News Column

Stacy Campbell

Cottonwood Extension District, Hays

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Free online book on soil and water conservation resources now available

An open textbook, *Soil and Water Conservation: An Annotated Bibliography*, was recently published by New Prairie Press, Kansas State University's open access digital press. The book highlights credible, free, and openly available online content related to soil and water conservation, including extension bulletins, government reports, technical bulletins, and more.

The book was edited by Colby Moorberg, an assistant professor of soil science in the Department of Agronomy at Kansas State University. The book was authored in a collaborative effort, led by Moorberg, that included 24 other experts and practitioners in soil and water conservation. Contributors also included students who were enrolled in AGRON 635 – Soil and Water Conservation in 2018 and 2019, a class taught by Moorberg. Funding for the book was provided by the K-State Open and Alternative Textbook Initiative.

What is an annotated bibliography?

Simply put, a bibliography is a list of cited resources that all pertain to a specific subject. An annotated bibliography goes a step further and provides a brief descriptive summary of each citation.

Soil and Water Conservation: An Annotated Bibliography provides full citations and links to websites where resources can be accessed. Each citation is followed by an annotation that summarizes the resource and provides context. For example, an annotated citation for using cover crops as a conservation practice on farmland. Has an online link to Managing Cover Crops Profitably, 3rd Edition. College Park MD-SARE Program. https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/BooksManaging-Cover-Crops-Profitably-3rd-Edition/Text-Version

This book produced by SARE provides in-depth information for nearly all aspects of cover crops as a conservation practice. Readers can navigate to an online version of each chapter in the book using the links on the left side of the screen. A printable PDF version of the book is also available. This book includes chapters on cover crop selection, rotations, soil fertility, pests, and more. Producer profiles are used throughout the book to provide real world scenarios and case studies for implementing cover crop in a production system. The book was designed to be a thorough resource, but not all encompassing, as was acknowledged in the foreword of the book.

The book is divided into four parts:

I. **History and fundamentals**

a. Introduction
b. Key concepts in soil science
c. Soil erosion processes

II. **Conservation practices**
a. Farmland
b. Shorelines, streams, and wetlands
c. Forest, range, and wildlands
d. Construction sites and disturbed areas
e. Rehabilitation of problem soils
f. Water quality and quantity conservation

III. **Conservation implementation**
a. Conservation agencies
b. Conservation polices

IV. **Careers**
a. Soil and Water Conservation

This type of resource has much potential for agriculture, which has few open textbooks available to date, yet has a wealth of free, credible, and accessible technical resources such as university extension bulletins from Land Grant Institutions like K-State and government reports from conservation agencies like the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

While the goal was to create a free textbook option for the AGRON 635 course, the potential audience extends beyond the college classroom. The resources in this book are summarized for a general audience and are easy to read. Extension agents and agricultural educators could enhance their soil and water conservation programs using this comprehensive book to locate credible and up-to-date information.

Soil and Water Conservation: An Annotated Bibliography can be downloaded from the New Prairie Press website, https://newprairiepress.org/ebooks/30/. It is available as a PDF, a web book, and e-book formats for Kindles and other electronic readers.

Information provided by Colby Moorberg, Assistant Professor of Soil Science.
moorberg@ksu.edu