Improving Soil Science Knowledge
A new generation of Extension educators

The Situation
Many experienced county agents have retired in recent years. These positions have been filled with recent college graduates with little soil science experience.

Soil health is an important area of programming interest across the United States. The North Dakota State University Soil Health Team is regarded by many land-grant institutions as a leader in research and extension outreach in this field.

Extension Response
Four day-long formal county agent soil science training workshops occurred throughout North Dakota. The morning portion of each workshop was a classroom style with topics that included salinity management, soil sampling, fertilizer management, sub-surface drainage, land judging basics, and soil survey. The afternoon portion of each training involved hands-on training of soil horizon diagnosis, proper soil sampling collection methods, saline/pH soil testing, and land judging.

Booklets were created that contain all soil related NDSU extension publications. The booklets also contained copies of presentations that agents can utilize for their programming efforts. Videos of each presentation were included in order to further educate.

Impacts
Evaluations were completed by all attendees at each training. The average score of North Dakota County agents indicated that their knowledge of soil science was 3.5 (on a scale of 1-7 with 1 having little knowledge and 7 being very knowledgeable) at the beginning of the training. Their average score improved to 5.5 following the trainings.

Feedback
“I can’t wait to have a soil pit at an upcoming workshop” – County Agent

“Liked the hands on activities! This will help me put education into real life situations” – County Agent

“I’ll have a 4-H land judging team next year” – County Agent

“Thank you for teaching me how to run Web Soil Survey” – County Agent

Public Value Statement
Educating Extension agents on soil health strengthens the technical expertise of the front line educators of the NDSU Extension Service who in turn educate current and future land stewards, farmers and ranchers.

Primary Contact
Chris Augustin
Area Extension Specialist/Soil Health
5400 Hwy. 83 S. Minot, ND 58701
701-857-7682
Chris.augustin@ndsu.edu