

IMPACT



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New Northwest Direct Seed Conferences Expand Grower Technology Access

The Situation

Direct seed cropping systems can effectively control Pacific Northwest cropland soil erosion and associated water and air quality problems, and improve soil quality and productivity, while potentially increasing grower profitability and competitiveness. Even though PNW research and grower experience with direct seed systems has been expanding in the 1990s, there was still limited grower access to the research technology and experience base that is critical to the development of successful direct seed cropping systems. Previous PNW Conservation Tillage Conferences and PNW STEEP Annual Research Reviews in the 1980's and 1990's attracted audiences of only 150-350. A new conference approach was needed to provide a larger number of PNW growers and ag advisers with first-hand access to new management strategies and technologies.

Our Response

The annual Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference was initiated in 1998 and new strategies have continued to be explored each year. Several new conference features and organizational strategies dramatically improved the potential to attract much larger grower audiences and improve technology access. These have included:

- Inviting international and out-of-state national speakers (a rarity before)
- Increasing the number of Northwest grower speakers from two to four in previous years to 8-16
- Publishing in-depth proceedings distributed at the conferences
- Producing videos of the conferences and making them available for loan/sale
- Involving more than 10 agricultural companies and groups as financial co-sponsors to cover additional costs of invited speakers, proceedings, videos and expanded promotion (no financial co-sponsors in previous conferences)
- Adding a new commercial trade show on direct seed systems (1999, 2000) and combining with an existing NW Ag trade show (2001, 2002).
- Creating a conference web site (<http://pnwsteep.wsu.edu/directseed>) for increased publicity and later access to the Proceedings, videos and other resources
- Actively involving PNW grower and conservation district associations, agricultural industries and other groups as cooperators to develop and promote the conferences. Veseth also invited the PNW Direct Seed Association to be a co-organizer of the conferences beginning in 2001.
- Utilizing extensive direct mailing of conference brochures through grower organization mailing lists and paid Ag media advertisements

Program Outcomes

Fifth NW Direct Seed Cropping Systems

Conference

This 5th Conference was held Jan. 16-18, 2002 in Spokane, WA. It was held in conjunction with Spokane Ag Expo and PNW Farm Forum; conference registration included admission to these two events. Increased collaborative efforts on schedules between the three events improved the educational opportunity for participants. This was also the second conference co-organized by the Extension Team of the PNW STEEP research program on conservation tillage systems and the PNW Direct Seed Association. Twelve ag companies and groups cosponsored the conference and 11 PNW grower organizations and Ag support groups and agencies cooperated.

The program featured 24 speakers, including 10 growers, from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. A Direct Seed Poster Exhibition was also included. A number of PNW grower organizations including: ID Grain Producers Association, OR Wheat Growers League, WA Assoc. of Wheat Growers, ID Assoc. of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, OR Assoc. of Conservation Districts, Washington Assoc. of Conservation Districts, and USA Dry Pea and Lentil Council helped get conference brochures directly to growers and ag support personnel. Collaborative efforts were also conducted to provide brochures or the conference web URL to ag service industry field staff through the major ag service companies and ag industry organizations, including the Far West Agri-Business Association.

Impacts—Growers are adopting the recommended practices, quadrupling the acreage involved. Pacific Northwest small grain production under low disturbance direct seeding (no-till) has grown from 157,000 to 630,000 acres from 1990 to 2000, an increase from 4% to 9%.

In some Inland Northwest grain-producing counties, 20 to 50% of the small grain acreage is now under no-till.... comparable to 30-60% of the cropland in a

number of U.S. global grain market competitors, such as Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Australia.

Conference attendance reflects the grower's support. From 1998-2001, the latest year survey results are available, more than 99 percent of respondents said the conferences would help increase the success and adaptation of direct seed systems by Northwest growers. More than 700 growers attended the Spokane conference in 2001. Since 1998, 620 to 940 growers have attended each year, far more than the typical 150-350 in previous conferences.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

USDA-CSREES PNW STEEP (Solutions To Environmental and Economic Problems) conservation research and educational program
USDA-CSREES Columbia Plateau Wind Erosion/Air Quality Project

Washington State University

Oregon State University

Don Wysocki, OSU Extension Soil Scientist, Pendleton

Russ Karow, OSU Extension Agronomist, Corvallis

Stephen Guy, UI Extension Crop Management Specialist, Moscow

Bill Schillinger, WSU Dryland Agronomist, Lind
Joe Yenish, WSU Extension Weeds Specialist, Pullman

John Burns, WSU Extension Agronomist, Pullman

Greg Schwab, WSU Extension Soils Specialist, Pullman

Dennis Tonks, WSU Extension Dryland Cropping Systems Specialist, Davenport

Larry Robertson, UI Extension Crop Management Specialist, Aberdeen

Brad Brown, UI Extension Crop Management Specialist, Parma

The Future

Direct seeding and more intensive cropping systems are relatively new and rapidly evolving farming systems in this region. To facilitate the continued growth and success of direct seed cropping systems in the Northwest, there will be an increasing need for accelerated research and extension efforts on developing and providing access to new technologies. This new conference series will

provide expanding technology access into the new decade.

For More Information

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