



MINNESOTA LAND • LAKES • LEGACY

CONSERVATION IN ACTION TOUR
AUGUST 11 & 12, 2015

CTIC Conservation in Action Tour Lineup Finalized

The eighth annual Conservation in Action Tour, which will be hosted in southeastern Minnesota by the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) on August 11 and 12, will explore a broad spectrum of conservation farming systems on a variety of farms. Space is still available on the tour, and the group's room block has been extended until July 17 at the otherwise-full official tour hotel in Minneapolis.

“This tour digs into the diversity of agriculture in southeastern Minnesota to explore the many creative ways farmers are approaching conservation farming,” says Karen A. Scanlon, CTIC’s executive director. “We’ll see farms ranging from small vegetable operations to large dairies, and we’ll see farmers tackling conservation challenges in all sorts of ways. There will be plenty of chances to see great ideas and creative systems in action—and to see that there is no single recipe for conservation farming. Each of these farmers is creating a solution that fits his or her farm.”

Families Feeding Families



Click [here](#) to
register today!

The 2015 Conservation in Action Tour is organized by CTIC in partnership with the Goodhue, Rice and Dakota Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts; Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources; Minnesota Department of Agriculture; Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center; Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



An informal networking event at the Mall of America in Minneapolis, sponsored by John Deere, will kick off the program the evening of August 11. The next morning, buses will head southeast toward the rich soils along the Mississippi River. The first stop will be at the Hmong American Farmer Association (HAFA) in Hastings, Minnesota, where Hmong family farmers manage a patchwork of cooperatively owned small fields to supply the Twin Cities, and beyond, with vegetables.

Pakou Hang, HAFA's executive director, will talk about the history of the Hmong people and their deep relationship with agriculture. She will also talk about immigrant farmers and their prominence in the local food markets. Janssen Hang, senior project manager at HAFA, will outline the organization's detailed whole-farm plan approach to conservation systems, tying together cover crops, nutrient management, rotations and pollinator-friendly plantings. He will also review the agronomic and conservation trainings offered to HAFA members. Michelle Wohlers of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will explore how conservation practices can be adapted on small-farm operations and visitors will gain insight on the role of ag conservation in supporting pollinators which, in turn, support us.

Soil Health



In Northfield, Bruce and Brian Peterson will discuss strategies their family uses to improve soil, protect water quality and build a strong corn and soybean operation. The brothers will explain how they employ cover crops, conservation tillage and a detailed nutrient management plan—including

The Mosaic Company is the 2015 Conservation in Action tour leader sponsor. Evening social is sponsored by John Deere.

For information on CTIC's Conservation in Action Tour or to register for the event, visit www.ctic.org/CIATours, or contact Crystal Hatfield at hatfield@ctic.org or (765) 494-9555.

soil testing, split applications and variable rate applications—to meet crop needs while minimizing the loss of nutrients to leaching or runoff. Paulo Pagliari of the University of Minnesota will join the discussion with insight on the soil health of Minnesota farms.

The Petersons will also host an interseeding demonstration led by farmer Jim Purfeerst and Tom Coffman of NRCS. Brian Peterson will lead a discussion of partnerships between farmers and their ag retailers for improved nutrient management, with the help of Kate Stenzel of Central Valley Ag and Kris Gibart and Jamie Seitzer of DuPont.

Drainage Water Management



Minnesota Association of Soil
& Water Conservation
Districts file photo

Partnerships will be the focus of the tour's lunch speakers, including Nick Goeser of the National Corn Growers Association's Soil Health Partnership; John Linc Stine, commissioner of the Minnesota

Pollution Control Agency; and John Jaschke, executive director of the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.

“Minnesota is a national leader in creating partnerships that address soil and water conservation challenges,” notes Scanlon. “Learning from their experience and getting the latest insight on the state's new buffer initiative will be valuable for participants on the tour from all over the country.”

On long-time conservation farmer Dave Legvold's property near Northfield, tour participants will explore drainage water management systems and saturated buffers with Brian Watson of the Dakota County Soil and Water Conservation District, farmer Doug Albin,

and Nathan Utt with Ecosystem Services Exchange. Legvold and University of Minnesota Extension researcher Jodi DeJong-Hughes will lead a discussion on the impacts of reduced tillage on the health of the soil and a demonstration of Soil Warrior strip-tillage equipment.

Livestock Angles



On the Maring Farm near Kenyon, Phil and Nathan Maring will lead the tour through a discussion of their rotational grazing and pasture management programs, which allow them to farm productively while protecting unique wetland habitat for the endangered Minnesota dwarf trout lily. Tom Steger of NRCS will also detail the Marings' efforts to tailor their operation to a challenging landscape, including the rebuild of a 45-year-old spring-fed pond, which taps Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) funds to beef up the farm's watering system.

Nearby at the Burfeind Dairy in Goodhue, visitors will walk among three generations of barns with David and Peter Burfeind, illustrating the family's commitment to conservation and animal health. Jeff King of NRCS and Pete Fryer of the Soil and Water Conservation District Joint Powers Board will delve into the workings of the farm's concrete-lined, two-stage lagoon system. The lagoon system is sized to allow Burfeind to apply manure on his operation and surrounding farms based on optimum agronomic need and timing rather than when it's necessary to free up space in the pond.

Core Conservation Principles

"There are so many partnerships, so many technologies and so many approaches to

conservation on this tour that there will truly be ideas and inspiration for everybody to bring home,” says Scanlon. “What ties together all the diversity is what we call the Core 4 principles of conservation farming—every operation is working toward better soil, cleaner water, greater on-farm profits and a brighter future.”

Those principles will likely be big topics of conversation at the tour-end supper sponsored by Bayer CropScience at the historic St. James Hotel, overlooking the Mississippi River in Red Wing. There, Steve Woods of the Freshwater Society will review highlights of the day, and a representative of The Mosaic Company—the tour leader sponsor—will close the program.

For details on the Conservation in Action Tour or to reserve a spot, visit www.ctic.org/CIATours or call (765) 494-9555.