

Organizing an Effective Conservation Field Day

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Our plan for this meeting:

- Slides (on handout), then discussion
- Why do you want to organize a field day?
- Your reaction today:
 - New Employee: panic
 - Experienced Employee: snooze



Topics

- Why a field day?
- How does this fit with the District goals?
- What are you trying to achieve?
- Is a field day the best option?
 - Audience
 - Cost
 - Benefit
- Are other 'events' an option?



Benefits of Field days

- Visibility
- Familiar format
- Addresses learning methods:
 - See, hear, touch, do
- Cooperators (farmer, industry, agencies)
- Social aspects

Dis-advantages of field days

- Cooperators (farmer, industry, agencies)
- Social aspects
- Time and effort to organize
- Weather dependency
- Cost
- Large crowd
- Small crowd

Alternatives to Field days

- One-on-one
- Group farm visits
- Small tours
- Twilight tours
- Scheduled breakfasts/lunches
- Webinars
- Media? Can a newspaper article do as much good?

Field day organization

- Goal of the field day
- Format
- Speakers
- Location
- Logistics: time tables, who does what and when
- The nitty gritty (porta potties, meal, water, shade, parking, plot signs, directions, etc, etc...)
- Advertising, sponsorships,
- Contingencies (cancel/change, weather, etc)

Example organization

- Goal: Educate farmers on use of cover crops
- Format: indoor lecture, outdoor cover crop plot tour, meal (sponsored by Coop)
- Speakers:
 - CCSI/NRCS with intro to cover crops
 - Seed Industry rep with details
 - Farmer who used cover crops
- Location: Coop shop and plot next to it
- Free article in local paper, mail 300 cards, make 35 phone calls



Examples of what will go wrong

- Well organized event, but
 - few attendants
 - wrong crowd
- Rain takes out parking
- Glitzy event, no content
- Speaker goes waaay long, messes up schedule
- Unruly loud crowd in the back

