COLORADO CONSERVATION TILLAGE ASSOCIATION

JOURNAL

www.HighPlainsNoTill.com www.farmsproject.org

Principles over Practice

We're all searching for the magic bullet – the perfect workout, diet program, daily routine, financial wizardry, or latest gadget promised to make us completely healthy, calm, productive, and worry-free. We fall into this trap as ag producers – the latest bio-natural-composted-micronutrient-liquid starter, science-fiction inspired technology, or just recently discovered miracle crop with an over-hyped market opportunity is the key to our success.

We sometimes fall into ideological trap of labels – if I want to be a Regenerative, No-Till, Organic, (insert your own here) Farmer, what checklist do I have to follow to qualify? What if I break the rules?

This is why the distinction between principles and practices is foundational to our role as stewards of the land. The soil health principles promoted by the USDA-NRCS - minimize disturbance, maximize diversity, soil cover, and living roots – are particularly brilliant, because these can be applied anywhere. That is the key to a Principle – it can be broadly applied to anyone, anywhere. Practices, on the other hand, are often better suited to local needs and circumstances.

Practices can be thought of as the 'tools' in our toolbox. Each tool has its own function and best uses, and a Principles-first mindset can give us the wisdom to know when to use the right tool for the right job.

A soil-health principles mindset has been very helpful and free to my own farm as I continue to work toward a more regenerative system. The principles help direct and evaluate practices, without limiting my options.

For example, windmill grass is a challenge on some of our acres. It is largely herbicide resistant and incredibly robust. This year, we used a chisel to break the sod-bound areas, vertical-tilled to break up the sod clumps, and immediately planted oats. There was physical disturbance, but it was immediately corrected with a cover crop.

Our goal isn't a perfect checklist of practices that qualify us as a card-carrying member of the Regenerative/No-Till/Organic/(insert your own) Farmer Club. Instead, we seek an agriculture system that builds and maintains healthy soils, healthy families, and healthy communities.

Please consider attending the High Plains No-Till Conference in Burlington, CO on February 3-4, 2026. We have a great lineup of keynote speakers – John Kempf, Erin Martin, and Don Day – as well as breakout sessions and a trade show, where you can learn from the experience and knowledge of others in the High Plains region. It is our hope that the conference not only provides you with great 'tools' for your toolbox, but also helps solidify the principles of soil health for your farm, your family, and community.

- Joel Grosbach, CCTA President

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2026 Speaker Preview

Don't miss these speakers at the 2026 High Plains No-Till Conference, and stay tuned for session details in the next CCTA Journal!

Featured Keynotes

John Kempf

Erin Martin

Don Day Jr.

Breakout Speakers

John Kempf
Patrick Fabian
Roger & Ryan Heier
Nick Easterly
Marlon Winger
Al Toops
Michael Bourke
Brian Brhel
Duke Webb
Colby Stegman
Rob Shortell
Vance McCoy
Mike Zuzolo

Jay Young
Miles Sorel
Tyler Johnson
Joel Grosbach
Jeff Corle
Green Cover
Colorado Corn
CSU
Farm Credit of
Southern Colo.
Elevate Ag
Eastern Colorado
Grasslands Coalition

CCTA welcomes new board members

Jakin Berns

Jakin Berns is the Sales Manager at Green Cover. With over a decade of experience in the cover crop industry, Jakin has worked closely with producers across the country to improve soil health, increase profitability, and promote regenerative farming practices. Jakin is passionate about helping people regenerate, steward, and share God's creation for future generations.

David Dryden

David currently operates 1,200 acres of sharecropped and rented crop ground near Stockton, KS. The operation has been 100% no-till since 1993 with a primary rotation of wheat-milo-soybean. Around 2012 they began to integrate cover crops into the system to rebuild soil health and reduce input costs. In the past seven years they have been integrating a very small herd of cattle to aid soil biology. David is currently focusing on growing roots year-round using relay cropping/intercropping of covers and alternative crops and planting green, as well as working on nutrient balance/management.

