

NW DIRECT SEED CONFERENCES EXPAND TECHNOLOGY ACCESS

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Direct seed cropping systems can effectively control PNW cropland soil erosion and associated water and air quality problems, and improve soil quality and productivity, while potentially increasing grower profitability and competitiveness. However, grower access to the latest technologies and experiences is critical to the successful development of these new farming systems. From 1977 through 1997, PNW Conservation Tillage Conferences and STEEP Annual Reviews of conservation farming research helped facilitate technology access, but audiences typically were only about 150-300. A new approach was needed to provide more PNW growers and Ag advisers with first-hand access to new management technologies and experiences.

New Conference Series – The first Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference was initiated in Pasco, WA, in 1998 – with a remarkable attendance of just over 900 growers and ag support personnel. It was organized through the PNW STEEP program in conjunction with a number of ag support companies and organizations. STEEP (Solutions To Environmental and Economic Problems) is a research and education program on direct seed / conservation tillage systems through WSU, OSU, UI and USDA-ARS. The five annual conferences from 1998 through 2002 had an average annual attendance of over 820 (ranging from 620 to 980). Over 99% of the 1998-2002 conference evaluation respondents felt that the conferences would help increase the success and adaptation of direct seed systems by Northwest growers.

New Conference Innovations – A number of new, innovative features and organizational strategies dramatically improved the potential to attract much larger grower audiences and improve technology access. These have included:

- Inviting international and out-of-state national speakers;
- Increasing the number of Northwest grower speakers from 2-3 to 6-16;
- Publishing in-depth Proceedings distributed at the Conferences;
- Producing videos of the conferences and making them available for loan / sale;
- Involving more than 12 agricultural companies and groups as financial co-sponsors to cover additional costs of invited speakers, proceedings, videos and expanded promotion (no financial co-sponsors in previous conferences);
- Adding a new commercial trade show on direct seed systems (1999, 2000, 2003) and combining with an existing trade show—the Spokane Ag Expo (2001, 2002);
- Creating a conference Web site (<http://pnwsteep.wsu.edu/directseed>) for increased publicity and later access to the Proceedings, videos and other resources;
- Involving 14 PNW grower and conservation district associations, and other groups as cooperators in helping develop and promote the conferences—the PNW Direct Seed Association became a co-organizer beginning in 2001; and
- Utilizing extensive direct mailing of conference brochures through grower organization mailing lists, e-mail announcements through those grower and industry groups, and expanded use of paid ag media advertisements

Conference Highlights

The 1998 Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference in Pasco, WA featured 48 speakers including: 16 growers from the PNW, Australia, and Canada; 11 ag industry representatives; and 13 researchers from the PNW, South Dakota and Indiana.

The 1999 Conference and (New) Trade Show in Spokane, WA, featured 37 speakers, including 14 researchers and 7 industry representatives and 16 growers from across the Pacific Northwest, Northern Great Plains, Canada, Argentina, and Brazil. On-line registration for conference co-sponsorships, conference pre-registration and poster exhibition registration was initiated. The commercial Direct Seed Trade Show was added at the request of growers.

The 2000 Conference and Trade Show in Pendleton, OR, featured 26 speakers including researchers, industry and agency representatives, and growers from across the Pacific Northwest, Canada and Australia.

The 2001 Conference in Spokane took another step to further expand NW grower participation. It was held in conjunction with the Spokane Ag Expo—the largest Inland Northwest ag show with an audience of over 6,000—and the PNW Farm Forum and seminar series, with conference registration including entrance into Ag Expo and PNW Farm Forum. The new PNW Direct Seed Association was also involved as a co-organizer beginning with this conference. The program featured 27 speakers including 14 growers from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, North Dakota, Chile, Germany, and New South Wales, Australia, as well as researchers and Ag industry representatives from the Pacific Northwest, Canada and Colorado.

The 2002 Conference in Spokane, WA, was again held in conjunction with Spokane Ag Expo and PNW Farm Forum, and conference registration included entrance into these two events. The program featured 24 speakers, including 10 growers, from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

2003 NW Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference Plans

The Sixth Northwest Direct Seed Cropping Systems Conference and Trade Show is scheduled for January 8-10, 2003, at the West Coast Hotel (formerly Doubletree), in Pasco, WA. The conference is again being organized by the PNW STEEP research and education program, and the PNW Direct Seed Association, with a number of ag support companies as co-sponsors, and developed in cooperation with about 14 other PNW grower and ag support organizations.

The program will feature about 26 growers, researchers and ag industry representatives from Idaho, Oregon, Washington, South Dakota, New Zealand and Canada. Preliminary program topics include: • NW grower experiences with direct seed systems across precipitation zones; • Pros and cons of lower versus higher disturbance direct seed systems; • Economic strategies for managing risk in the transition to direct seed systems; • Effects of residue management strategies on direct seed drill performance; • “Stacked rotations” and other strategies for minimizing weed and disease problems in direct seeding; • Weed management strategies for Clearfield wheat systems across PNW precipitation zones; • Evaluation of glyphosate formulations for burndown in direct seed systems; • Alternatives to glyphosate as part of a resistance management strategy in direct seed systems; and • New innovations in direct seed equipment designs.

The conference Web site (<http://pnwsteeep.wsu.edu/directseed>) will provide continued updates on the conference program, hotel reservations, registration and all other conference topics. You can also contact the Conference Office at 509-547-5538 or Fax 509-547-5563.