



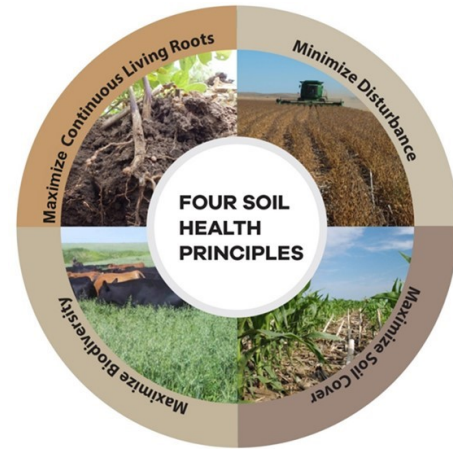
The Indiana Conservation Partnership

Soil Health Philosophy

The Indiana Conservation Partnership and our primary customers—Indiana’s farmers—are recognized as national leaders in our collaborative efforts to incorporate soil health systems into conservation planning, farm management and educational activities. Our priority focus on implementing a soil health strategy has had tremendous success in helping farmers voluntarily address many of the state’s primary resource concerns.

We define soil health as the capacity of a soil to function as a vital, living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. The four key **Soil Health Principles** which apply to all land uses include:

- MINIMIZE DISTURBANCE**
- MAXIMIZE SOIL COVER**
- MAXIMIZE BIODIVERSITY**
- MAXIMIZE CONTINUOUS LIVING ROOTS**



To be successful in fully implementing a **Soil Health System**, the following objectives must continually be part of every management decision and field operation:

- Increasing organic matter
- Increasing water infiltration
- Improving nutrient use efficiency
- Increasing aggregate stability
- Increasing water-holding capacity
- Enhancing and diversifying soil biology and habitat

Implementing a single conservation practice may slow the degradation of soil function, but rarely achieves the broad improvements of our resource objectives, so we work with producers to help them implement a “**systems**” approach to improve the health of their soil. A system is a suite of practices and management methods that when used together results in additional improvements to soil health that can help address Indiana’s primary resource concerns.

The elements of a soil health system go beyond the minimum standards and specifications of a conservation practice, so when we talk about soil health on cropland, we emphasize descriptive adjectives associated with each practice element, such as

- Quality** no-till/strip-till
- Diverse** conservation crop rotations
- Prescriptive** conservation buffers
- Integrated** weed and pest management
- Adaptive** nutrient management
- Precision** farming technology
- Integrated** livestock and manure
- Diverse** and **Strategic** cover crop integration

These practices, when combined with a profitable and sustainable soil health system can help producers go beyond sustainability to actually regenerating their soil. But it is important to note that any benefits gained can be quickly lost if this systems approach stops. For that reason, improving soil health requires a commitment to a **never-ending journey**.

For many producers, implementing a soil health system may require significant changes in their operations. To be fully successful can take time, even years. The ICP supports our customers through ongoing education and financial and technical assistance so that soil health improvement is possible across all agricultural philosophies and becomes the management system of choice.

The Indiana Conservation Partnership includes eight entities that share a common goal of working with to promote voluntary conservation on private land. We provide technical, financial and educational assistance to support and implement economically and environmentally compatible land and water stewardship decisions, practices and technologies.