

Lab Exercise 11 Questions

1. The film ended with a conversation between a Chesapeake Bay fisherman (Ooker Eskridge) and a Pennsylvania farmer (Steve Groff). What did you find interesting about their conversation? Did the fisherman feel that water quality in the Chesapeake Bay was improving as a result of more use of cover crops and other conservation practices on farmland? In Maryland and some other areas near the Chesapeake Bay, over half the corn and soybean fields have cover crops – can this high level of cover crop adoption to improve water quality be replicated elsewhere? What can help make it happen and what barriers might get in the way?
2. Which of the farmers made the biggest impression on you with their remarks and what you saw and heard about their farms? What did you take away from listening to that farmer (or farmers)?
3. The film started out with the Dust Bowl era of the 1930s and then made the connection of preserving the soil because we all like to eat. Is there an opportunity to make more people in society aware of the importance of our limited soil resources, and how would you do that?
4. One of the farmers (Dan DeSutter from Indiana) talked about how soil organic matter has declined significantly since modern agriculture began, and his desire to restore his soil organic matter. Why is that important and what can help build soil carbon and soil organic matter?
5. The farmers and soil experts in the film talked quite a bit about the living organisms and the need to keep them fed and healthy to have a healthy soil. Can you think of any parallels to how a healthy soil ecosystem functions in prairies or forests?
6. Soil health encompasses soil chemistry, soil physics AND soil biology. In the past, soil biology was not given as much attention as the physical or chemical aspects of soils. Now that there is a growing awareness of the importance of soil biology and soil health, how do you think that will change farm management in the future?