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Meet Monica Monroe

Pro-Ag announces the hiring of Monica Monroe of McNabb, Illinois. She is a recent graduated of Illinois State University with a degree in Agri-Business and Agronomy Management. Monica will work out of our Bloomington office with Chris Behl. Hired this past summer, Monica has been busy learning our business and the location of our accounts. We asked her "Tell us about yourself and what you like to do."



I grew up on a small farm with beef cattle in Putnam County. I graduated from Putnam County High School in 2014 where I participated in softball, golf, dance and FFA. After high school, I went to play softball for Parkland College in Champaign where I started my degree in Agriculture. I've always been interested in the agriculture field but wasn't sure where to start so I took the business route. I graduated Parkland with an Associate's degree in Ag Business. The summer after graduation I interned at the Parkland College Land Lab where I helped manage our plots. This internship helped me realize I really enjoyed the agronomy side as well. After that I went on to pursue my Bachelors at Illinois State University. While at ISU I participated in the Ag Science Club and the Trap N Skeet Club. The summer after my junior year, I interned with Advanced Crop Care as a crop scout checking fields and reporting back to farmers. I decided to pick up Agronomy Management as a degree while at ISU. I graduated in May 2018 with a double major in Ag Business and Agronomy Management. I started working for Pro-Ag right after graduation this spring under Chris Behl in the Northern territory. I love working outdoors so I enjoy soil sampling very much. Some of my hobbies include being outside, shooting trap, and being with friends and family. I look forward to learning a specific side of Agronomy and be able to help farmers reach their full potentials with their crops. I currently reside in Bloomington, Illinois.

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Pro-Ag Consulting is 40 years Old

This year Pro-Ag Consulting, LLC is celebrating its 40th year in business. Pro-Ag was created out of an idea John Hackerson had for a company that now reaches seven states and is a multi-million dollar company. We at Pro-Ag feel very blessed.

In the summer of 1979, John Hackerson was working as a field Agronomist for a seed corn company. As part of his job, he was using soil test results to help his clients select certain hybrids. These tests were usually taken and supplied by the farmer's service company. Often, the test results just had an average for the entire field.

Knowing that every spot in the field did not yield the same, John wanted more tests on more areas of the field. He came up with the idea to draw a map of the field making the field look like a checker board. Then each square was numbered and the results of each square or grid were recorded separately. This process was then called grid sampling. Recommendations for plant food would be applied according to the test results.

Would it work and could a person make a living just doing soil sampling and consulting to individual farmers? Products like seed or fertilizer were not being sold. He was going to be just like a hired hand working for the farmer.

With the encouragement from several of his accounts, he quit his job and he and his wife, Joann, built a soil testing lab and started a company called Professional Agricultural Services in Beardstown, IL.

In December 1984, John's brother, Don, joined him in Beardstown and formed a partnership. Business grew and expanded east into Shelby County, Illinois. In 1987, Don moved to Findlay in Shelby County to better serve the customer base. Customer's told friends about Pro-Ag and the client base expanded rapidly and in 1989 an additional Soil Lab was built in Windsor, IL.

Then in 1991, John and Joan wanted to retire so Don and his wife, Carolyn, bought out their interest and changed the company name to Pro Ag Consulting. By 1992, the business had outgrown the Windsor location and a new building was purchase at our current location of 1503 Kentucky in Windsor with a total of six employees.

Over the next 10 years new employees were added. Chris Behl who worked part-time in the summer while going to High School and College, was added fulltime in 1994. Then in 1995 Ted Huber, was added as a field consultant. In 1998, Jason Boerngen graduated from Southern Illinois and joined Pro-Ag staff and was assigned the Mt. Carmel area. Then in January 2000, Matt Schilling, graduated from Southern and was assigned Southern and South Western Illinois.

In the year of 2001, several companies tried to purchase Pro-Ag from Don & Carolyn. Fearing they would change the way the company did business, those offers were refused.

Wanting the company to continue, an agreement to buy the company and continue to operate Pro Ag Consulting was reached with the employees Chris Behl, Ted Huber, Jason Boerngen, and Matt Schilling

In 2004, Charles Campbell was hired to handle the accounting and financial part of Pro-Ag and was added as one of the owners. So, today the above mentioned five people own and operate Pro Ag Consulting.

The future of Pro-Ag Consulting is very bright. Many new technologies have been incorporated into our service to meet the needs of today's agricultural challenges. Our training continues and we are hiring new and qualified people to help service our many customers.

What is so special about Pro-Ag? We have never sold a product and hopefully never will. We strongly believe that if you are to be an independent consulting company and make recommendations, you can't sell a product you may be recommending.

Only 1 in 20 independent consulting companies survive 5 years. We have made it 40 years! Only with your continued support were we able to do so.

Thanks for being a client of Pro-Ag Consulting!