Examples of what will go wrong

- Nobody can hear speaker
 - PA systems



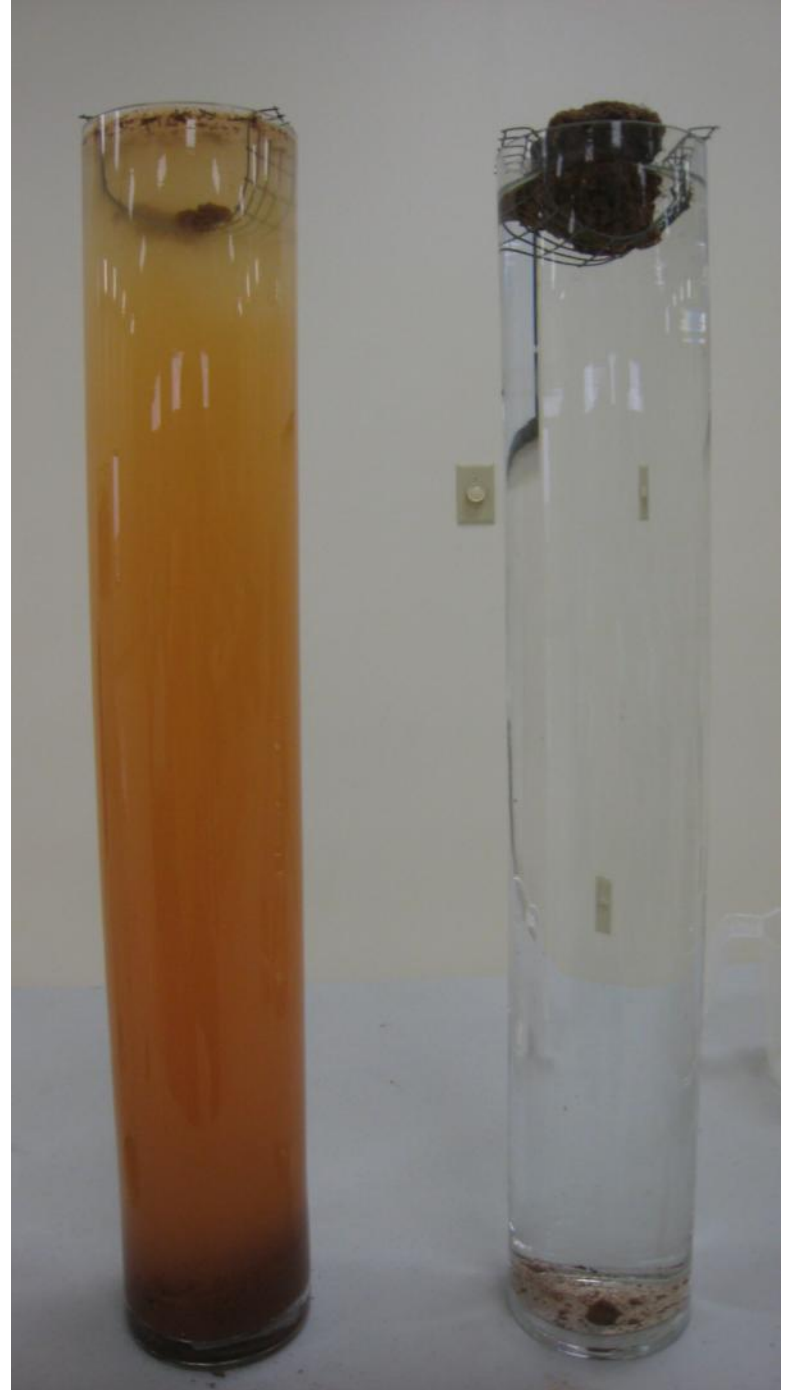
Examples of what will go wrong

- Nobody can hear speaker
 - PA systems
 - Heating systems, wind
- Nobody can see presentation (board)
 - Size of presentation materials: 6 ft rule
 - Size of attendee groups: split?
 - Light (sun)
- Discomfort (hot, cold, wind)

Examples of great events

(There were many more, no disrespect meant)

- Newton-Jasper Co SWCD Soil Quality field day
- Why was this good?
 - Well defined topic
 - Details taken care off
 - Indoor-outdoor, PA, fans, road watered
 - Partnering (multi-county, bussineses, agencies)
 - Great handouts
 - Influential farmers in attendance
 - Many questions after event
 - Follow-up phone calls/requests for more information



Don'ts

- Little effort to reach target audience
- Last minute managing
- No contingency (main speaker does not show, lunch is late)
- Are you there to make coffee or to educate?
 - opportunity for you!
- Assess need for a field day
 - “we do this every year” is not a need
 - “need to fulfill grant requirement” is not either

Tips (Do's)

- Use a 'play-book' for details
- Aggressively target specific audience
 - What does field day offer?
 - Why should people be there?
 - Is it worth their time?
 - What will they learn?
 - Personal invitations vs. media
- Delegate tasks, but keep track:
 - Many hands make light work, but.....
 - Need one 'leader', many do-ers

Tips (Do's)

- Where can participants get additional info?
- Consider hand-outs, when to hand them out.
- PowerPoint handouts not always useful

Tips (Do's)

- How do you measure success?
- Output vs. Impact
- Get feedback (evaluation survey?)
- Debriefing, what worked / what did not

- Reputation of success saves a lot of work
- Building reputation takes a lot of work

Questions

- Where do you find speakers?
- Do speakers need help (slides etc)?
- Who do you use?
 - Farmers
 - Industry
 - Agency
 - University
 -
- What to pay speakers!!

Questions

- Offer credits (PARP, CEU)?
- How to recognize sponsors
 - Let them speak? Is it a sales pitch?
- Liability insurance
- Weather insurance
- EMT/Police presence

- Who is willing to share playbook?

Best Practices for Field Days: A Program Planning Guidebook and CD for Organizers, Presenters, Teachers and Volunteers (BPFDD)

University of Minnesota, 2005

Book and CD

\$19.95

<https://shop-secure.extension.umn.edu/>



Your turn!

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