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Conservationist of the Year grows soil health message

Tivoli Gough, NRCS Published 2:29 p.m. CT Dec. 5, 2019



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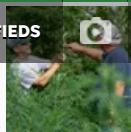
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Nick Guilette, center, says it's exciting a decision-making process on a day-to-day basis for farmers to take action. Photo: Natural Resources Conservation Service Wisconsin

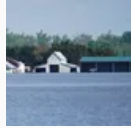
conservation being talked about and becoming more of a decision-making process on a day-to-day basis for farmers to take action. Photo: Natural Resources Conservation Service Wisconsin



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"Soil health can generally be explained by three main qualities: the ability for soil to hold onto water, the amount of organic material in the soil and the level of biological activity in the soil," explained Nick Guilette.

These guiding principles inspire Nick every day to work in agriculture with local farmers interested in making a conservation impact to benefit the natural resources we all enjoy. Guilette, of Casco, Wisconsin, was recently awarded the Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) Conservationist of the Year Award, for his dedication to exceptional conservation delivery and customer service as a leader in the industry.



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The 2019 award was presented November 22, in Washington, D.C. by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief, Matthew Lohr, at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). "(Guilette) has contributed substantially to the exchange of conservation ideas within the agriculture industry," Lohr said. "He is truly a leader in conservation."



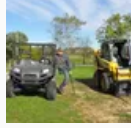
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Guilette has spent his entire life engaged in agriculture. He grew up farming 300 acres with his family, while also working in various conservation positions professionally. With a background in resource management and soils, he has worked as an advanced nutrient management and GPS technician, on local farms as a certified crop adviser and agronomist and with the NRCS as a demonstration farm project manager.



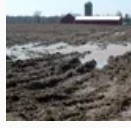
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In his role as a demonstration farm project manager with NRCS, Guilette uses his expertise to guide soil health efforts on the ground, working with producers through the Door-Kewaunee Watershed Demonstration Farm Network. The network, funded through the NRCS Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), features four farms that demonstrate the best conservation practices to protect the Great Lakes. Guilette works to showcase conservation systems that reduce erosion and sediment loss leading to nonpoint source pollution and provides educational technology transfer to the public, farmers, universities, partners and agri-business.



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"NRCS is proud to partner with Nick through the NRCS demonstration farms. He provides sound advice and resources as an educator to implement leading-edge conservation practices at the local level; he exemplifies excellence in his field, and we congratulate him as CCA conservationist of the year," said Angela Biggs, NRCS Wisconsin state conservationist.



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Dec. 11, 2019, 8:05 p.m.



“I enjoy working with the NRCS through the demonstration farms. This partnership fosters beneficial conservation management decisions on these farms, and subsequently, on many area farms, keeping our natural resources sustainable for future generations,” Guilette explained.

As an educator, Guilette's efforts have made a conservation impact.

“His soil health message, through outreach field days, farm tours and workshops, has spread from the demo farms to other farms across the Midwest and even further,” added Barry Bubolz, NRCS area GLRI coordinator. “Nick has been advising the demo farms to try more sustainable conservation practices like no-till, low-disturbance manure applications and ‘planting green.’ For example, we’ve seen corn silage planted into growing rye and it’s working.”

Guilette encourages soil health principles to area farmers, assisting them in building more resilient, economic and environmentally friendly cropping systems.

“NRCS works with certified crop advisers at the local level, sharing science-based technologies that make a conservation impact on our natural resources to build productive lands and healthy ecosystems. It is great to see Nick getting positive results from planting green, which is no-till planting primary crops into actively growing cover crops. This is one of many soil health practices that farmers are using,” said Diane Gelburd, NRCS deputy chief for science and technology.

Guilette and Bubolz recently witnessed a 20-minute, half-inch rainfall on one of the demo farms. They saw zero runoff on the fields planted green and were able to drive on those field less than 24 hours later due to the farm’s use of soil health practices. These positive results, and others are being shared farmer-to-farmer throughout the network.

“Certified crop advisers, like Nick, play an important role in partnering with NRCS to further locally-led conservation and soil health efforts. Working together with farmers, they can help innovate and safely push the boundaries of what is thought possible in soil health management today. They help producers make regenerative land management decisions that work for their unique operation, natural resources, that year’s weather, and their bottom line,” said Bianca Moebius-Clune, NRCS soil health division director.



NRCS Chief Matthew Lohr, left, presents the Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) Conservationist of the Year award to Nick Guilette, with Bill Northey, right, Under Secretary for Farm Production and

Guillette has also worked with the NRCS as a Technical Service Provider, writing comprehensive nutrient management plans, a conservation plan unique to animal feeding operations. He's written conservation plans for growers on more than 25,000 acres.

Guillette's focus on peer-to-peer mentoring and information sharing at demonstration farm events offers a unique challenge for farmers to be models of sustainability through soil health. Nick advocates for farmers to be a part of the conservation solution and he will continue to use his passion for environmental stewardship as 2019's CCA Conservationist of the Year.

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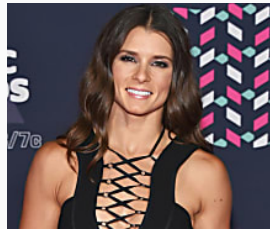
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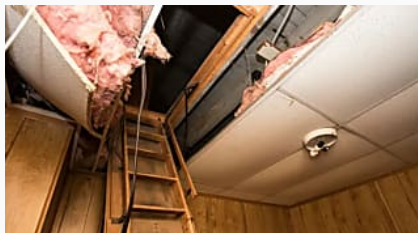


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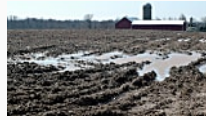
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