



MERIT myth

PARTNER BRIEF

11-1-2016



OUR MISSION



The Merit or Myth project was established to provide additional support to the South Dakota Natural Resources Conservation Service's ongoing soil health initiative. While SD-NRCS has made great strides in the promotion of soil health principles and practices, many producers are concerned that these ideas won't work for them. These concerns are primarily management issues that include planting into too much residue, low soil temperatures, too much soil moisture in spring, weed concerns and basic economics. At Merit or Myth, we are engaging with producers, scientists and conservationists across the Mount Rushmore State to address these specific concerns.



OUR MISSION (continued)



Our primary medium is video which we plan to promote through diverse social media channels. As of the end of August, we have made two trips to South Dakota, and we have met with nine farmers, six scientists and a number of conservationists. Based on the information we have gleaned so far, we believe that the original “Myths” can be addressed through SD scientist and farmer. Nevertheless, we’re aware that there is so much more that these folks are communicating in terms of testimonials the way that they think which may be considered holistic, or integrated or systems thinking. In this sense, we feel that much more of the material goes “beyond the myth” and leads to a much broader view of thinking of agroecosystems. After initial review to date, we feel the main content we still lack is to answer the question, “how exactly do I make the change?” and “where would I go to if I wanted to talk about changing?” We are excited about moving this project forward and being an integrated part of the South Dakota Strategy for Improving Soil Health.



INTERVIEWS (PRODUCERS & SCIENTISTS)



Farmers and ranchers we have met with (from West River to East River) include Dave Ollila - Butte Co., Monty Williams - Pennington Co., Doug Sieck - Walworth Co., Ralph Holzwarth - Potter Co., Steve Reimer - Brule Co., Matt Bainbridge - Davison Co., Mike Seefeldt - Clark Co., Al Miron - Minnehaha Co., and Dick Nissen - Clay Co. There are still a number of producers we still want to visit with including Dan Forgey and Bryan Jorgensen. Note that we have farmers going from extremely dry to typically moist conditions, and part of that idea is to counter the idea that “soil health doesn’t work here!”

Our scientists include Dr. Randy Anderson, Dr. Mike Lehman, Dr. Tom Schumacher, Dr. Dwayne Beck, Dr. Jon Lundgren and Dr. Pete Sexton. We also have material from our conservationists including Jeff Zimprich, Jason Miller and Jeff Hemenway.



PRODUCERS & SCIENTISTS MAP



ACTIVE CONTENT



Since our official launch on August 16, 2016, Merit or Myth has produced a variety of online content. This content has laid the foundation of our social media campaign that, to date, has garnered a combined following from Facebook and Twitter of over 700 active members. As our content continues to hit the web, along with new targeted campaigns, we are setting our sites on having over 1,000 followers in the first couple of months of 2017. Below are the highlights of our active content thus far:



VIDEO

To date, we have produced 2 official videos highlighting our “Merit or Myth” truth-finding theme. These videos are hosted on the SD NRCS YouTube “Merit or Myth” channel. In addition, we have various “Facebook Live” videos and the occasional “vlog” recapping and previewing what’s to come. The two videos currently active are:

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| ● “Introducing the Soil Health Revolution ‘Merit or Myth’” | Our official intro video that outlines our mission and highlights what’s to come. |
| ● “Residue is Your Friend - Dwayne Beck” | Addresses the two opposing views of residue - one as a “friend”, the other as an “enemy” - and shines a light on why Dwayne Beck sees residue as a resource. |
| ● “Building Organic Matter with Residue” - Ralph Holzwarth | Elaborates on the view of residue as a “friend” by addressing some of the specific benefits that come with it. |

ACTIVE CONTENT (CONTINUED)



BLOG

We have completed 7 featured blog entries that are posted and promoted bi-weekly. These posts feature a variety of relevant topics: from the farmers that we've met with to the issues they find most pressing to our own observations of the current agricultural landscape. Below are the 7 featured blog posts to date:

• “The Truth is Out There”	Introductory post highlighting Merit or Myth, our mission and the content we produce.
• “An Outsider’s Love Letter to SD”	Recapping our 10 day trip through the Mt. Rushmore State and highlighting our stops along the way.
• “SOILS: A Quality of Life Issue?”	Highlights our meeting with Minnehaha County farmer Al Miron and the effect quality soils can have on quality of life.
• “FARMING: A Lesson Well-Learned”	Features Pennington County farmer Monty Williams and highlights the benefits of community learning.
• “Introducing the Soil Health Revolution ‘Merit or Myth’”	Features our official intro video and discusses what’s to come.
• “SD Voices of Soil Health”	Shines a light on the SD USDA NRCS’s upcoming project covering soil health and the producers involved.
• “RESIDUE: A Friend or an Enemy?”	A blog post introducing the issue of residue management.

COMING SOON...



We have several upcoming videos that are “in the pipeline”:



UPCOMING VIDEOS

● “Below Ground Herd Consuming Above Ground Residue” - Al Miron	Second cut - awaiting review.
● “Come Look at Our Planter” - Chris Nissen	Second cut.
● “Pros and Cons of No-Till and Conventional Till Systems” - Pete Sexton	Intro and outro scripted, shot. First cut to be posted on YouTube for Review.
● “Transitioning to No-Till - Broad Brush Strokes” - Pete Sexton	Intro and outro scripted, shot. First cut to be posted on YouTube for Review.
● Title TBD - Dave Ollila	Clip selected.
● “Soil Health Spiral” - Randy Anderson	Video to be shot on Nov. 10th.

COMING SOON... (CONTINUED)



Our content is not exclusively relegated to conventional video and blog formats. In the coming months, we plan to launch a few other marketing campaigns to increase online engagement and offer fresh content.



PODCASTS

“SD Cropcast” - Merit or Myth’s exclusive podcast. The first two episodes that have already been recorded and are currently in post-production feature Soil Scientist Randy Anderson and SD NRCS agronomist Jason Miller. We believe that this content specifically will be of use to our audience as many farmers don’t have the time to dedicate to reading materials or watching videos, but while out in the field, are free to listen to a variety of content.



VLOGS

On our second trip to South Dakota, we posted several “vlogs” (video blogs) that recapped the day; highlighting what producers and scientists we met with and how they inspired us. As Merit or Myth expands, we plan to include more vlog content with “quick hitting” takes on agricultural and farming practices as well as highlighting latest news and building anticipation for upcoming content.



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