



Agriculture Soil Health Outreach Program (AgSHOP) Annual Performance Report - 2024

Performance Period 9/26/2023 to 9/26/2024



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Performance Summary

The AgSHOP project implemented and made significant progress on the six key deliverables. In February 2024, the Soil Health in the West Conference was held in St. George, Utah. It included two preconference workshops, two days of breakout sessions, and keynote presentations. The Soil Health in the West Conference has already been scheduled for February 11th-13th, 2026.

UDAF has entered into contracts with Utah Food Coalition (UFC) to work with Urban / Small farmers, as well as with Covenant Pathways to assist with the formation of the tribal soil health groups. Both of the organizations have conducted outreach events in the first year of the project.

In June 2024, UDAF opened up applications for organizations seeking funding to host localized soil health workshops around the state in 2025. Applications were ranked, and funds obligated, with contracting underway.

UDAF hired a marketing specialist to increase the social media and digital presence of the Utah Soil Health Partnership (USHP). So far the website has been redesigned, a newsletter has been developed, social media content has been created and instructional videos have been filmed and posted. Additionally, the USHP has participated in several outreach events throughout the state during this first year.

To provide individualized technical assistance, the Utah Soil Health Program developed and implemented the In-Field Soil Health Assessment Project as part of the outreach efforts. UDAF staff conduct on-farm site visits and a soil health assessment, then provide a report of the results, as well as information on resources and cost share opportunities to address the identified resource concerns.

The following sections of the report will provide further details into each of these activities.

Accomplishments and Deliverables

Below are details of the key accomplishments and deliverables for the AgSHOP during the first year, from September 26th 2023 to September 26th 2024, completed by the Utah Soil Health Program under the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food in partnership with Utah Association of Conservation Districts, Utah Food Coalition, Covenant Pathways, and the Utah Soil Health Partnership.

Soil Health in the West Conference

The Soil Health in the West Conference was held February 6th - 8th 2024 in St. George, Utah and the surrounding area. The event consisted of two pre-conference workshops / field days held in Hurricane, UT and two days of presentations and breakouts at the Dixie Convention Center in St. George. The pre-conference workshops included a Beginners workshop and a Grazing with Soil Health workshop. Both workshops included a classroom and field portion.

Pre-Conference Workshops

Beginners Workshop



Topics covered in the beginner workshop included:

- Understanding Soil Health Principles and Biology
- Getting Started - Implementing Soil Health Principles and Practices
- Cover Crop Basics
- What to look for - How to tell if your soil is healthy - Shovel reading 101

Instructors included NRCS and UDAF staff.

The in-field section of the workshop included teaching and performing the in-field soil health assessment.

Seating was limited for the Beginners workshop to 40 individuals due to classroom size and the ability to conduct hands-on training; the workshop sold out. Participants were provided with resource guides, handouts and a “Soil Owner’s Manual.”

Grazing with Soil Health Workshop



Topics covered in the Grazing with Soil Health workshop:

- Regenerative Ranching in the Desert
- Regenerative Grazing Practices: Observations in the Field

The Grazing with Soil Health workshop was led by Alejandro Carrillo with the Grassland Regeneration Project. The workshop was sold out with a seating capacity of 30.

Conference Keynotes and Breakouts

Day two and three of the conference included two keynote presentations and 42 breakout sessions from 30 different speakers.

