

The Soil Health Restore (SHR) Program is a Clean Water Indiana (CWI) funded project for row crop farmers in Owen and Morgan Counties. SHR cost-shares farming practices that build soil health and ultimately enhance the productivity of cropland, while improving water quality. This project is a public/private partnership between Owen County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), Morgan County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), and Greene Crop Consulting, Inc.

Simply put, practices that support diverse soil microbiology, build soil health and unlock its inherent fertility. This translates to refraining from activities that damage microbes and adopting those that encourage them. In a conventional corn/soybean cropping system tillage and bare, exposed soil negatively impact soil microbes. These microscopic allies require a year-round living root to prosper, and long periods between harvest and planting without vegetation take a negative toll on their populations.

Reducing tillage and planting cover crops between “cash” crops are farming methods that build beneficial soil microbes. Also, microbes are finicky about the chemistry of the soil and usually need some nutrient balancing to thrive. Balancing soil health to support beneficial soil microbes doesn’t happen overnight and often requires several years of consistent management to see results.

Unpredictable weather, increased pest pressure, and market fluctuations make farming risky. Changes in behavior happen over time and must be built on successes, not failures. Through providing cost-share payments for soil health building practices, the SHP Program buffers the risk for farmers with a safety net. SHR Program provides three consecutive years of cost-share payments for 1.) soil testing and nutrient management consulting, and 2.) fall/winter cover crops for enrolled fields.

The SHR Program is a good fit for any farmer in Owen or Morgan County that is interested cover crops, precise nutrient management, and reduced tillage. This program is an especially good fit for farmers that value data-driven, innovative farming techniques. For more information contact: Devin Brown in Owen County at 812-829-2605 or devin-brown@iaswcd.org, or Lisa McPhee in Morgan County at 765-349-2060 or SWCDoffice@morgancounty.in.gov. For more information click the **Soil Health Restore Fact Sheet** or **Soil Health Restore Application** for more information. To apply print and fill out the application and return to your local SWCD, or scan and email to above email addresses. Applications will be accepted beginning **March 1, 2021**.