“Soil is at the foundation of everything that we and the other life on earth need to live...”
- The Cornell Framework Manual

Your soil is an ecosystem teeming with life! When managed properly, this ecosystem will function at its full capacity to sustain productivity, improve environmental quality and increase net farm profit.

Healthy soil is characterized by good soil tilth, sufficient root depth, good water storage capacity & drainage, sufficient supply of nutrients, low populations of plant pathogens & insect pests, large populations of beneficial organisms, low weed pressure, freedom from chemicals and toxins that harm crops, resistance to degradation, & resilience when unfavorable conditions occur.

HOW CAN MY FARM’S SOIL HEALTH BE EVALUATED?

Have a Comprehensive Soil Health Assessment conducted on your cropland, hayland or pasture. This Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) for enhancing Soil Health provides access to Cornell University’s Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health when you apply for technical assistance. The Conservation District Soil Health staff will collect soil samples from your property, send the samples to Cornell Soil Health Testing Lab and interpret those results in a Soil Health Management Plan.

HOW CAN MY FARM’S SOIL HEALTH BE IMPROVED?

A Soil Health Management Plan interprets the results of the Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health and provides recommendations for best management practices to address your soil’s physical, biological & chemical functionality. Financial assistance is available through this program to execute those practices, based on the recommended schedule.
WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A SOIL HEALTH MANAGEMENT PLAN?

Your Soil Health Management Plan (SHMP) will be developed by Conservation District staff with you (the producer) to address short & long-term objectives that will address constraints identified in the Cornell Soil Health Assessment. [An example of assessment results at left.] Your SHMP will recommend & describe practices that will build or maintain a healthy soil that can supply the needs of the soil organisms, prevent overall environmental degradation, & contribute to improved economic benefits.

WHAT ISSUES ON MY FARM WILL BE ADDRESSED?

- Soil Quality Degradation
- Water Quality Degradation
- Soil Erosion
- Degraded Plant Condition

WHAT ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS?

- Developing & instituting Crop Rotations
- Planting Cover Crops
- Conducting or increasing Nutrient Management
- Mulching
- Improving management of irrigation water
- Implementing rotational grazing
- Conducting deep tillage (to break up a plow pan)

Pictures in this publication were taken in New England, by K. Bousquet, SRICD.

Pg 1: (left to right) Hayland; Vegetable crops; Pasture.

Pg 2: (left, top to bottom) Rainfall simulator / Soil health demo; Soil sampling; Cover crops; Deep Tiller