

State Legislation on Soil Health

Proposal to update the SOIL CONSERVATION section (TITLE 22a) of the Connecticut General Statutes to include Soil Health.

The Need:

We seek to update the Soil Conservation section of the CT General Statutes (Title 22a) to include soil health. Soil Conservation first became law in Connecticut in the 1940's, following the dust bowl era, with a focus on soil erosion. We now understand that the health of Connecticut's soils goes far beyond controlling erosion. Healthy soils are an important asset to Connecticut's farmers, forest landowners, municipalities and residents for improved food security and equity, water quality and quantity, and are an important instrument in climate change mitigation and resilience. **Connecticut State Statute should be brought up to date regarding the importance of healthy soils and the ecosystem services they provide.** This update will ensure that ongoing work on soil health continues and is in place to better leverage federal dollars.



“Soil health” means the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans.

The proposal:

- Simply an update of the Soil Conservation section of the CT General Statutes to include soil health. It does not create any new programs.
- Reflects in state statute, the scientific understanding that Soil Conservation is founded in protecting and advancing soil health, with soil erosion being only one component of protecting the ecosystem services provided by soils.
- Recognizes that soil health and watershed health are intrinsically linked and that soils across all landscapes are important. Soil health is important to protect our water resources and food production systems. It increases food production and food security. It filters water of pollutants and provides for better infiltration, increasing drought resiliency and flood storage. It reduces loss of soil from erosion and the need for pesticides, fertilizers, and irrigation.
- Is a first step in implementing the GC3 Phase I Report – Action Item #44. Soil health is important to climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency and achieving Connecticut's GC3 goals.
- Supports Connecticut's Environmental Justice goals. Healthy soils across the landscape reduces utility costs of producing clean drinking water and protects residential wells. It also increases food production and maintains sustainability of our farms, increasing food security and access to local foods.
- Confirms that Connecticut understands the importance of soil health for food security, watershed health, and climate resiliency. This is important for leveraging technical assistance and funding from federal agencies, including USDA, for farmers, landowners, and local governments.