



NEWS RELEASE

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Soil Health Partnership farmer leader earns White House award

'Champions of Change' award recognizes Americans doing extraordinary things in their communities

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Tim Smith remembers driving a Model G two-cylinder tractor to plow his family's farm in North Central Iowa. Today, still farming that same land, he is a leader in adopting advanced agricultural practices to improve soil health. Doing so protects the water that ends up in the Gulf of Mexico.

In recognition of his commitment to adopting new practices and teaching others, Smith received the [White House Champions of Change](#) award on Oct. 26 in Washington, D.C. The Soil Health Partnership and Iowa Soybean Association both nominated Smith for the award.

"American agriculture is more advanced and efficient than ever, but making deeper changes in the business of farming will enable us do even better for long-term sustainability," Smith said. "Losing precious soil is not sustainable. Farmers are becoming more aware of this and the impact it has."

Smith farms near Eagle Grove, Iowa, in the Boone River Watershed. In 2011, he signed up for a federal program that identified the watershed as a priority for reducing nitrate and phosphorous levels in the Gulf of Mexico. In 2014, he joined the newly formed [Soil Health Partnership](#), which over a five-year period will identify, test and measure farm management practices that improve soil health and benefit farmers.

The practices Smith has changed on his farm include:

- Scientific **nutrient management**, using the latest technology to help measure and optimize the application of fertilizer on his crops.
- Installing a **bioreactor** on his farm, a trench filled with a carbon source, like wood chips, which serves as a food source for microorganisms that break down nitrate in the water.

- Using **strip-till** to prepare his land for planting, a less-intensive method of tillage. By utilizing less intensive tillage on his land, beneficial fungi and bacteria can thrive, soil gas exchanges improve, water holding capacity increases and nutrient use efficiency can improve.
- Growing **cover crops** like cereal rye on 550 of his 800 acres. Cover crops help store excess nitrates that might otherwise leach into groundwater. They also help prevent erosion.

“Tim Smith truly believes in creating lasting change, and has generously used the knowledge he’s gained to teach others,” said Nicholas Goeser, director of the SHP. “He has shown hundreds if not thousands of farmers, students and others how environmental stewardship can protect the watershed, optimize yields, enhance profits and improve the soil’s overall profile for years to come.”

Smith tells other farmers that it’s not hard to change practices. He shows photos of his father using a moldboard plow years ago, saying at one time, “...we thought we couldn’t farm without a plow.”

“Change is nothing to fear,” Smith said. “Farming practices have always evolved, and will continue evolving.”

The Champions of Change award recognizes ordinary Americans doing extraordinary things in their communities. Smith was recognized with several others in the “Sustainable and Climate-Smart Agriculture” category.

About the Soil Health Partnership The Soil Health Partnership brings together diverse partner organizations including commodity groups, federal agencies, universities and environmental groups to work toward the common goal of improving soil health. Over a five-year period, the SHP will identify, test and measure farm management practices that improve soil health and benefit farmers. We believe the results of this farmer-led project will provide a platform for sharing peer-to-peer information, and lend resources to benefit agricultural sustainability and profitability. An initiative of the National Corn Growers Association, we provide the spark for greater understanding and implementation of agricultural best practices to protect resources for future generations. Visit the [website](#) for more.