



# SJ 9: JOINT RESOLUTION FOR A MONTANA SOIL HEALTH DAY AND WEEK

**Sponsor: Sen. Bruce Gillespie (R) SD9 | Co-Sponsor: Sen. Janet Ellis (D) SD 41**

The vitality of Montana's food, water, economy, and environment are rooted in the health of Montana soils. These soils, and the people who steward them, have the ability to grow nutritious food for our communities and keep our waterways clean. Yet every year our soils are lost or degraded because their value is overlooked. Everyone in Montana is impacted by the health of our soils and stands to benefit from the strong climate and food security that healthy soil provides.

**Soil health is a win-win:** It's good for Montana's economy and good for the conservation of our working landscapes.

## Synopsis

This joint resolution would designate the first week of April as "Montana Soil Health Week" and the Wednesday of that week as "Montana Soil Health Day". The resolution intends to raise awareness of the importance of soil health, celebrate Montana's agricultural producers, uplift Montana's culture and legacy as an agricultural state, and promote the stewardship of Montana's soils.

## Economic Impact

**Montana's biggest industry deserves our support:** Soils are the foundation of Montana's leading industry – agriculture. Given that agriculture and natural resources industries are some of the largest economic sectors in our state, it's important that we support and celebrate the innovations that keep our ag producers thriving, and ensure that agriculture can continue to be an economic driver for the state for generations to come.

## Why is this needed?

Despite soil's importance for the resilience and prosperity of our rural communities, human and environmental health, nutrition and food, animal feed, fiber, and fuel production, public awareness about the importance of soil protection is scarce.

**Soil health bolsters food security and makes our working landscapes more resilient:** Producers need healthy soils to ensure food security for our state and country in the long term, and to keep their operations economically viable. Whether facing drought, erosion, or other natural factors that present challenges to agricultural producers, increasing soil health can create greater stability.

## What does this bill do?

- This resolution simply establishes a designated week to celebrate soil health in Montana. It elevates this important issue and provides organizations the visibility to create voluntary opportunities for education and outreach.
- This resolution creates an elevated week-long celebration of soil health with messaging and education to reach voices outside of the agriculture community and raise awareness for Montana's most valuable natural resource.
- Creating a week-long celebration invites a broad and diverse coalition of Montanans to come together to celebrate and strengthen the practices and principles for soil health management.

**This resolution raises the visibility of great work being done:** Natural Resource Conservation Services, Montana's conservation districts, organizations, and ag operations throughout the state have been doing innovative work to implement healthy soils practices for decades. A week designated to celebrate soil health in Montana would provide them an opportunity to further elevate and expand this meaningful work.

## What it does not do:

- The resolution does not require or mandate Montana agricultural producers and landowners to take action to protect and build soil health.
- It does not request appropriations from the Montana State Budget.
- It does not request additional resources from State Agency Staff, unless the agency or organization chooses to participate in Soil Health Week and Day.

**Soil Health Day and Week will be completely voluntary to participate.**

## Fulfilling a need identified by Montana's farmers and ranchers:

Producers are asking for more opportunities to learn from one another: The Montana Association of Conservation Districts in conjunction with other organizations conducted the Montana Soil Assessment Report in 2022, in which producers identified outreach and education opportunities as the key barrier to robust adoption of healthy soils practices. This Resolution would allow a diverse group of soil health advocates to gather together to celebrate, educate, build capacity and raise awareness about why protecting soil is important to human, environmental, and economic health.

With questions and to learn how to support this resolution contact Gusty at [gusty@northernplains.org](mailto:gusty@northernplains.org).

