

Wyoming Roadmap for Healthy Soils

Executive Summary

Healthy soils are the foundation of robust and resilient agricultural systems and economies. Based on extensive stakeholder engagement, the Roadmap contains 30 recommendations and 4 key steps for implementation to support the voluntary adoption of soil health practices by Wyoming farmers and ranchers. There is substantial interest in soil health among Wyoming producers and agricultural professionals. Despite this interest, many barriers prevent Wyoming producers from adopting soil health practices. At the same time, there are numerous opportunities to expand soil health activities in the state. The Roadmap identifies **nine overarching barriers and opportunities** facing Wyoming producers and ag professionals. Among the most significant are: 1) the perceived costs of soil health practices, 2) the need for financial and technical assistance; 3) a desire for educational resources; and 4) a lack of demonstration projects and Wyoming-specific research on the impacts of soil health practices.

The Roadmap first summarizes the results of surveys, listening sessions, and interviews that engaged with over 230 producers and ag professionals from across the state. It then highlights the recommendations of two working groups dedicated to understanding and advancing solutions with respect to soil health science and education. Next, cross-cutting recommendations that arose out of consideration of the totality of input from the stakeholder engagement process are included. In total, the Roadmap contains **30 recommendations** (see next page) to encourage the voluntary adoption of soil health practices. Finally, **four key steps to implementation** are identified to ensure these recommendations do not sit on the shelf: 1) Identify a WY partner(s) to lead the next phase of this effort; 2) Hire a coordinator to implement the Roadmap; 3) Seek funding for key activities in the Roadmap; and 4) Continue WCHS. The full Roadmap can be found at www.groundupconsulting.us/wchs

About the Collaborative

The Wyoming Collaborative for Healthy Soils (WCHS) is a multi-stakeholder effort aimed at engaging the broad agricultural community to identify ways to support producers in the voluntary adoption of soil health practices on croplands and grazing lands. It is currently funded by the University of Wyoming. The goal of WCHS is to support the widespread adoption of soil health practices through a stakeholder-driven process.



**WYOMING
COLLABORATIVE
FOR HEALTHY SOILS**

Science and Practice Group Recommendations

SP1: Utilize the NRCS definition of soil health

SP2: Encourage the widespread use of in-field soil health assessments pursuant to NRCS 2021 guidance to develop quantitative, region specific benchmarks for soil health (for croplands)

SP3: Recommended Lab Analyses (for croplands)

SP4: Integrate the “Soil Health Gap Concept” into producer programs and research to establish region-specific, quantitative benchmarks (for croplands)

SP5: Emphasize the soil health principles, monitoring, and the decision-making process rather than practices in producer education (for grazing lands)

SP6: Encourage producers to use the USDA NRCS Pasture Condition Score Index for assessing managed pastures (for grazing lands)

SP7: Develop an easy to use assessment form like the Pasture Condition Score Index for assessing rangelands

SP8: Develop an easy to use web-based tool for monitoring grazing lands

SP9: Create a network of on-farm/on-ranch demonstration and research sites

SP10: Include robust financial analyses in scientific research and government programs

SP11: Conduct additional research on carbon markets

Education Group Recommendations

E1: Promote printed and digital resources for interpreting soil health test results

E2: Provide technical assistance to interpret assessment results and suggest new practices

E3: Establish an online soil health hub

E4: Plan and host an annual Wyoming soil health symposium

E5: Start (and maintain) a listserv to promote events, educational opportunities

E6: Distribute a monthly or quarterly newsletter

E7: Develop local/regional educational conservation resource guides

E8: Increase and enhance field days

E9: Design decision support tools

E10: Expand economic case studies

E11: Utilize Technology to Enhance Peer to Peer/Mentor Connection

E12: Provide financial assistance to incentivize experimentation

E13: Build pathways that connect producers with a network of technical assistance providers

E14: Organize peer-to-peer learning

E15: Provide scholarships to attend soil health events and conferences

Cross-cutting Recommendations

CC1: Seek additional funding from philanthropy, grants, or the state for conservation districts and producers

CC2: Provide assistance for conservation districts and producers to apply for grants

CC3: Engage with supply chain partners

CC4: Make the STAR Rating System available for Wyoming producers