

Testimony on SB2342, Soil Health

February 4, 2021

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

When I was first asked about this bill my reaction was that there is no downside to bringing up the subject of soil health, what can be done to promote soil health and give this subject more attention. This bill does that and will hopefully result in getting the many stakeholders together to discuss soil health and find ways to accomplish more across the state.

The bill can be viewed as two separate halves. The first 9 pages take existing law and add the terms "restoration, and soil health" to current sections that deal with "soil conservation". My reading of these changes to existing law seem to be acceptable and not a problem for most individuals who use or refer to these sections.

The pages that follow after page nine create a new chapter and assign some new responsibilities to the state such as setting up a special fund in the Office of the ND State Treasurer, and bringing the ND Agriculture Commissioner in to this subject in a variety of new ways. I have gone through these new sections and have many questions on how this will work in terms of clear lines of responsibility, who is in charge and accountable for the money that may be needed to get the work done. It is my understanding that there are amendments coming that may clear up some of my questions, so I look forward to seeing those.

It is my hope that this bill on soil health will result in getting more done by helping identify the problem, elevating this subject to a higher priority within the legislature, potentially leading to higher state funding, increasing awareness and communication across state agencies, and bringing stakeholders together to see if this bill can be used as a vehicle to advance the cause of soil health across the state.

Sincerely,

Jim Dotzenrod

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