



North Dakota

Featured Project

Customer: Producers

Location: Bowman & Slope counties

Project Cost: \$25,767

RC&D Funding: \$10,611

Partners: Bowman-Slope SCD

Date: 2010 Growing Season

Improving Soil Health through Cover Crops

The benefits of introducing cover crops into a production agricultural system are being re-discovered. Among the many benefits of cover crops are improved soil health through increased water infiltration, reduced soil erosion, increased soil organic matter, improved pest control and increased nutrient recycling.

The Bowman-Slope Soil Conservation District recently completed year one of a two-year demonstration to improve soil health through the use of cover crops. In the most arid region of the State, no-till agriculture is widely accepted as the norm and techniques to save moisture and improve soil health are extremely valuable.

The project as implemented is quite diverse in its use of cover crops. In addition to planting cover crops on post-harvested fields, cover crops will be used to rotate tame pasture and hay land back to production agriculture without the use of tillage. After a few years under a no-till production rotation, the producer may then rotate site back to a more productive forage system.

The keys to the Demonstration project are site diversity, seed mixtures designed to fit each Producer's goal, and a no-till farming system. Each site has had a baseline Soil Food Web test conducted and will have a second test after two years. Local staff are monitoring and collecting samples at each site for total production, plant species growth characteristics and forage quality.

As the project unfolds, the Bowman-Slope Soil Conservation District will be holding multiple tours and outreach activities to share the outcomes of the Demonstration project.



Cover Crops can improve soil health and assist with forage to crop rotations without the use of tillage.