

Demonstration and Education to Increase Soil Health Adoption on Massachusetts Cropland

UMass Extension Agriculture Program | 230 Stockbridge Rd. Amherst MA 01003

Challenge Grants Implementing the Commonwealth's Healthy Soils Action Plan

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Interim Report Ref# C132: Quarter Ending December 31, 2024

The HSAP funded research and education continued into the fall and winter. We do not have any changes to our overall implementation plan or schedule. Specific activities were as follows.

Research

The first sampling of the *No-till and Cover Crop Mixes* experiment occurred on Nov. 12th. Penetration resistance, cover crops biomass, and groundcover was measured in each plot and soil samples were collected for soil health analysis at the University of Maine.

Research activities will resume when the ground thaws in the spring with the installation of tillage and lime treatments in the *No-till and pH* experiment and visual assessment of winter survival in the *No-till and Cover Crop Mixes* experiment.

Outreach

One outreach event was held at the *No-till and Cover Crop* experiment with 20 attendees in an NRCS training program on Dec. 11th to discuss the treatment performance and research goals.

We conducted an in-depth workshop to teach about the *Soil Health Test Kit* methods and availability in Phillipston MA in collaboration with the Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust attended by 50 people on Dec. 4th and an online lecture attended by 137 students for the UMass Green School on Dec. 11th.

Outreach will continue this spring with at least 3 farm visits planned and our *Soil Health Mini School* on March 26th. Farm visits will include demonstration of the *Soil Health Test Kits* and discussion of the *No-till and pH* experiment. *Soil Health Mini School* will include a session on both experiments and demonstration of *Soil Health Test Kit*.

Materials have been purchased to assemble *Soil Health Test Kits*, some in the reporting quarter and some in January 2025. Complete assembly of the *Soil Health Test Kits* will occur in the winter of 2025 with placement around the state during the spring and summer.

Budget

This is not an official expenditure report or invoice, and those documents generated by the UMass Controller take precedence. Our records indicate that in the reporting quarter, direct non-personnel expenses totaled \$2,501.77, with \$26.00 for external soil testing and the remainder for Soil Health Test Kit materials.

Personnel expenses are still pending as internal UMass effort allocation change requests are processed, so they will appear as zero on the invoice for this reporting quarter. The next quarterly report and the next Controller's invoice are expected to reflect staff effort from project inception. Our rough estimate of the salary and fringe expenses that will be attributable to the project through 12/31/24 is approximately \$7,000.