- Dancing Earthworms
- Benefits And Obstacles Of Implementing The Soil Health Practices On A Family Dairy Farm
- How To Talk Crap To Your Friends And Get Away With It
- The Steward/Stewardship Balance
- Covering Cover Crops, Understanding The Benefits
- Managing Water Cycle And Carbon Cycle Through Soil Ecology
- A Soil Health Journey At Red Acre Farm
- Carbon On The Range: The Effects Of Livestock Grazing On Soil Organic Carbon And How To Measure It Accurately
- Summer And Winter Grazing With Nofence Virtual Fencing Technology.
- The Impact Of Soil Health And Plant Diversity On Meat Nutrient Density
- What Is 1% Worth? Monetizing Water Holding Capacity
- Indigenous Regenerative Intelligence - Soil To Soul Awakening
- Soil Health With Cash Crops, Cover Crops, And Cattle
- How Nature Feeds The Soil Ecosystem: An Overview Of The Carbon And Rhizophagy Cycles - A.K.A. Plants Are Not Vegetarians
- Cover Crops In An Alfalfa And Corn
- The Evolution Of Grazing In The Desert
- Reducing Irrigation Through Monitoring And Mechanical Practices.
- STAR - Saving Tomorrow's Agriculture Resources
- Linking Soil Biology To Soil Health
- Protecting Skeletons & Making Money: The Double Edged Sword Of Water Rights, Greenbelt, Conservation Easements And More
- Harnessing Nature's Potential For Forage Production & Soil Health
- Farming With Nature Using Indigenous Wisdom
- Summer And Winter Grazing With Nofence Virtual Fencing Technology
- Linking Grazing And Finishing Systems To Animal And Human Health
- Pastured Poultry In Utah...Is It Possible, Profitable, Worth It?
- Q&A Session With Joel Salatin
- How I Implement The Principles Of Soil Health
- Grazing For Rain
- Covering Cover Crops, Understanding The Benefits
- Soil Health Practices At Work In The Intermountain West
- Protecting Skeletons & Making Money: The Double Edged Sword Of Water Rights, Greenbelt, Conservation Easements And More
- Management-Intensive Grazing On And Around Pivots Without Permanent Fences.
- Amazing Grazing: It's About Time
- Regenerate AZ: A Community Shifting The Paradigm
- Rock Beats Scissors, Scissors Beats Paper, Paper Beats Rock, But Water Trumps All!
- Carbon On The Range: The Effects Of Livestock Grazing On Soil Organic Carbon And How To Measure It Accurately
- USDA-NRCS Aberdeen Plant Materials Center: Cover Crop Trials
- Biochar Opportunities In The Southwest For Drought Mitigation And Crop Resilience.
- Q&A With Alejandro Carrillo
- Soil Health Practices For Small-Scale Growers

Speakers for the conference included:

- Josh Adams
- Joe Cann
- Alejandro Carrillo
- Ryan Christensen
- Tyson Coles
- Brian David
- Mitch Dumke
- Nacia Franco
- Matt Goble
- Kris Hulvey
- Stanford Jensen
- TK Kern
- Braden McMurdie
- Sara Patterson
- Terron M Pickett
- Brett Reed
- Tony Richards
- Joel Salatin
- James Skeet
- Katie Slebodnik
- Jared Sorenson
- Stephan Van Vliet
- Yadi Wang
- John Webster
- George Whitten
- Cameron Williams
- Marlon Winger
- Mary Wolf





Vendor Fair

The conference included a vendor fair and exhibition hall with various vendors, organizations and agencies hosting booths for attendees to learn about products, services, and resources available to them to implement soil health.

The event had a total of 43 sponsors along with an additional 9 exhibitors participating in the vendor fair portion of the event. Additionally, some vendors brought in equipment for attendees to view, including a no-till drill and an agriculture drone.



Event Summary

Overall, the event was very successful and well-attended, especially the workshop / field day / conference dinner optional activities. Positive feedback from the event with significant support for the next conference scheduled February 10th-12th 2026.

Total Registrations: 395

Attendee Check-in: 343

Workshops: 2

Keynotes: 2

Breakouts: 40

Local Soil Health Workshop Grants

In June 2024, the Utah Soil Health Program opened an application period for organizations around the state to host local workshops to be held in 2025. Organizations were required to have experience working with producers and priority was given to applicants that had past experience in implementing an educational event.

13 applications were received and ranked by the Soil Health Advisory Committee (SHAC). 27 events were proposed with an estimated 2,275 possible attendees, and a total cost of \$107,385 with applicants contributing \$43,810 in matching funds. 11 applicants were preapproved for funding for a total of \$30,000 in grant requests. Below is the list of funded applicants.

Title	Organization Name	City
Holistic Planned Grazing & Ecological Monitoring Courses	3 Springs Land & Livestock	Salt Lake City
Utah Farm & Food Conference 2025 Soil Health Expansion	Red Acre Center for Food and Agriculture	Cedar City
2025 Healthy Soils Guest Speaker Series	Wasatch Community Gardens	Salt Lake City
Beaver River Watershed Tour/Soil Health Field Day	Beaver Conservation District, Twin M Conservation District, USU/Beaver County Extension	Panguitch
Soil Health Education in Tooele County	Grantsville Conservation District and Shambip Conservation District	Grantsville
The DIRT Series	Hello!Bulk Markets	Salt Lake City
Daggett Conservation District Soil Health Workshop and No-Till Drill Demonstration	Daggett Conservation District	Manila
Garfield/Kane County Soil Health Field Day	Canyonlands Conservation District/Kane County Conservation District/Upper Sevier Conservation District	Panguitch
Iron County Soil Health/Water Conservation Field Day	Enterprise and Iron Conservation District	Cedar City
Northern Utah Soil Health Conference	North Cache Conservation District	Logan
Grand Small Scale Soil Health Workshop	Grand Conservation District	Moab

Table 1. Local Soil Health Workshop Grant Recipients

Urban / Small Farm Outreach

Utah Food Coalition hosted an urban and small farm field day on August 4, 2024 that included site visits to three different small farm operations that produce vegetables & specialty crops, along with grazing different types of livestock on small acres. The Utah Soil Health Program personnel also taught observations and evaluations of soil health training at the event. 42 people attended the all day event.

