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## **Field day will explore cover crops in corn and soybeans – April 6, near Leighton**

**LEIGHTON, Iowa** — Practical Farmers of Iowa and farmer Ward Van Dyke – in partnership with Mahaska County Soil and Water Conservation District and Muchakinock Creek Watershed Project – will host a cover crop field day on Thursday, April 6, from noon to 3 p.m., at three locations in the Leighton area.

Ward raises primarily corn and soybeans on about 2,000 acres, practicing no-till and reduced tillage and incorporating cover crops.

The event – “Cover Crops for Corn and Soybeans” – is free to attend and will start with lunch at noon, supplied by Ward, at the Leighton town hall (306 Otley St., Leighton). **Please RSVP for the meal** to Alisha Bower, [alisha@practicalfarmers.org](mailto:alisha@practicalfarmers.org) or (515) 232-5661, by Monday, April 3.

The event is part of Practical Farmers’ 2017 spring cover crop “caravan” field day series, which features events at locations across Iowa exploring cover crop issues in grazing and row crop systems.

After lunch, guests will caravan together to the second stop – one of Ward’s fields, located at 1233 205<sup>th</sup> St. (about 4 miles northwest of the Leighton town hall). Guests will get to see a cereal rye cover crop that Ward planted last fall in a fertilizer application and incorporated with vertical tillage; and Ward will share his experience with different ways of planting cover crops, and how cover crops have affected water quality, soil loss, and phosphorus and potassium loads on his farm.

Steve Berger, who farms near Wellman, will also speak at this stop about how to scout cover crop fields to assess the health and success of the stand, and attendees will get to participate in a scouting activity.

Ward says he has learned by attending field days hosted by other farmers, and wants to extend the same opportunity. “I hope others can learn from my successes and my mistakes, and that I can learn from the other presenters. Where there’s a will, there’s a way. How do we change management to make these [practices] work?”

From there, the group will caravan to the third stop – a field operated by farmer Arvin Vander Wilt, located between Leighton and Pella (1938 Bayard Ave., about 4.5 miles from Ward’s field). Arvin is a partner with Mahaska Soil and Water Conservation District and has an oat-rye cover crop mix planted on his crop fields that attendees will get to view. Jason Steele, area resource soil scientist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, will use a rainfall simulator to show how soil cover and roots in the ground affect soil properties.

**Directions:** From IA Hwy 169, turn south on Eaton Avenue towards Leighton and go 1.8 miles. Turn right on Perry Street, go two blocks to the T-intersection at Otley Street. The Leighton town hall is a white metal building north of Leighton Lumber.

Practical Farmers of Iowa’s 2017 spring cover crop field days are supported by Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship; Iowa State University Extension; Land Stewardship Project; Natural Resources Conservation Service; Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota; The Pasture Project; and Unilever.

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