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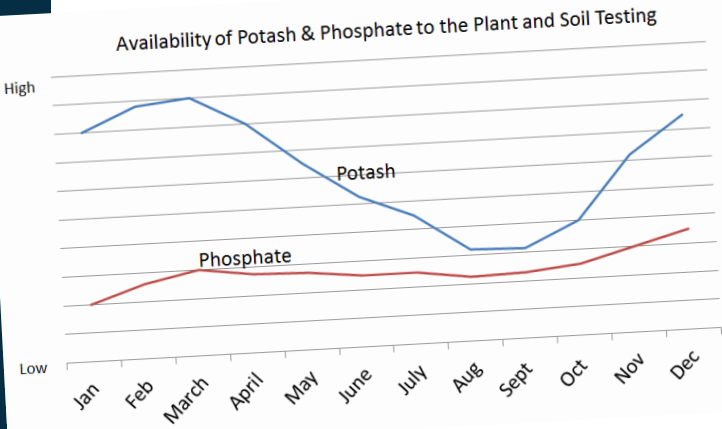
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To do a
Simple task
Exceedingly
well Spells
Success

Why we try to sample your fields the same time each year

We use an inventory method of soil sampling to determine your soil’s nutrient needs. Each sample point is evaluated and a pre-scribed amount of plant food is recommended to insure the most economical yield for your crops. It is important that we sample the same time each year, because the available nutrient in the soil varies by the time of year the sample was taken.

Field tests have been performed to measure nutrient availability in the soil for each month of the year. Phosphorus availability remains relatively steady all year long. Tests taken in early spring compares favorably with tests taken in late summer. Potash unlike Phosphorus will vary greatly during the growing season. Potash levels are usually the highest in late March early April and lowest in August and first part of September.



For a program of soil testing like ours to be more effective, the time of year the samples are taken is very important. If you have any questions, call your Pro-Ag Agronomist.

Potassium Sulfate or Potassium Chloride?

Concentrations of K in our soils are often too low to support healthy plant growth without adding Potassium. Potassium is needed to complete many essentials functions in plants, such as activating enzyme reactions, synthesizing proteins, forming starch and sugars and regulating water flow in cells and leaves.

Currently in most of our Illinois Counties, only Potassium Chloride (KCL) is available for our agricultural use. Potassium Sulfate (K2SO4) is gaining in popularity and results of using it instead of (KCL) are favorable.

Most Illinois soils are short in Sulfur. Potassium Sulfate contains 17-18% Sulfur and no Chlorine. The Sulfur speeds up nutrient uptake which has resulted in higher yields. Sulfur is required for protein synthesis and enzyme function.

Today, most production of Potassium Sulfate (K2SO4) comes from our western states of New Mexico and the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Price per ton is a bit higher than Potassium Chloride (KCL) – 60%. But Potassium Sulfate contains no Chlorine and adds a much needed source of Sulfur makes the extra cost a most worthwhile addition to your fertilizer program. Check with your plant food supplier about ordering some for your Potash needs.

In early March, the nutrients used during the previous year’s crops have been released back into the soil lattice and along with the newly released nutrients from the soil combine to give us our highest reading. There are no growing crops so all the nutrients are available for our tests.

When the plants start to grow especially in late August, potash is taken into the plant and when that happens, we cannot measure it with a soil sample. August/September is usually the drier months and when soil gets extremely dry, Potash becomes unavailable to the plant and also to our soil tests.

Taking soil tests the same time each year eliminates many of the fluctuations that may occur. Trying to compare a soil test taken in the Spring one year and one taken in July/August the next year will most likely show a great deal of variation.

Buffer pH – What is it?

We have been requested by some clients to run the buffer pH test. Since this test is seldom used I will attempt to describe the test and its result.

We take each soil sample that comes into our lab and perform a basic pH test. This test does not measure lime in the soil. It is a measurement of the Hydrogen & Aluminum Ions that reside in the soil structure. The higher the concentration of these ion’s, the more acid the soil. To neutralize the effect of these ions, we add limestone to flush the ions out of the lattices of the soil.

When we are done with the pH test, we add a buffering solution to the sample to see how the pH level will change while adding this solution.

We use this reading in making lime recommendations. There is also a correlation to the CEC of the soil sample. A low CEC has less spots for H & AL ions to reside, so less lime is needed to correct the soil pH. Likewise the higher the CEC, more lime will be needed to obtain the desired pH reading.

Scholarship Winner Announced

Beginning in 1996, Pro-Ag Consulting wanted to give back to Agriculture by helping others enter the Agricultural field. It was decided to financially help one of our client’s family members who was planning to study Agricultural at the university level.

So in 1996 our first \$2000 scholarship was awarded in honor of Jim Koester of Watseka, Illinois. Jim was a young farmer who was farming with his dad, Roy, and Grandfather Adolph. He met a very untimely death in a farming accident. This is the 23rd year the scholarship has been awarded.

