

Cover Crops Strengthen Soil Health in Walsh County

By Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District

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Walsh County farmers are increasingly turning to cover crops as a practical tool to protect their soils, build resilience, and enhance long-term productivity. Cover crops—crops that are grown primarily to improve soil health rather than for harvest—are showing promising results across the region, according to recent field observations and conservation initiatives. There are local producers that have seen firsthand how cover crops can work in northeast North Dakota. These producers use cover crops for extended grazing season, to help reduce input costs, and build long-term soil health.

This year's **favorable fall moisture** has created ideal conditions for cover crop establishment in much of Walsh County. Species like **cereal rye, oats, turnips, radishes, and clovers** are popular among local farmers because they establish quickly and can tolerate the region's cool autumn climate. Cover crops help keep the soil covered, living, and working all year long, it will also reduce erosion, build organic matter, improve soil structure, and provide real value to our local producers.

In addition to improving soil health, cover crops can:

- Reduce wind and water erosion
- Scavenge nutrients to prevent leaching
- Increase water infiltration and soil moisture retention
- Suppress weeds and improve seedbed conditions
- Provide grazing opportunities for livestock

Understandably, adopting cover crops isn't without its challenges. Short growing seasons, herbicide carryover, and proper termination timing require careful planning. To help farmers succeed, the Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District, in cooperation with NRCS, offers technical assistance and information on cost-share programs which can help offset establishment costs. We understand every farm is different, the key is to start small, work with your conservation partners, and find a system that fits your operation.

The Soil Conservation District encourages producers to reach out and learn more about species selection, planting methods, and management strategies. Field demonstrations, workshops, and one-on-one consultations are available to help farmers take the next step toward healthier soils and more resilient farming systems. For more information or to schedule a conservation planning visit, contact the **Walsh County Three Rivers Soil Conservation District** at **284-7363** or visit www.walshcounty1938.com.

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