



# News Release

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## **Soil Health Short Course to offer Educational Information to Land Managers**

TEMPLE, Texas, Dec. 18, 2018 – An upcoming Texas Soil Health Short Course will focus on increasing biological wealth with livestock Feb. 26-27, 2019 at the Palestine Civic Center in Palestine, Texas. The workshop will offer attendees a greater understanding of dynamic soil properties including water infiltration, water holding capacity, and organic matter content. Producer’s practical approaches to implementing a Soil Health Management System on their farm will also be discussed.

“We are very excited to bring this opportunity to farmers and ranchers in Texas,” says Jason Hohlt, a range management specialist with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Texas. “The topic of soil health is getting increasingly common in ranching publications across the nation. This is a great opportunity to better define soil health and why it is important to ranchers.”

The workshop is being conducted by the USDA-NRCS, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board, Association of Texas Soil & Water Conservation Districts, and Texas Wildlife Association with the Anderson-Houston Soil and Water Conservation District hosting the event.

According to Hohlt, several Texas NRCS staff have been working closely with ranchers to implement projects to help identify effective soil health practices for this region. This event will showcase preliminary results from a three-year demonstration project aimed at application of commonly discussed management practices geared to improve soil health. Hohlt states the workshop will be an opportunity for the project participants to share their findings with ranchers at the workshop.

“Soils are the foundation of life and the factory of biological workers that help us provide necessities for our society,” says Nathan Haile, NRCS Agronomist. “They serve many roles for water capture and filtration, carbon storage and cycling, pollution breakdown, and much, much more. Understanding how to manage the soil to improve that factory’s efficiency is critical for ranchers, not only for their own economic benefit but the benefit of the nation.”

The short course will feature leading researchers and producers in soil health. Speakers include Dr. Christine Jones, an internationally renowned and highly respected groundcover and soils ecologist from Australia; Dr. Richard Teague, Texas A&M AgriLife research ecologist from Vernon; David Daigle, rancher from Beauregard Parish, Louisiana; Jimmy Downe and Joe Beall, ranchers from Anderson County, Texas; and several soil health and range management specialists from the NRCS.

The short course’s unique format will include two field tours (one each day of the conference) to observe soil health systems being implemented locally, with conference room presentations prior to the tour to provide knowledge of the concepts of principles of soil health. A speaker panel will provide participants the opportunity to question both researchers and practitioners about the principles and practices they present. There will be a rainfall simulator demonstration that will provide insight to how functioning soil is important to agriculture producers, water providers and users downstream. The short course includes two noon meals and will also feature a “A Plan and Purpose for Every Acre” social hour and dinner on the evening of Feb 26.

Early bird registration is \$50 for the short course by Feb 15, 2019, followed by \$75 regular registration after Feb 15. For more registration information, or opportunities for your nonprofit or association to sponsor visit the Soil Health Short Course website at <https://www.texas-wildlife.org/resources/events/texas-soil-health-short-course> or call Iliana Pena at 210-826-2904.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

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