



COVER CROP CHAMPIONS

Cover crops are planted when cash crops aren't growing. This simple practice of keeping the soil covered with green plants throughout the year benefits soil health, farm productivity and the environment. Cover crops make farms resilient – they allow water to soak in rapidly, decreasing ponding and flooding during heavy rainfalls, and also hold that water in the soil during times of drought. They save money spent on chemical inputs by providing nutrients to future crops, suppressing weeds, and breaking pest cycles. Cover crops also keep soil from eroding and filter runoff so that nutrients and sediment stay on your land, protecting water quality for communities downstream.



National Wildlife Federation's Cover Crop Champions are leading farmers and local partners who provide farming knowledge and inspire conservation to broad audiences in their regions. NWF provides training to Champions in innovative outreach strategies based in social science and farmer decision making, as well as funding and resources to implement their outreach plans. Since 2013, the National Wildlife Federation has supported Cover Crop Champions in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Champion teams consist of at least one farmer and one outreach professional, working together to design carry out an outreach plan that targets new audiences in their area.

During the program, each champion team is responsible for reaching 150 farmers and 10 crop advisors. To measure effectiveness of the program, champions report on:

- Events (field days, farm shows)
- Speaking engagements
- Radio and TV stories and print articles
- Attendance at events



Follow us on social media!



Cover Crop Champions

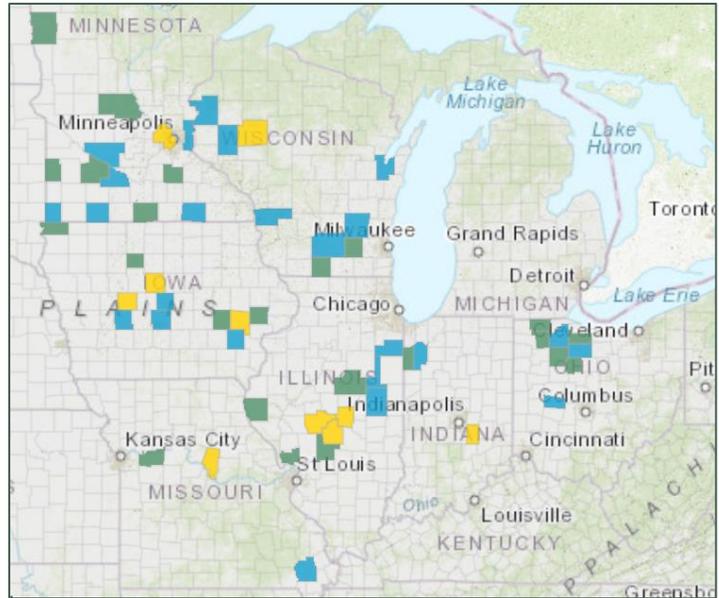


@nwf-ag

Champion Results

From 2013 – 2019, NWF supported 40 Cover Crop Champions teams. In their outreach efforts, champions wrote letters to farmers, hosted workshops and field days, and were interviewed for both radio and television programs. Other teams installed road signs, and conducted educational visits. Farmer champions value this opportunity to guide outreach efforts because it “allows [them] to be a leader in this new movement” and “to reach out to more farmers and land owners than [they have in the past].”

Based off a formula that estimates cover crop outreach success rate, % acres in cover crops, and average farm size, these teams reached over 31,600 farmers directly through their outreach, resulting in over 423,000 new acres of cover crops planted in 2013-2019.



Counties with Farmer Champions (green), Outreach Champions (gold), or both (blue) from 2013-2020.



For 2020, we reevaluated and improved our metric for estimating the impact of Cover Crop Champion outreach. Going forward, we will use a triangulation approach based off of 1) a minimum number of self-reported acres planted as a result of farmers attending Champion events, 2) social indicators of changes in perceptions and attitudes about cover crops through a standardized evaluation of farmers reached, and 3) satellite data from counties where Champions work.

For more information about the Cover Crop Champions Program please contact Jess Espenshade (espenshadej@nwf.org) or Luke Petersen (petersenl@nwf.org)

Follow us on social media!



Cover Crop Champions



@nwf-ag