farmers on their journey to soil health and provides valuable content through hosting field days, workshops, and Soil Sessions webinars; providing in-depth content for blog posts, and adding additional resources that will be rolled out in 2020. When a farmer joins the SHP program, he or she works with the designated Field Manager to design an experiment on a field. This experiment compares a soil health practice, or combination of practices, to the

“The SHP Field Team has over 90 years of combined experience among the nine Field Managers and 103 years of experience among the 11 dedicated staffers working directly with farmers to aid in increasing soil health management.”

SHP Staff Area

- Abigail Peterson
- Alex Fiock
- Anna Teeter
- Jack Cornell
- Jim Isermann
- John Stewart
- Keith Byerly
- Kristin Poley
- Lisa Kubik
- Maddy Rabenhorst
- Dustin Brucker

SHP’s Field Team territory continues to expand. This map shows the current areas covered by the Field Team.
management historically undertaken on the field.

The SHP Field Team has over 90 years of combined experience among the nine Field Managers and 103 years of experience among the 11 dedicated staffers working directly with farmers to aid in increasing soil health management. Four of our 11 field staffers were added in 2019 due to our rapidly expanding program. Our staff is highly qualified, with two-thirds of SHP staff already having or currently working toward an advanced degree in Agriculture or Science.

The combination of these years of experience, coupled with the field staff members’ respective levels of education, has created many broad, diverse areas of expertise.

We continue to strive to ensure the farmers we work with have access to the best information to make the right decisions for their farm. Through strong, outcome-based collaborations, we at SHP have seen greater awareness and adoption of soil health practices in 2019.

“Hearing about other growers’ successes while learning from their failures has by far been the best part of joining SHP.”

Greg Whitmore
Shelby, Nebraska
SHP Farmer since 2014
Expanding team logistics
What does it take to coordinate a growing team and expanded research sites? As it turns out, a team of three based in St. Louis to run behind the scenes operations. While we have many departments within SHP, the Operations Team is unique in that it gets to work with the entire team daily.

Our year started off with the Soil Health Summit in St. Louis. With over 330 in attendance, eight different breakout sessions, and guest speakers from across agribusiness, NGOs, and commodity groups, this event successfully brought together diverse groups to discuss one thing that unites us all: improving soil health. The Soil Health Summit would not have been as successful without the entire SHP team stepping in to help.

In addition to the Summit, SHP attended a number of large events this year including Commodity Classic, Wisconsin Corn & Soy Expo, Colorado Farm Show, Iowa Power Farming Show, Davos on the Delta, Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference, Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting, and Farm Progress Show. The Operations Team works behind the scenes to ensure all of the materials needed are available for each show.

Other major projects during the year included working closely with partners to analyze data privacy and protection within the program. We also evaluated how to implement new technology to help the team be more efficient and mobile while working out in the field.

In addition to the items discussed above, the Operations Team manages 28 grant agreements, six research agreements, and many contracts.

The work that the program does would not be here without the generous support of all of our partners, and it is a pleasure to work with each of them.
2019 spring soil sampling

When it comes to soil sampling across our expanded network, spring is our busiest season—and this spring was no exception. Our Operations Team assembled custom soil sampling kits which included all of the registration forms and supplies needed to conduct sampling on each of our sites. We have included some of the numbers regarding what it takes to put together the kits:

- Over 12,000 soil sampling bags
- Over 3,800 zipper bags
- 146 insulated coolers
- 300 cold packs
- Over 450 boxes

“The program has really grown over the last five years. Going from a one-man show to full staff, SHP has kicked it up three notches and improved 110 percent since we first got involved five years ago. It takes time for the data to evolve but with the help of SHP, it’s a great way to learn more about the benefits of soil health.”

Carrie Vollmer-Sanders
Angola, Indiana
SHP Farmer since 2014
Year in Review

Communications Lead’s Message

Communication outreach expands in 2019

More opportunities to connect

Several new communication channels launched in 2019 to support our ever-expanding organization. These channels bring informative content to our partners, the farmers we serve, and others in the soil health community.

In March we launched Digging In, a weekly blog for agronomic insights and organization updates. During the second half of 2019 and continuing through 2020, we featured a monthly agronomic or soil health theme where our Field Managers shared helpful resources, personal soil health journeys, and initial findings from on-farm trials. The blogs have received tremendous engagement and are the driving force behind half of all SHP website traffic.

