

# DIVERSE SOLUTIONS FOR DIVERSE SOILS



The Washington Soil Health Initiative (WaSHI) is a partnership between the Washington State Conservation Commission, the Washington State Department of Agriculture, and Washington State University. WaSHI establishes a coordinated approach to promoting healthy soils in Washington through research, outreach and education, and funding opportunities throughout Washington's diverse regions and cropping systems.

## Washington Soil Health Initiative Projects

### *Soil Health Roadmap*

What is the health of Washington's soil? What do we want it to be? How can we get there? To answer these questions, WaSHI partners interviewed agricultural stakeholders using extensive surveys, listening session, and focus groups.

The resulting Soil Health Roadmap describes the five following needs:

- 1** Quick, cost-effective methods to assess soil health.
- 2** Information on translating soil health knowledge into practice management decisions.
- 3** A better understanding of soil biology.
- 4** An approach that acknowledges differences in soil health across regions and cropping systems.
- 5** Resources for growers to experiment with soil health practices on their land.

To read the full Roadmap, visit [wasoilhealth.org](http://wasoilhealth.org)

### *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.

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.



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture



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# 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.

## 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. This project builds soil health capacity by engaging diverse agricultural communities across Washington.

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

## 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.

Six 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.



## STAR: Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources

This free and voluntary program generates public recognition and economic valuation for on-farm soil health management. Farmers answer simple, production-specific questions about their rotation, tillage, nutrient applications, and conservation practices. Local, crop-specific science committees convert responses into scores between 1 and 5 STARs, and eligible participants are provided with branding materials. STAR incentivizes and rewards good stewardship using a consistent scale across regions and systems. Enrollment in Washington STAR begins in summer of 2024.



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