

# West Polk SWCD Soil Health Incentive Program

## Definition/Purpose

- Cover crops are unharvested crops of grasses, legumes, brassicas or other broadleaf species grown primarily for erosion control, soil improvement and nutrient management.
- The practice can be implemented to support one or more of the following purposes:
  - Reduce erosion from wind and water.
  - Reduce water quality degradation by sequestering mobile soil nutrients.
  - Build soil structure and create organic matter
  - Provide habitat for soil organisms and beneficial insects
  - Suppress weed pressure and interrupt pest cycles
  - Improve soil moisture management
  - Loosen compacted soil and improve infiltration/gas exchange
  - Fix and supply nitrogen for cash crops
  - Improve spring field trafficability

## Policy

### **The purpose of this program is to:**

- Help West Polk farmers offset the cost of seeding and terminating cover crops on a trial basis.
- Demonstrate the positive effects of cover crops on soil health and erosion control.
- Help farmers gain experience about the practical application of cover crops in our area and make their findings available to guide others.
- Encourage farmers to take the next step into reduced tillage and/or regenerative agriculture
- Promote the long-term adoption of soil health practices that build soil, reduce erosion and improve the resilience of West Polk farms.

	<b>1 Year Contract</b>
<b>Payment rate per acre:</b>	<b>-<u>Single species</u>:</b> \$40.00 <b>-<u>Multiple species</u>:</b> \$55.00 (at least 3 species – grass/broadleaf mix)
<b>Additional premiums:</b>	<b>-<u>Interseeding premium</u>:</b> \$10.00/ac. <b>-<u>Demonstration plot premium</u>:</b> \$15.00/ac. <b>-<u>Research cooperation</u>:</b> \$25.00 for treatment (seeded) acres (case by case)
<b>Acreage cap:</b>	Up to 160 ac. per farm (20 ac. minimum)
<b>Reenrollment:</b>	Contracts expire after first year.
<b>Eligible acres:</b>	Preference may be given to areas with resource concerns and/or producers willing to participate in academic research or outreach/demonstration.
<b>Time of payment:</b>	Full payment will be made in the summer after successfully completing the practice.

### **Terms and Conditions:**

- To be eligible, enrolled cropland must currently be farmed and lie within the West Polk Soil & Water Conservation District.
- Only one contract will be awarded per operation.
- Any land already enrolled in a cover crop program or receiving payments is ineligible.
- Farms previously enrolled in the WPSHIP and those already using cover crops are eligible. However, applicants must either:
  - add additional species to those currently being planted
  - try different species/mixes altogether
  - experiment with earlier seeding dates and/or interseeding
  - integrate conservation tillage into cover crop regimen
- Fall strip tillage is acceptable on enrolled acres after the cover crop is seeded.
- Herbaceous wind barriers and nurse crops are not cover crops and will not be incentivized.
- Fall grazing is acceptable if it doesn't contribute to the cover crop's destruction before winter.
- **Fall termination will void the contract.**
- **Fall conventional tillage will void the contract.**
- Not every applicant is guaranteed to receive funding. Sufficient funds may not meet demand.