In April we launched Soil Sessions, a webinar series by the Soil Health Partnership. The webinar series features a diverse range of topics from cover crops to drones, to featuring SHP founders on topics that benefit SHP farmers and the soil health community. On average, over 100 farmers, industry leaders, and news reporters register for each webinar. Following each webinar, the video is shared on YouTube and continues to gain following for those who could not attend the webinar live. We will continue to build our Soil Sessions library by hosting a webinar every other month in 2020.

In 2019, SHP distributed a monthly e-newsletter featuring content from throughout the month. Content included blogs, press releases, webinar recaps, and upcoming events. The e-newsletter is shared with over 1,300 contacts from across the country and the distribution list continues to grow rapidly each month.

Collaboration through communication

SHP also continued distribution of a quarterly print newsletter exclusively for SHP farmers. This newsletter recaps happenings at SHP and shares private events for SHP farmers.

SHP continued to promote new partnerships with new states through distribution of press releases throughout 2019. SHP works closely with the NCGA Communications Team to further emphasize key SHP outreach avenues.

SHP has been active daily on social media channels, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. In 2019, we had over 1.3 million social media impressions and our social media following continued to grow as

“We look forward to 2020 as a year of continued communication expansion through the launch of The People of the Soil Health Partnership podcast in April and a media training event for key SHP spokespeople in March.”

Stacie McCracken
Communications Lead

“We look forward to 2020 as a year of continued communication expansion through the launch of The People of the Soil Health Partnership podcast in April and a media training event for key SHP spokespeople in March.”
Communications Lead’s message, continued

we built up our previously established communication channels.

We look forward to 2020 as a year of continued communication expansion.

Communications spotlight

In 2019, we launched our Soil Sessions webinar that features deep dives into soil health science & practices.

Keep up on the latest SHP and soil health news, delivered straight to your screen via our Digging In blog & e-newsletter.

Our new People of Soil Health podcast, coming in 2020, will feature interviews with thought leaders of the soil health movement.

“Networking with other farmers and learning about what works for them while receiving data from your fields are by far the best rewards of being an SHP farmer.”

Theo Bartman
Rock Valley, Iowa
SHP Farmer since 2014
## Schedule of activity

### Financial review

**Total Assets:**

$5,128,677

**Total Liabilities:**

$4,308,245

**Total Unrestricted Net Assets:**

$1,537,976

**Total Change in Net Assets:**

$820,432

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### Beginning Balance

$641,096

### Net Assets

**Support and Revenue – Funding Committed**

- Meeting Revenues: $27,550
- Meeting Sponsorships: $100,935
- Unrestricted Funding: $1,562,976
- Restricted Funding: $3,223,618
- Government Funding: $213,598

**Total Net Assets:**

$5,128,677

### Expenses

- Program Support Needs: $603,419
- Supplies: $69,123
- Personnel: $2,126,271
- Projects: $620,509
- Partnership Funding: $-
- State Program Needs: $888,923

**Total Expenses:**

$4,308,245

**Changes in Net Assets at End of Year:**

$820,432

### Ending Balance

$1,461,528
Financial review

2019 income by type

- Total Assets: $5,128,677
  - Restricted Funding: 30%
  - Unrestricted Funding: 4%
  - Government Funding: 1%
  - Meeting Sponsorships: 2%
  - Meeting Revenues: 63%

2019 expenditures by category

- Total Liabilities: $4,308,245
  - Personnel: 14%
  - State Program Needs: 14%
  - Projects: 2%
  - National Support Program Needs: 49%
  - General Supplies: 21%

*All figures unaudited, Fiscal Year is Oct 1, 2018 - Sept 30, 2019.

Giving partners

2019 FISCAL YEAR

- Total Gifts: $5,101,127
  - Industry: 40%
  - NGO: 50%
  - Checkoff: 6%
  - Government: 4%

Our 2019 funders

- In alphabetical order
  - Bayer CropScience
  - Cargill
  - Environmental Defense Fund
  - The Fertilizer Institute
  - Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR)
  - General Mills
  - Iowa Corn Growers Association
  - Midwest Row Crop Collaborative
  - Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council
  - National Corn Growers Association
  - National Wheat Foundation
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - South Dakota Corn Growers Association
  - Syngenta
  - Tennessee Soybean Promotion Council
  - United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA NRCS)
  - Vermillion Water Basin Conservation District
  - Walton Family Foundation
Learn more about the Soil Health Partnership by visiting soilhealthpartnership.org.

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