

**Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Report To  
Papio-Missouri River NRD Board  
January 8, 2015  
Neil Jensen, District Conservationist**



**USDA OBSERVES KICK OFF OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SOILS**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is launching its International Year of Soils celebration, joining partners across the world to build awareness about soil in 2015. Soil is important in providing food security and ecosystem functions for a rapidly growing world population.

As the primary resource essential for food production and ecosystem functions, farmers and ranchers play a critical role in maintaining soil health. NRCS works with landowners to apply conservation practices that work to sustain the health our nation's soil, including cover crops, crop rotations, and conservation tillage and no-till.

With an increasing global population, a shrinking agricultural land base, climate change and extreme weather events, the nations of the world are focusing their collective attention to the primary resource essential to food production—the soil.

The United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), working within the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, spearheaded the adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly designating 2015 as the International Year of Soils. The year of awareness aims to increase global understanding of the importance of soil for food security and essential ecosystem functions.

NRCS is coordinating activities to mark USDA's involvement in the International Year of Soils. **Nearly 80 years ago, NRCS, formerly the Soil Conservation Service, was created to improve the health and sustainability of our nation's soils. The agency's original mission continues to this day – providing assistance to producers looking to improve the health of the soil on their land.**



Conservation that works to improve soil health is one of the best tools NRCS has to help landowners face these impending challenges – and maintain and improve their productivity with the use of soil management systems that includes cover crops, conservation tillage and no-till and crop rotations. These systems reduce sediment

loss from farms and ranches, buffer the effects of drought, flood and other severe weather; sequester carbon and create biodiversity in our rural landscape.

International Year of Soils provides an opportunity for us to learn about the critical role soil conservation and improved soil health play in the economic and environmental sustainability of agriculture.

Working with the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA) and other partners, **NRCS will be showcasing the importance of soil with monthly themes** created by SSSA:

- **January: Soils Sustain Life**
- **February: Soils Support Urban Life**
- **March: Soils Support Agriculture**
- **April: Soils Clean and Capture Water**
- **May: Soils Support Buildings/Infrastructure**
- **June: Soils Support Recreation**
- **July: Soils Are Living**
- **August: Soils Support Health**
- **September: Soils Protect the Natural Environment**
- **October: Soils and Products We Use**
- **November: Soils and Climate**
- **December: Soils, Culture and People**

For more information, visit [NRCS's soil health webpage](#) or the [International Year of Soils webpage](#).



Ralph Arauza, NRCS Soil Conservation Technician, Omaha Field Office, retired after 36 years of service. A majority of that service was spent applying conservation practices within the Papio-Missouri River NRD.

Ryan Johnson, Survey Aid, Blair Field Office, has left for employment with private industry.



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