

Two Great Field Days Celebrate 20 Years for the No-Till Alliance

Secretary Redding cites “Relentless passion for promoting soil health”

On two beautiful days in late July the PA No-Till Alliance celebrated its 20th anniversary with two well-attended soil health field days. On July 22 Ryan Graham welcomed 150 soil health enthusiasts to his farm in Butler, PA, followed by nearly 250 attendees at Jim Herhsey’s farm in Elizabethtown, PA on July 24.

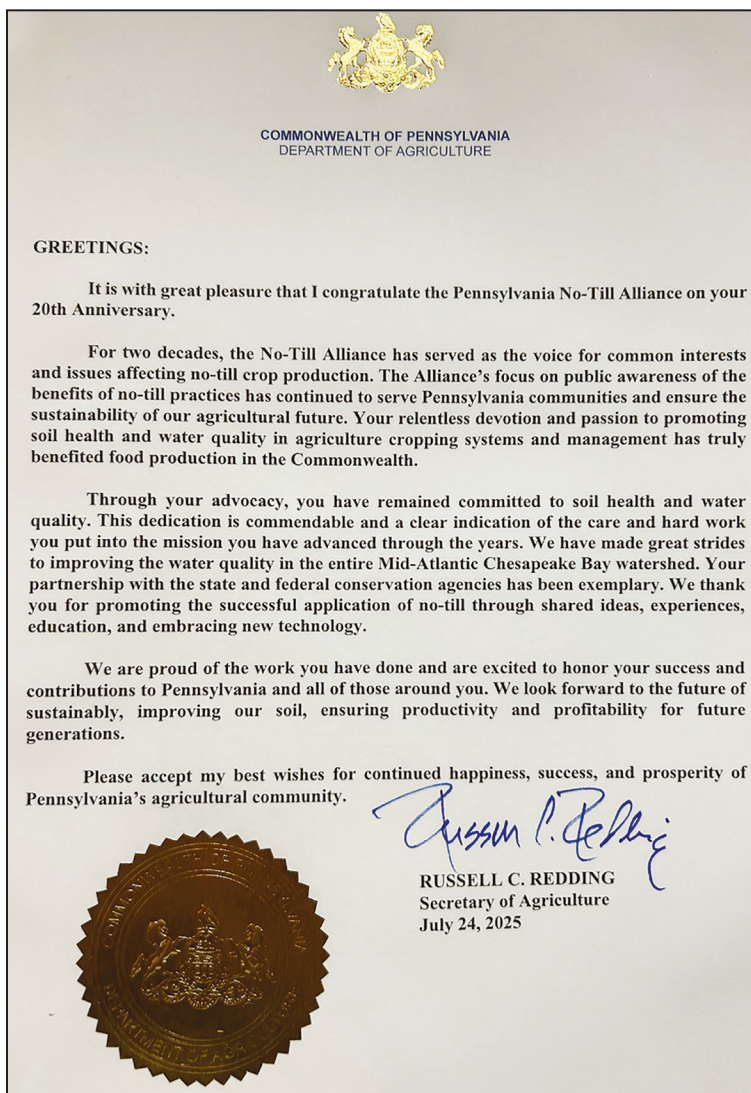
A highlight at each was Doug Wolfgang, State Conservation Commission presenting the Alliance with a plaque recognizing the Alliance’s 20 year anniversary and Ag Secretary Redding presenting a letter congratulating the Alliance on this achievement. His letter (pictured right) stated in part, “Your relentless devotion and passion for promoting soil health and water quality in agriculture cropping systems and management has truly benefited food production in the Commonwealth.”

Lead by keynote speaker Blake Vince of Ontario, Can., both programs included a mix of presentations on topics ranging from controlling deer damage to innovative ways to limit slug damage to fine-tuning nitrogen application to corn. As always, the “out in the field” breakout sessions created tremendous interest and discussion. These included planting green with the latest in no-till drill technology, discussion of water infiltration and healthy soil characteristics with a deep soil pit and the advantages of various cover crop mixes depending on your goals.



Keynote speaker Blake Vince

Speaker Vince proved to be a strong advocate for cover crops, recommending planting multi-species mixes of, in his case, as many as 18 varieties on his 1200 acres. Declaring that, “it’s all about diversity,” he stated that, “we must feed diversity with diversity.”