Paul Flanders

Paul runs a composting business focused on recycling organic materials into high-quality compost that supports healthy soils and sustainable agriculture. Alongside this, he's currently transitioning their hay farm to a grazing-based system that incorporates cover crops. This shift aims to improve soil health, increase biodiversity, and build long-term resilience in their farming operation while reducing inputs and enhancing carbon sequestration.

Peyton Ward

Peyton Ward was raised on a farm in Hereford, TX, where he developed a strong work ethic alongside his father and grandfather. A graduate of Texas Tech University, he spent several years in the forage seed industry before beginning his career in conservation. Peyton currently represents Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah for Vence, a Merck Animal Health company, where he collaborates with ranchers to implement advanced technologies that enhance soil health and livestock performance. Peyton joined the CCTA Board of Directors in 2025 and resides in Boulder, CO.

Regenerative ag co-op launches in eastern Colorado

Rootward, a new regenerative agriculture cooperative, is launching in eastern Colorado to help farmers and ranchers improve profitability while prioritizing land stewardship.

Founder Zach Brammer grew up in Sterling, Colorado, where he worked on his family's farm and ranch. After seeing the financial pressures producers face firsthand, he founded a national renewable energy company that partnered with farmers and ranchers across the country to develop solar projects on their land and establish long-term income streams. Through that work and his roots in Colorado agriculture, Brammer witnessed the challenges that producers face related to financial stability and transitioning to regenerative practices. Determined to change that system, he left the renewable energy industry to launch Rootward.

"It's really about how we can make producers more profitable and give them more control," said Brammer. "And how we start building a system that actually puts farmers and ranchers first."

Rootward intends to utilize multi-year contracts with premium, fixed prices for crops and livestock to provide members with stable income and protection from market swings. The co-op will own and operate its own processing facilities and sell directly to consumers, schools, and restaurants, ensuring producers keep a greater share of the food dollar while supporting the long-term adoption of regenerative practices.

As owners, producers will also earn equity in the cooperative with sales, giving them a stake in its profits and a voice in the decisions that will shape Rootward's future.

The new cooperative also aims to develop transparent stewardship standards in collaboration with its members that reflect the realities of local farms and ranches. This will eliminate the need for expensive, cumbersome certification by third parties while ensuring that customers know their food was produced with integrity, responsibility, and care for the land.

Rootward is currently seeking new members across eastern Colorado and the surrounding areas to join the conversation and help shape the cooperative's future. Interested farmers and ranchers can contact the Rootward team at (970) 425-3073 (call or text) or info@rootward.com. Additional information is also available online at www.rootward.com.

STAR® SEED INC.

$1,000 CCTA Scholarship Application

Directions: Please complete this application completely and accurately. Include all the required items listed below, and submit by **December 1st.** Application is also available at www.HighPlainsNoTill.com. Scholarships may be submitted in electronic format via email to coordinator@highplainsnotill.com or by postal hard copy. No preference will be given to either format. Scholarship winners will be contacted mid-January. Winners will be invited to the CCTA conference in February to be recognized. There is no obligation to attend, but it is highly encouraged.

Colorado Conservation Tillage Association Agricultural Scholarship Qualifications

- Students who will attend a higher institution of learning full-time in Spring or Fall 2026 OR a full-time student enrolled in a vocational (trade) school program in Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas or Wyoming.
- Majoring/training in Agriculture (equine and animal science excluded), Ag business, Horticulture or Agronomy.
- Must be a Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas or Wyoming resident.
- Minimum GPA of 2.7

Application

Name: _____

Home or Permanent Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home Phone:_____ School Phone: _____

Name and address of hometown newspaper: _____

_____

Semester for scholarship application (please select one): ____Spring 2026 ____Fall 2026

Name of Higher Institute of Learning: _____

Student Number: _____

Agriculture Scholarship or Financial Aid Department Mailing Address: _____

_____

Agriculture Major/Field of Training: _____

Required Attachments

- List of school extracurricular activities and involvement.
- List of out-of-school agriculture and leadership related activities and involvement.
- List of honors and awards.
- Official and most current transcript.
- One-page essay explaining your interest in agriculture, knowledge of conservation tillage practices, future goals.
- One letter of recommendation.
- Headshot photo.