Utah Food Coalition Report

AgSHOP Progress Report for Urban and Small Farms - November 2024

In 2023, following a successful Living Soils Summit for small growers, we formed a planning committee called the *Living Soil Collective*, which meets monthly (and more often when necessary) to plan and implement education opportunities –funded by the AgSHOP grant– for small and urban growers on the Wasatch Front.

Committee Members

Chandler Rosenberg, *Utah Food Coalition*
Rikki Longino, *The Mobile Moon Cooperative*
James Loomis, *Wasatch Community Gardens*
Tia Mitsinikos, *Wasatch Community Gardens*
Kristen Kropp, *Bug Farms*

Event Overview & Updates

2024 Field Day, completed August 4, 2024. We organized transportation for 30 people to travel to 3 different agricultural operations for a full day of soil-focused learning.

- 1) Rustling Aspen Farm, Midway, UT
- 2) Madsnacks Produce, Oakley, UT
- 3) 3 Springs Land and Livestock, Peoa, UT

At each site, the producers gave a tour of their operation highlighting their soil health management strategies and detailing soil health practices that they have found to be effective at improving soil health and productivity. Tony Richards and the Utah Soil Health Partnership were also present and they provided technical information and demonstrations as participants learned and practiced some in-field soil health assessment tools, such as observation and the spade test, infiltration, compaction testing, and more.

Lunch and transportation were provided. There was ample interest in the event, and it was really wonderful and educational, exposing many urban growers to smaller operations outside of Salt Lake City.

2025 Soil Summit, scheduled for March 14-16, 2025 at the SLC Library.

Building on the success of our 2023 Living Soils Summit, the coalition is currently in the planning stages of this event, has secured a venue, and has a number of speakers lined up to participate. After a well-attended event in 2023, for 2025 the hope is to expand the audience beyond the small-grower community by providing some content and activities that are open to the general public and the home gardener along with more in depth and technical information for those operating small and urban farms in the Great Basin.

These events have displayed the depth of technical knowledge and the web of relationships has deepened as the small grower soil health community has been slowly built over the last couple of years.

- **2026 Field Day**: planning will begin once the 2025 Soil Summit concludes.
- **2027 Soil Summit**
- **2028 Field Day**





Tribal Soil Health Group

The project has partnered with Covenant Pathways to form a tribal soil health group in Utah. Utah is home to eight federally recognized tribes, including:

- Confederated Tribes of Goshute
- Navajo Nation
- Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation
- Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
- San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe
- Skull Valley Band of Goshute
- Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray Reservation
- Ute Mountain Ute Tribe

Covenant pathways leaders James and Joyce Skeet have engaged with individuals in Utah connected to the indigenous community. Attached below is the first year report from Covenant Pathways on their work completed.

Covenant Pathways Report

Fall Report 2024

In our vision to Include Indigenous folks in Utah's soil health initiatives, we are striving to bring together indigenous leadership and Utah's agriculture network to discuss opportunities to support existing indigenous-led initiatives.

Building a network and trust among indigenous peoples requires time; building trust, follow through and keeping one's word. We have identified some potential facilitators living in Utah to assist us with this project. Al Grossi is a grower and radio host in Salt Lake City with a number of connections in Native communities. Dave John is from the Navajo and Cochiti Tribes living in Utah. He also a radio host with large network. We have recently spoken with Bleu Adams, founder of IndigeHub, who grew up in Utah and is from the Navajo Tribe. We have brought them to the table to ensure that indigenous peoples have a voice in the direction and future of sustainable food systems.

On our initial trip to Salt Lake City in July 2024, we met with Dave John and Al both together and individually to listen to their hearts and share the vision for this project. We discussed ideas and strategies to begin to create a network with the indigenous communities and decided to begin a list of leaders and locations where we can present the benefits of soil health and determine viable future engagement and support for resources with workshops, gardening supplies, access to different expertise, and exposure to other farms within the state of Utah.

Together we set a date in October 2024 for James and Joyce to travel to Salt Lake City again to continue strategizing with Dave and Al, and set a date of on Oct 19 in Salt Lake City to invite indigenous leaders and other interested folks to an open session to talk more about this opportunity. There was a lot of discussion around biochar, composting and healthy soil. At the same time we realize the challenge of bringing the right folks to the table. One central theme

that continues to come up is centered around support for Medicine plants and Medicine gardens. There were also discussions about identifying an Indigenous farm that can be a model for healthy soil applications and composting, and dialogue about a future healthy soil summit.

