

A Silver Creek Reflection

Interseeding corn for a jumpstart on establishing cover crops

The Background

Silver Creek growers and land owners are working to improve their operations, while improving soil health and runoff water quality. Maintaining cover on fields over winter is important for keeping soil and nutrients on the fields, and out of the creek. Northern climates like that of Silver Creek can be challenging for establishing cover crops if planted after harvest in the traditional linear timeline which weather and late harvest can influence greatly. Interseeding can change that.

The Concern

The traditional linear approach of planting cover crops after harvest could lead to instances of less cover and poorly established cover crops. The decreased functionality of cover crops results in poor nutrient and soil retention.

The Plan

The Silver Creek team worked with Brown County and the Fund for Lake Michigan to purchase a 6-row interseeder from InterSeeder™ Technologies. This equipment is available and free of charge for growers in the Lower Fox River watershed interested in planting cover crops. The team worked with an interested grower to demonstrate interseeding between corn rows, and ensure herbicides would not negatively impact cover crop establishment.



The Result

The previous winter's rye cover crop was terminated in May by crimping, and a standard 30-inch row no-till corn planter was used shortly afterwards. When the corn reached V4 stage, the field was interseeded with soybeans, red clover, white clover, vetch, and radish in a single pass. Urea was applied at 150 lb/acre shortly after interseeding.

The machine maintained the correct spacing and the V4 corn remained un-harmed throughout the seeding. There was no negative impact on yield. Yield differences between fields which were interseeded and those that were not were thought to be due to soil and moisture differences. In fact, yield may be greater because some of the cover is harvested with the corn. An additional benefit was the established cover crop significantly reduced muddying the field and therefore reduced rutting and tracking of mud onto roadways when harvesting the corn silage.



Lessons & Opportunities

Using the InterSeeder™ to plant cover crops earlier in the season allowed the cover crops to mature and serve as fall and winter forage. While a herbicide program may need to be adjusted to ensure proper cover crop establishment, agronomists in the Silver Creek project are aware of this and understand the herbicide impacts on interseeding.



Cover crop growth was less dense than anticipated because the five-specie seed mix required greater variability in planting depths than could be accommodated in the InterSeeder™. Using a mix with more uniform planting depths will improve germination.

For more information on the InterSeeder™ including a fact sheet for its applicability to your fields, please visit www.newwater.us/projects/silver-creek-project/.

Ask your Silver Creek team how this experience could benefit you.

Jeff Smudde/NEW Water – 920-438-1071

Nikki Raimer/Outagamie County LCD – 920-832-6077