His other recurring theme was that it was essential to have as many living roots as possible in the soil year-round. This not simply for erosion control, but also helps capture carbon, build organic matter and enhance soil biological activity.

For those not in attendance the story is best told by the pictures on page 3.

The Alliance Active at Ag Progress Days

As has been the case for many years, the Alliance had a large presence at Penn State College of Agriculture's Ag Progress Days in August. Key elements were our information tent, the rainfall simulator demonstration and assisting with the planting green demonstration.

A highlight was a visit from the recently appointed EPA Region 3 administrator, Amy VanBlarcom-Lackey. Amy grew up on a dairy and hog farm in Bradford County and has been part of the management team at the farm for many years. Prior to that, some may remember her from her days working with the State Conservation Commission and PennAG Industries.

While in our area Amy did a lengthy interview with



Dave McLaughlin explains the rainfall simulator to EPA Administrator VanBlarcom-Lackey as an interested family looks on.

President Jim Hershey discussing how farmers, the Alliance and EPA can work together on important conservation concerns.

No-Till Alliance Welcomes New Board Members

Earlier this year Ron Carter of McDonald, PA, in Washington County was elected to complete the unexpired term of long-time director William Cannon. Ron's willingness to serve in this role brings a valuable southwestern Pennsylvania perspective to board discussions. His contribution has already been felt as he has been instrumental in establishing a collaboration between the Southwest PA Soil Health Meeting Committee and the Alliance for our PA No-Till Alliance Winter Soil Health Meeting. It will be held on Jan. 27, 2026 at St Vincent College in Latrobe, PA.

Ron will serve a 3-year term expiring in 2027.

Then, at the annual meeting held

following the field day on July 24, John C. Johnson of Delta in York County was elected to a full 3-year term running through 2028. John has been an active Alliance member

for many years, rarely missing a field day or winter meeting.

John replaces longtime director Jim Harbach who elected to not seek re-election.

Thank You, Jim Harbach



As noted above, after many years of service to the PA No-Till Alliance, Jim Harbach elected to not seek another term as a director. The board of directors and many other members who came to know Jim over the years want to express our thanks for your dedication, deep thinking and insightful comments. While no longer a director, we are sure you will remain an active member and will continue to be willing to share your knowledge and experience.

Free 20th Anniversary Gifts for Members

Through the generosity of sponsors Univest Bank, Messick's Farm Equipment, Mel Weaver and Sons and Hostetter Grain all current and new members of the Alliance are entitled to receive a commemorative 14-inch wall clock and a digital soil temperature and pH meter. If you did not get one at the field days they will be available at future events so watch for them!





Pictured clockwise from left: State Conservation Commission Exec. Secretary Doug Wolfgang and PDAg Secretary Russell Redding stand in cover crop as they study the soil pit. David Hunsberger of King's Agri Seeds explains the attributes of various cover crop mixes. The crowd gathers for the start of the planting green demonstration. Ryan Graham and his son Reid (the aspiring assistant farm manager) welcome guests to their farm as President Hershey looks on. Lisa Blazure, PA Soil Health Coordinator, discusses what attendees can learn about soil health from a soil pit.

Pictures Tell the Field Day Story



Pictured clockwise from top left: Father and son get a close look at no-till seed placement using soil "dig stick" provided by Horizon Farm Credit. Drone shot of the equipment demonstration at Hershey Farm. The field days received huge support from over 30 vendors and sponsors, each with a display table. A portion of the large crowd in attendance at the eastern field day



Doug Wolfgang, State Conservation Commission and PDAg Secretary Russell Redding present members of the Alliance board the wooden plaque and congratulatory letter commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Alliance. (Left to right) board members Leroy Bupp, Dean James, Lisa Blazure, Gordon England, Jeff Frey, and Jim Hershey. Doug Wolfgang and Secretary Redding. Board members Ben Peckman, Andy Flinchbaugh, administrative coordinator Jay Howes and board members Ron Carter and Matt Ulmer. (Missing are board members David Hunsberger, William Thiele, Jim Harbach and Ryan Graham – all who attended the other field day)



Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance
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Thank you!

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SAVE THE DATE!

Winter Soil Health Meeting

January 27, 2026

St. Vincent College • Latrobe, PA

(In conjunction with the Southwest PA Soil Health Conference)

January 29, 2026

Location to be determined

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."*