In early November 2025 we had a zoom call with Bleu Adams, founder of non-profit IndigiHub. Many of this organization's values align with our project. In the zoom conversation with her, she mentioned the need for more funding to support the mission. Her organization provides support and resources for indigenous peoples interested in starting food related businesses, as well as training for farmers to improve the quality of their soil and produce.

We are making plans to travel to Utah in early 2025, meet in person with Bleu and several indigenous leaders that we have started communications through Al, Dave, and Bleu. We also have a connection with a Shoshone Elder that is very interested in learning more about healthy soil and how we can impact indigenous growers. As we move forward, James and Joyce need a strong presence in Utah until we can begin to hand off more responsibility to Al, Dave and/or Bleu.

On October 19th 2024 an informational gathering was held to gather information on current needs as well as build further connections to the tribal communities.

Cultivating Soil Health Among Indigenous Growers

About the Event

Inviting Indigenous leaders and growers to begin discussions on building healthy soil; using compost, mulch and biochar to grow nutrient rich foods and medicine plants

What to Expect

- Determine support for resources, workshops and gardening supplies
- Spirit Farm Documentary - A short film of an Indigenous farm.

19 OCTOBER 2024
06:00 PM - 8:00 PM

MESTIZO COFFEE
631 W N TEMPLE ST
SALT LAKE CITY

CONTACT INFO:
PUNK ROCK FARMER AL
(801)598-1658
DAVE JOHN (801)420-7288



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SPIRIT FARM

NAVAJODESIGNS@MSN.COM

[HTTPS://COVENANTPATHWAYS.ORG/](https://COVENANTPATHWAYS.ORG/)

Public Outreach Campaign

In the efforts to increase the public awareness of soil health the project has hired Leon Page as the outreach coordinator, housed in the marketing division of UDAF. Leon has experience in digital and print media, website and graphic design, and event planning. He has updated the USHP website and implemented new branding for the partnership, along with updating the Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube pages. Leon has assisted in the development of flyers and event promotional materials for many of the USHP partners including Utah Food Coalition and Utah Association of Conservation Districts soil health events. He has also provided documentation and photography for several soil health events, and produced the first few of a series of educational and instructional videos for soil health equipment resources in Utah.

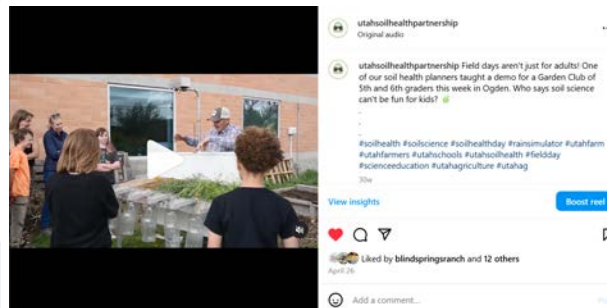
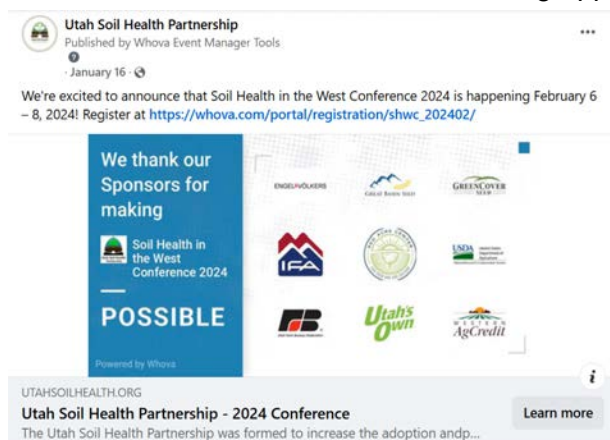
Soil Media Efforts

