

# What is Soil Health?

Soil health describes how well soils support plants, animals, and humans.

The term health also recognizes the living nature of soils and the importance of soil microorganisms.

Healthy soils can:

- Reduce effects of climate change
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Filter air and water
- Increase crop productivity
- Support biodiversity
- Ensure thriving rural economies

The Washington Soil Health Initiative offers a win-win-win opportunity for farmers, the environment, and the people of Washington by providing support for building healthy soils.



Leslie Michel

# Interested in learning more or getting involved?

Visit [wasoilhealth.com](http://wasoilhealth.com) to access resources, learn about events, and read more about WaSHI projects.

Stay in the know — subscribe to the WaSHI newsletter



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The Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) is a partnership between the Washington State Department of Agriculture, Washington State University, and the Washington State Conservation Commission.

WaSHI establishes a coordinated approach to promoting healthy soil in Washington through research, outreach and education, and funding opportunities throughout Washington's diverse regions and cropping systems.



# State of the Soils Assessment



Hundreds of soil samples and management surveys have been collected to measure the state of the soils in Washington's diverse regions and cropping systems. In addition to collecting samples, WaSHI partners have trained nearly **100 technical advisors** how to soil sample, and distributed tailored soil health reports to more than **200 producers**. The project builds capacity and engages with communities across Washington that may not be thinking about soil health.

The State of the Soils Assessment has four primary objectives:

- 1** Assess baseline soil health in Washington
- 2** Understand how climate, crop type, and management impact soil health
- 3** Develop cost-effective ways for producers to assess their own soil health
- 4** Develop crop-specific decision support tools

Want an interactive map? Scan the QR code to access or visit <https://bit.ly/3HNp4qk>



# Sustainable Farms and Fields Program

Adopting new practices can be costly, but the Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) Program makes it easier and more affordable. Through SFF, farmers and ranchers can implement climate-smart practices that **increase carbon sequestration** and **reduce greenhouse gas emissions**.

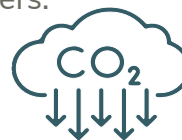


**Equipment-sharing** can help landowners who may not be ready to purchase equipment and use it for no till or direct seed



**Cover crops** can sequester carbon in the soil while preventing erosion and improving water quality and productivity of farmland

Conservation districts and other public entities can apply for Sustainable Farms and Fields grants to deliver grant-eligible activities to interested farmers and ranchers.



Management practices that help mitigate climate change can also increase farmer and ranchers' resiliency, provide environmental co-benefits, and increase long-term economic viability

# Network of Long-Term Soil Health Research Sites

Long-term research is needed to measure the effects of agricultural management on soil health, crop productivity, and economic outcomes over time and in a changing climate.

**6** long-term agroecological research and extension (LTARE) sites have been funded through WaSHI, representing key agroecological regions in the state. Each site strives to provide producers with **regionally specific** best management practices and measure soil health relative to each **unique cropping system**.

