

# CONSERVATION Showcase

## Role of Soil Health Promoted

Continued success of agricultural systems in our world is dependent upon the ability to maintain soil health and manage water resources through conservation planning, according to New Mexico NRCS agronomists, water quality specialist, and soil scientists. And, they are out to increase understanding of the role conservation planning plays in the maintenance and improvement of soil health.

“Conservation planning seeks to take soil health and productivity from its current level and manage it to achieve its full potential,” said Ken Scheffe, state soil scientist. “One of the most powerful tools to deliver soils information to farmers, ranchers, conservationists, and homeowners is the Web Soil Survey which is on the Internet.”

The Web Soil Survey puts local soil maps, descriptions, data, and suitability ratings into the hands of users.

Another source of information NRCS New Mexico is making available to land and water users, in its efforts to continually provide more and better information, is the Integrated Water Management Handbook. This handbook incorporates materials that emphasize the effects of tillage, irrigation, and nutrient and pest management upon long term soil productivity. This information was used this past summer for training session for conservation planners and NRCS partners.

In addition, NRCS New Mexico has acquired soil quality test kits so its local field and soil survey offices can assess soil conditions for farmers and ranchers, and offer options and recommendations for improving soil health. Because recognizing soil health indicators is so important, NRCS New Mexico is also scheduling workshops for farmers and



ranchers this year to provide hands-on demonstrations of soil sampling, testing, and evaluation of soil conditions.

“Global reduction in agricultural productivity due to soil erosion and degradation, depletion of irrigation water supplies, and competing land uses is putting a squeeze on capacity to meet increasing world-wide demand for food and fiber,” said Scheffe. “Even when looking at the local picture, to continually succeed as producers we must maintain soil health and manage water resources through conservation planning.”

Integration of needed conservation practices and management assures water quality, soil quality, and overall ecosystem health is maintained.

For more information about the Web Soil Survey and Integrated Water Management Handbook go to [www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov)