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Learn Why Seeing is Believing for Soil Health and Water Retention with NY Grazinglands Trailer at Empire Farm Days



New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer Program manager Fay Benson uses a rainfall simulator and soil samples to demonstrate how healthy and unhealthy soils retain water. Visit the demonstrations at the 2016 Empire Farm Days August 9, 10 and 11. Photo: New York Grazinglands Coalition

Cortland, NY. Even before crops began shriveling and browning in the summer heat, farmers were interested in learning about the ability of their soil to retain water and prevent run-off. At four events in August, the New York Grazinglands Coalition will offer soil health demonstrations illustrating how healthy and unhealthy soil reacts to rainfall.

The New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer will be at the following events:

August 4, 5, 6: Grasstravaganza, Alfred State College, Alfred, NY

August 9, 10, 11: Empire Farm Days, Seneca Falls, NY

August 17: Cornell Vegetable Research Day, Freeville, NY

August 25: Soil Health Field Day, New Paltz, NY.

The New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer uses a six-foot high rainfall simulator to show how the same amount of rainfall impacts soil in five different pans: from bare soil to soil sowed with a crop. Pans under the soil sections capture runoff to show how well or how poorly the soil retains the water.

The solar-powered trailer with its own on-board water supply and two 12-volt pumps also includes equipment for conducting the Slake Test that compares the ability of the soil to maintain its structure and resist erosion, and active carbon testing along with penetrometers for demonstrating root pressure in soil, and a sponge comparison that measures soil pore size.

To bring this type of soil health education to New York state, the New York Grazinglands Coalition collaborated with five additional states to receive a National Conservation Innovation Grant through the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the USDA. The grant purchased a Soil Health Trailer for each state.

Fay Benson with the Cornell South Central NY Dairy Team and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County manages the New York Grazinglands Coalition Soil Health Trailer program in New York state. Benson says, "Using soil health demonstrations with soil samples is a great way for farmers and landowners to understand the concept of soil health as they see the impact of how different soil reacts to rainfall."

For details on the soil health programs, contact Fay Benson, 607-391-2660, afb3@cornell.edu, <https://www.facebook.com/nysoilhealthtrailer>.