



CONTACT

MELINA WATTS
GLENN COUNTY RCD

Office 530.934.4601 x5
melina@glenncountyrcd.org



NEWS & REPORT:

Growers Lead the Way: Soil Health in Glenn County, California

By Melina Sempill Watts

Sitting at the Glenn County Farm Bureau annual dinner last year as a new hire at the Glenn County Resource Conservation District (RCD), I started estimating decades of experience, per farmer in the room, and multiplying it by the numbers of people in chairs. Then I began layering in the growing experience of their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and beyond. In Glenn County, it is common for a farm to be in the fourth, fifth or sixth generation of family ownership. What I saw: arguably over ten thousand years' accrued farming knowledge in one room.

At the Glenn County RCD, Executive Officer Kandi Manhart wanted to capture that multi-generational farming wisdom by talking to our growers about soil health practices they use on farm today – and how they and their families came to make these land management practice choices. Funded by a \$2,000 mini-grant from the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts, Manhart set out to do just that.

Glenn County RCD hired recent University of California-Davis graduate Sinead Santich, a filmmaker now at KQED in San Francisco, of the wildly popular Deep Look YouTube series. After asking the Glenn County Soil Health Technical Advisory Committee for input, Glenn County RCD asked some of our most soil health conscious growers to tell us what they know. Santich created the three videos below profiling the three operations and their lessons learned:

At Knight Farms, Craig Knight, his father Peter Knight and his brothers, grow tomatoes, row crops and seeds for a wide variety of crop types. They shared how moving to drip tape has improved soil health, while talking about historic farming practices. Apart from practical thoughts on soil health, we were touched by some of their insights about working with long-term farm staff; i.e. they make an annual Knight Farms yearbook for workers to share with family and friends.

At MTSJ Dairy, dairy owner Marty Poldervaart (whose family has been in dairy for centuries, extending back to Holland) and his PCA/CCA, Steve Gruenwald from Growers' Choice Crop Consulting taught us how strip till, no till and integrated lagoon/manure management help both the dairy and the supporting fodder crops to thrive. We were dazzled to see Poldervaart getting three fodder crops a year in the field, covered with head-high Sudan grass, in which we were standing.



At Vereschagin Farms, Mike Vereschagin taught us that cover crops of brassica (mustards) are preventing replant disorder disease, nearly eliminating nematodes (as opposed to nematode counts in the high hundreds or a thousand in adjacent fields), and helping improve trees' access to water. Initial concerns that cover crop bloom would distract bees from the primary mission have proven incorrect: the cover crop bloom comes in after the almond pollination and a little bit before the prune bloom, thus fitting in between. University of California-Davis and University of Oregon monitoring have found bees still prefer orchard flowers over cover crop bloom,

so there's no impact on orchard pollination. In the face of colony collapse, cover crops give a vital alternative food source to the bees – Vereschagin's beekeeper wishes he would plant more cover crops.

When it comes to soil health, in Glenn County, our growers are leading the way. Please follow our YouTube channel, Glenn County Resource Conservation District, as we add success stories of how our growers are working to improve their lands.

If you are interested in learning more about Soil Health or receiving information about Glenn County Resource Conservation District's (GCRCD) field days, held in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE), please contact Melina Watts via email at melina@glenncountyrcd.org or by calling the GCRCD office at 530-934-4601 x5.

WWW.GLENNCOUNTYRCD.ORG