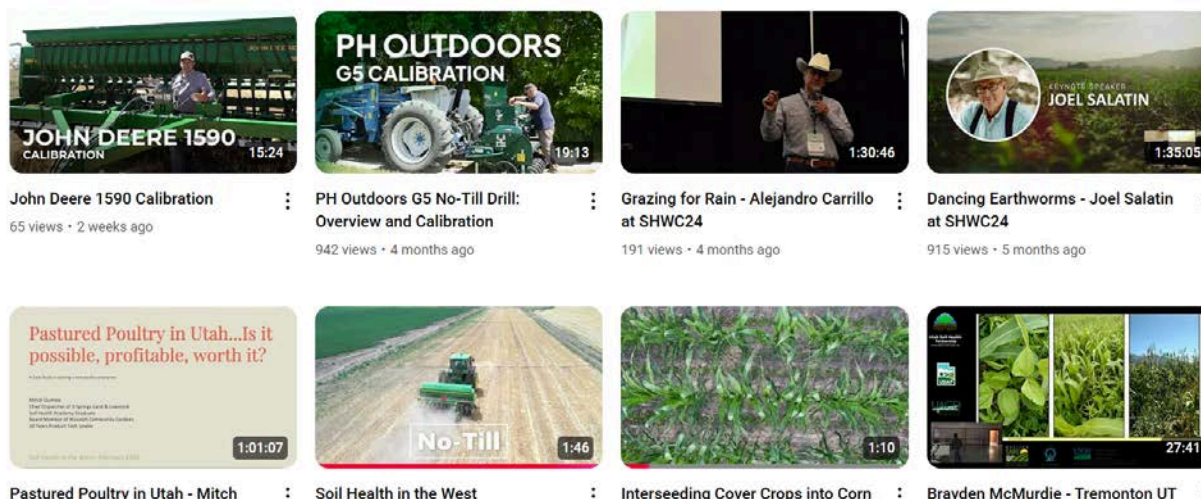


The www.utahsoilhealth.org home page includes information on the USHP staff and SHAC members and links to partners. Basic information on the six soil health principles, instructional videos such as the rainfall simulator, along with upcoming events.

Facebook and Instagram

The USHP facebook and instagram pages are used to prompt events and share news related to soil health efforts across the state, funding opportunities, and new programs.





The USHP youtube channel has several education videos including presentations from previous events, instructional videos on no-till drill, and other soil health equipment setup.

Youtube Viewership Stats

Subscribers: 383
 Total Views 30.5K
 Watch Hours 7.7K
 Total videos: 71

Public Outreach Events

In first year of the project, the USHP was involved in the following number soil health events:

Total Events: 28

Total Participants: 2254

Utah Counties Served:

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| • Daggett | • Sanpete | • Garfield |
| • Salt Lake | • Garfield | • Kane |
| • Cache | • Utah | • Millard |
| • Weber | • Cache | • Box Elder |
| • Sevier | • Wayne | • Wasatch |
| • Washington | • Emery | • Sevier |
| • Uintah | • Carbon | • Morgan |
| • Iron | • Weber | |

USHP Newsletter

The USHP started a quarterly e-newsletter that the public can sign up for. The newsletter includes updates from the partnership, information on partners events, resources and funding opportunities.



Fall 2024 Soil Health Updates

Grant news, program highlights and new resources all posted by the Utah Soil Health Partnership.

Local Soil Health Workshop Grants - AgSHOP

The recipients of the 2025 Local Soil Health Workshop Grant have been selected! A committee of Soil Health Partnership members has reviewed all applications and

Excerpt from Fall 2024 Newsletter.

Statewide Field Staff Meeting - 2025

Planning has commenced for holding a statewide field staff meeting to involve agency field staff from UDAF, NRCS, USU County Extension Agents, and Crop Advisors. The meeting will be used to collect field-level needs and barriers to soil health along with sharing various efforts currently underway in the state.

Additionally, collaborative training around soil health has been planned by NRCS and UDAF for Spring 2025. UDAF will also be implementing a soil health certification for UDAF planners that will include in-field soil health assessment protocols and soil health plan development.

Moving Forward

As we move into the second year of the project, the focus for 2025 will be more localized events through the local soil health workshop grant with the 11 organizations funded. These events will be a combination of workshops, field days, and conferences. Many of the funded organizations have scheduled events and are in various stages of planning. The USHP will support each of these efforts with marketing staff, demonstration tools, and presenters if needed.

The Utah Food Coalition has planned the Living Soil Summit to be held March 14th-15th in Salt Lake City. USHP will be assisting with the introduction presentation, as well as the rainfall simulator demonstration. The UDAF marketing department is assisting with development of flyers and promotion of the event.

Individual technical assistance and support will be provided to any producer in Utah under the in-field soil health assessment program. Producers interested will be given a soil health plan and encouraged to sign up for available cost share assistance with the NRCS.

Several Conservation Districts that have acquired soil health equipment (such as no-till drills) will be hosting field days to demonstrate the setup and use of the equipment to help increase the successful adoption of no-till. Some districts are planning to conduct cover crop trials and other demonstrations of soil health principles in action.

The USHP will continue to work on instructional videos, educational materials, resource guides, and fact sheets.