



Farmers Improving Soil Health

NO-TILL NUGGETS

Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance
February 2025

Farm Show and Winter Meeting Highlight January Activity

As in past years, the No-Till Alliance supported the Farm Show by coordinating the large conservation display. Key elements include a large harvested “field” which is then planted into cover crop with a no-till drill. The cover crop is then rolled and corn



These root tubes were a new addition to the display this year. Each tube was planted with a different species of cover crop.

and soybeans planted. All the cover crop and the corn and soybeans are grown at Quality Greenhouses and moved into the building as the display is being installed.

Another section includes a running stream, properly fenced and buffered. In recent years a “healthy soils make healthy crops” section has been added to demonstrate, using raised vegetable beds, how the same techniques farmers use with cover crops and no-till can be applied to home gardens. It is estimated that over the eight days of the show staff had at least 250 conversations on this topic with interested individuals.

The rainfall simulator always attracts interest from a wide variety of people, whether they be farmers, students, the public, the weathermen or even as seen in the picture, the governor.

A new conversation starter this year was the addition of 5-foot tall,



Alliance Vice-President Dean James explains the rainfall simulator to Sec. Redding and Governor Shapiro.

6-inch diameter root tubes. They are filled with soil and various cover crops planted at the top. Visitors can see the different root structures and depth, which had reached the bottom of the tubes. An informational sign “It all Starts with the Roots” explained the critical role they play.

Winter Soil Health Meetings Well Attended

Keynote speaker Jay Fuhrer impressed the audience at both meetings with his depth of experience studying soil health for the past 40 years, but even more with his practical application of what he has learned.

As always, farmers speaking to other farmers about their experience on their own farms were a valuable part of both programs.

In Venango county long time Alliance member Mike Ohler presented a detailed

history his progressive refinement of his no-till planter and attachments to achieve the results

he wanted. Farmer panels both days addressed changes they’ve seen

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First Alliance president Karl Kroeck accepts “No-Till Pioneer” award from president Hershey.



Paul Dotterer accepts “No-Till Pioneer” award from president Hershey.



This new sail flag celebrating 20 years of the Alliance greeted attendees.

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Alliance Board of Directors Meets to Strategically Plan for the Future

For the first in over 10 years the full board of directors, 13 farmers representing all geographic areas of the state, met for a full day meeting in mid- December to strategically plan for the near- and long-term future of the Alliance. Expertly facilitated by Jen Reed-Harry of PennAg Industries, members were asked to complete SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis and answer 5 specific questions prior to the meeting as guide for the discussion.

Topics during the meeting addressed span a broad range of topics, including, among others:

Are the name, vision statement and mission statement of the Alliance still appropriate and relevant as topics addressed have become much broader than only no-till?

Should we work with other like-minded groups to organize a large multi-day soil health conference?

How do we ensure continuity of leadership and messaging while still engaging new ideas and voices?

Are we fully exercising outreach opportunities available via social media platforms?

Following the meeting board members were provided with a comprehensive 16-page report by PennAg which they are now reviewing with the goal of establishing a firm plan forward as the Alliance celebrates its first 20 years.

Any Alliance members with thoughts on suggestions are encouraged to pass them on to any board member or administrative coordinator, Jay Howes, jhowes@pennag.com.

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while adopting no-till and cover crop systems, making management changes based upon test results and managing spring covers and

planting green.

One of the more unique presentations dealt with a simple low tech fencing to control deer damage. Dean James reported it was very

cost effective to use two strands of poly-wire at two different heights and spaced 28 inches apart around the perimeter of high risk fields.

Rounding out the program, the Alliance presented Paul Dotterer of Clinton County and Karl Kroeck, first president of the Alliance with No-Till Pioneer awards.

There is Still Time to Renew Your Membership for 2025

Benefits Include:

- ★ Free Subscription to No-Till Farmer Magazine – Includes 12 monthly issues, quarterly updates and full access to their digital resource library. (*\$.59.95 Value*)
- ★ Free registration at Alliance Summer Field Days and Winter Soil Health Meetings (*\$.40+ Value Potential*)
- ★ Quarterly Alliance Newsletters and monthly Email Updates

Join Now for only ~~\$50.00~~!

OR Consider Becoming an Annual Farm Sponsor for \$250 and receive all the benefits above, **PLUS** 2 subscriptions to No-Till Farmer and up to 4 free registrations at our events.

PA No-Till Alliance 2025 Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State _____ Zip Code _____

Email Address _____

Individual Membership — \$50

(Includes FREE subscription to No-Till Farmer magazine - \$49.99 Value and FREE registration at all events)

Farm Sponsor of the No-Till Alliance - \$250.00

(Includes 2 subscriptions to No-Till Farmer and FREE registration at all Events)

Make check payable to “PA No-Till Alliance and Mail to: PA No-Till Alliance
2215 Forest Hills Dr., Ste 39
Harrisburg, PA 17112



 Penn State Extension

 PENNSYLVANIA
SOIL HEALTH
COALITION

Incentive Program for Adaptive Nitrogen Management

Fine tune your corn nitrogen fertilizer needs

Are you fully accounting for all the nitrogen that's in your soils?

Penn State has developed a Nitrogen Decision Support Tool (N Tool) that allows a user to input site-specific soil and cover crop data to calculate a corn fertilizer recommendation that **accounts for nitrogen availability from soil organic matter and cover crop residues**. Farms with a history of frequent manure applications may have the greatest benefit from using this new tool.

What's the Incentive?

This program will pay \$100 per acre for a farm to use the tool on 5-20 acres. This is intended to cover the labor and analysis costs of collecting plant and soil samples. The farm may collect this data themselves or work with their crop advisor.

Farms with healthy soils may be able to reduce nitrogen fertilizer amounts providing direct cost savings for the farm. Reducing nitrogen applications may also minimize nitrogen losses to the environment through excess nitrate leaching or nitrous oxide emissions.

Requirements for Participation

- Farm must be within the Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Any corn field harvested for grain or silage
- Minimum planting area for incentive payments is 5 acres, maximum is 20 acres
- Fields greater than 20 acres can enroll just a portion of the field
- Utilize the PSU soil sample analysis, Pre-sidedress Soil Nitrate Test (PSNT), and the Corn Stalk Nitrate Test (CSNT)
- Estimate cover crop biomass and carbon: nitrogen ratio
- Establish a control strip of your standard nitrogen rate in the enrolled field to compare with the Penn State nitrogen fertilizer recommendation
- Provide yield data from calibrated yield monitor maps (preferred but not required) and possibly other records to Penn State

For more info. contact Lisa Blazure
[at lblazure@stroudcenter.org](mailto:lblazure@stroudcenter.org)



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Support of Alliance activities by our annual sponsors is crucial to our ability to fulfill our mission and is much appreciated. Thank you!

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Mark Your Calendars
And Plan to Help Us Celebrate
20 Years
of the PA No-Till Alliance

Summer Soil Health Field Days

July 22, 2025	July 24, 2025
Ryan Graham Farm	Hershey Farms
Butler, PA	Elizabethtown, PA

Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance

Our Vision: *“Using no-till systems to improve our soil and water quality, productivity and profitability for future generations.”*

Our Mission: *“To promote the successful application of no-till through shared ideas, experiences, education and new technology.”*