

No·till

On The Plains

Global Change Because It's Right: For Policy, For Health, For the Soil

Written into Allan Savory's message of hope, was a message of change and urgency.

As a world renowned expert on holistic management Savory spoke to the 700-plus attendee crowd at this year's No-till on the Plains Winter Conference. His name drew in the crowd that calls itself dedicated to rejuvenating the soil. Savory told the crowd how a commitment to soil health would mean a complete change in management, institution and ecological practices.

With 94-percent of the globe engaged in agriculture, ranging from crop production to raising fish, Savory says people should quickly realize there cannot be cities, orchestras, armies or universities without ag.

“The fate of civilizations follows the fate of agriculture.”

Savory says the world problems of increasing droughts, floods, nutritional health, mega fires, immigration, dwindling rural communities, bankruptcies, suicides, aging farming and infrastructure all culminate with global desertification and climate change. Soil destruction itself is happening at an alarming rate and Savory calls ag an extractive industry, producing 75 billion tons of eroding soil a year. Savory encouraged No-till on the Plains attendees to truly understand the concepts of sustainable, regenerative and permaculture to avoid repeating the fate of civilizations throughout history.

It is the concept of holistic management, which Savory says is not a cropping practice but a change from people in management. Livestock, he says, can be managed to be the answer to desertification and to eliminate the use of fossil fuels.

“Even a child can know that no resource can cause a problem,” Savory says. “It is the management of live-

stock that chooses to do the things we've done for thousands of years, to put millions of animals in factory settings feeding them grain. People who currently manage fossil fuels but burn them at a rapid rate. If we do change our management at the farm and policy level we



can offer more for future generations than was ever possible in history of mankind.”

Everything we manage, Savory says, is a complex

system. And as the real world functions holistically that too is a complex system of management. Having a reason to take action is what motivates people and he explains the current civilization reacts when they are trying to improve their own lives by meeting a need or a desire. In the case of No-till on the Plains, attendees want to improve the soil and/or their farm operation. The second set of actions most people take, Savory adds, is when people must address a problem, present or perceived.

“The export of U.S. soil due to erosion outweighs all grain and exports.”

Being involved in a political party in his home country of South Africa then ultimately a civil war, Savory says he came to understand that government addresses problems through policies. He witnessed then that people truly did not manage any differently compared to Roman times or earlier in history. Savory would call the current management of our civilization as reductionist. And, he says, it is universal.

Continued on page 3

Emmons Healing Soils and Souls

For Jimmy and Ginger Emmons, their garden is more than just vegetables.

He and his wife, Ginger, from Leedey, Okla. have made a career of farming and ranching. They used to grow conventional crops, buy the biggest tillage equipment and worry about what the neighbors thought. Today, however, the couple uses soil health systems exclusively and immerse their daily lives in growing education of soil health outside of their local safe zone.

The story of the Emmons' commitment to soil health goes beyond the fields. Last year, he and Ginger moved their love of soil to tending a garden.

The local food bank in Vici, OK was taking care of many families but could not give its patrons fresh foods. Emmons knew the value of growing locally and using the opportunity to provide fresh food as an education on just how fresh food can be from healthy soil.

Emmons told the audience, "with help from various partners we came up with one of the best projects I've ever been involved in. Introducing vegetables, greens, melons and other fruit producing plants into what we call a chaos garden. The goal was to donate all the food to the regional food bank that provides fresh local

raised vegetables with no synthetic fertilizers or chemicals. The produce is all naturally grown from the biology. Healthy soil, healthy food, healthy bodies."

The Emmons dedicated three acres to planting 20 species of vegetables, cover crops and vine crops. At harvest time, local helpers picked the vegetables by hand and packed Emmons' Ford F-150 cab from back to front.

"Kids from our 4-H and FFA programs came out to glean the garden and they picked 2,750 pounds of vegetables," Emmons says. "We folded the seats down in the pickup and put crates side by side on the floor, then stacked them three high. We are just enjoying life as we go."

Seeing the fruits the their labor would have been enough for these humble servants. Unabashed by the emotion in his voice, Emmons recounted a phone call he received from an elderly woman after one of the food bank deliveries.

"Mr. Emmons, I had fresh vegetables today. I haven't had fresh okra and squash in 15 years. I'm shut in, I'm in a wheelchair. Thank-you."



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Savory - Continued from page 1

“What can we call such management other than reductionist, if we move from complexity and go to simplicity that is reductionist management, just as it is today is exactly the same in all cultures in all ages,” Savory says. “Once you are aware of this, you can recognize unintended consequences everywhere. The war on drugs increased violence. The war on weeds doesn’t kill weeds but spreads chemical and spends billions of dollars.”

Savory also stated that dead, eroding soil is the greatest export every year from U.S. ag, outweighing all grain and exports. In fact, he says the soil conservation service estimates the amount of soil that leaves the U.S. every day is a trainload equaling 116 miles long. “No other export we have matches that,” he says.

Savory’s comments conclude that political health regarding soil is as important as rejuvenating the soil itself. For No-till on the Plains attendees Savory’s message of hope included this theory and others, which will be discussed in future newsletters.



Ginger and Jimmy Emmons pictured next to some of the fresh food grown from their Farm to Food Bank project. Partners for this project include the United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, and Green Cover Seed.

Emmons says farmers and consumers must remember they can do anything in a system that is alive, “Where there is life, there is hope.” No-till on the Plains, he says, has a concept of sharing soil health with the world and farmers should use it to also teach people in their area how they can do better.

Emmons’ garden is a testimony to soil health. And with the right level of commitment, farmers, ranchers and consumers can make it their testimony too.

View both 2018 Winter Conference General Session videos on the website at www.Notill.org. Watch for your next No-till On The Plains Newsletter for more inspiration from Allan Savory, Jimmy Emmons and other No-till On The Plains members and speakers!

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Upcoming Events

Spring Field Days

May 2nd - Windom, KS & May 8th - Clay Center, KS

Visit www.Notill.org for details about these field days examining soil health practices in soybean fields. Supported by a grant from the Kansas Soybean Commission.



SAVE THE DATE!
WICHITA, KS

Winter Conference - January 29-30, 2019

Beginners Workshop - January 28, 2019

AIM Symposium - January 31, 2019



New Electronic Newsletter for NTOP

No-till on the Plains welcomes you to its new, internal newsletter format. We hope you enjoy the content. If you are missing the Dryland No-tiller newsletter you can sign up for it directly at www.notillfarmer.com

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Contact No-till On The Plains:

Steve Swaffar

P.O. Box 81

Berryton, KS 66409

Call: 785-210-4549

Email: swaffar@notill.org