Release of Scholarship Information

I hereby authorize the release of the contents of this application and information concerning my academic standing while attending the higher institution, with an Agriculture Department, listed on this application to the donor or official representative of any award I may receive and/or the news media.

Signature of Applicant:_____ Date:_____

Printed Name: _____

Send completed application to: coordinator@HighPlainsNoTill.com or
Mail to: CCTA, 23929 County Road 16, Kit Carson, CO 80825

2026 High Plains No-Till Conference Sponsor Registration

Company:_____

Registering Person Name: _____

Company Mailing Address: _____City _____ State ___ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax (_____) _____

Local Contact Person (if different from above): _____

Local Contact Person Phone: _____

Local Contact Person Email: _____

Local Contact Person Mailing Address: _____

Company Website:_____

Please check one:

____ Conference Sponsor - $300 (no booth)
____ Bronze Booth Sponsor - $600
____ Silver Booth Sponsor - $1,000
____ Gold Booth Sponsor - $2,000
____ Platinum Booth Sponsor - $4,000
____ Corporate Platinum Sponsor (Contact for details)

Additional Opportunities:

____ Outdoor Equipment Display - $250
____ ~~Sponsored Breakout Session - $500~~ **SOLD OUT**
____ Conference Attendee Packet Insert - $80

Total: _____

Mail completed form and payment to: CCTA, 23929 County Road 16, Kit Carson, CO 80825.

Sponsorship Levels

	Conference $300	Bronze $600	Silver $1,000	Gold $2,000	Platinum** $4,000
Listed on Website	X	X	X	X	X
Complimentary Registrations	1	2	2	3	4
Booth Space		8' x 8'	8' x 8'	8' x 16'	8' x 16'
Program Ad*	1/8 page (color)		1/4 page (color)	1/2 page (color)	Full page (color)
Journal Ad			1/8 pg. x 1 issue	1/8 pg. x 3 issues	1/4 pg. x 3 issues
Attendee Packet Insert*			X	X	X
Conduct a Breakout Session*					X
Outdoor Equipment Space*					X

2026 Attendee Registration

February 3-4, 2026

Registration fee is the same for attending one or both days (except students).
Registrations are non-refundable and non-transferable.

Early Bird Registration..... $150
Registration after 1/15..... $210
Students (per day)..... $ 35

Register online at:
www.HighPlainsNoTill.com

Name of Attendee: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
☐ Yes, please send me text updates about the event. (If not checked, updates will be emailed.)

Check one: __ First-time attendee ___ Attended conference previously
Check one: __ Attendee -- $150 ($210 after Jan. 15)
__ Student ($35.00 per day) Attending: ___ Tues ___ Wed

Additional Attendee: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____
☐ Yes, please send me text updates about the event. (If not checked, updates will be emailed.)

Check one: __ First-time attendee ___ Attended conference previously
Check one: __ Attendee -- $150 ($210 after Jan. 15)
__ Student ($35.00 per day) Attending: ___ Tues ___ Wed

Please make check out to CCTA and mail with registration to:
CCTA
23929 County Road 16
Kit Carson, CO 80825

Or sign up online by scanning this QR code!

23929 County Road 16, Kit Carson, CO 80825

2025 Fall Issue

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HIWASSEE PRODUCTS

BONUS!

Interested in a deep dive? Join a full-day pre-conference workshop with John Kempf on Feb. 2nd to discuss the "Principles of Regenerative Nutrition Management."

Details and registration for the workshop are available on the CCTA website at: www.highplainsnotill.com.

CCTA is a nonprofit organization serving the High Plains Region. It is a resource of experienced farmers working with industry, University, and agricultural agency personnel with a goal to spread research and on-farm gained information about conservation farming practices.