This year’s winner is Emma Hocking of Mt Carmel, Illinois. Emma is a graduate of Mt Carmel High School and is the daughter of Todd & Marlene Hocking and granddaughter of Larry & Carolyn Hocking also of Mt. Carmel. Emma has enrolled in Wabash Valley College in Mt Carmel. She plans to study Agricultural Technology Business and major in Agri-Science Technology at Murray State University in Murray, Ky.

While attending school, Emma was a very busy

young lady, being on the honor roll, serving as delegate to state FFA convention, the Illinois State Fair, National FFA convention and National Catholic youth delegate. Activities she participated in included: Secretary to Wabash Co. 4H Federation, Barn Busters 4H Club President for 2 years, Robotics Engineering Science & Technology, St Mary’s Youth group, Vice-President and member of the high school Marching band and concert band.

As for her personal goals, after graduation she would like to pursue a career in Energy Technology. She would like to design, program, and trouble shoot the newest Agricultural Technology. Emma enjoys the challenges of trouble shooting computer problems at school and at home. **Congratulations Emma!** We wish you well in your continuing education efforts!



A Year in Review...

MATT SCHILLING - *McLEANSBORO, IL*

We had a very cold winter in our area last year and since we did not have any snow cover, the ground froze much deeper than usual. With the frost hanging on until mid-April, we had a late start of planting. As soon as the planting was over we experienced a lot of 90 degree weather. The result was a very fast growing crop and Corn fields went from planting to tasselling in 65 days. It was very difficult for farmers to get additional application on in a timely manner. Soybeans got planted on time, but was not an exceptional year for conventional Soybeans. Better than average but not great. Wheat wasn’t good. Fields in 2017 made 90 – 100 bu; wheat made only 55-60. Grain fill time may have been a little short. Double crop Soybeans were some of the best ever raised 60 plus bushel/acre were common. Summary: Growing season was very much accelerated. Then the second week in September we had Hurricane rains of 10-12 inches in 36 hours. Any low land crops were hurt. It made harvest very difficult. Fall harvest was the longest drawn-out harvest that I can remember. Several Soybeans were harvested in January.

TED HUBER - *OAKLAND, IL*

We had a very cold spell New Years and the rest of the winter was normal to our area. With late snows and rains, no field work was done until after mid-April. When it did break, the seed beds worked great and most planting was done by the 10th of May. With the excellent seed beds to plant and the warm weather that followed, we had very little replanting to do. From April 20th to Memorial day we were very dry causing the plants to get a healthy root system. We had warm days and lots of growing degree days which got the crops off to a great start. We were fortunate to have adequate rains all season. Seems like rain came at least once every week sometimes twice or three times! Soybean yields were excellent! Fungicides application showed excellent results, increased yields of 10-15 bu/acre. The wet growing year affected fields not using fungicide. Corn yields in most areas were good and better than average. Partly due to the excellent test weights. Harvest was timely, but wetter than usual leaving ruts in the fields that will have to be dealt with next spring. Fall field work did not get done in most areas.

CHRIS BEHL - *BLOOMINGTON, IL*

We had a very cold winter with little snow cover so the ground froze deep. But warm weather came in February and we were able to sample some fields in late February. The Spring weather came early and planting conditions were excellent. Most Corn and Soybeans were planted in late April and first 10 days of May. Interesting point: there were a lot of Soybeans planted before Corn and the Soybean yields at harvest were very good. We have noticed an old nemesis is coming back, that being Cyst Nematode. Checking some Soybean fields this fall where there were 15-20 bushel difference in yields, showed the presence of Nematodes in the tests we took. Last of May until mid-June we were droughty. This caused deficiency such as sulfur to show up in many areas. The driest area seemed to be a triangle from northern McLean County to Onarga and then up to Dwight. Harvest in the Central part of the state was timely and on time. Northwest Illinois was hampered by heavy rain and harvest was still going on in late January. Yields in Central Illinois about normal but not a record. Area around Fisher to Champaign was very good.

JASON BOERNGEN - *MONTRORSE, IL*

Our winter was the coldest we have had since the winter of 2013/2014. We had no snow cover so the ground froze 17-18 inches deep. The result was a very good seed bed in which to plant our crop. We were able to plant Corn and Soybeans earlier than normal. Corn got planted the last week of April and the first week of May. Most soybeans were planted first week of May. June started very dry but ended wet. Weather was very good which required very little if any replant. The Wheat crop in our area was above average in yield. We worried about it surviving the cold winter but with the dry fall root growth was very good which helped survival rate. Double crop Soybeans were better than average. Corn harvest started the last two weeks in September and Soybeans first of October. Corn and Soybeans yield in our area was very good, if not record breaking. In the southern part of my territory, south of Rt 50, soybeans were above average but corn was just average. Heavy rains, in June, caused a lot of water damage in corn along with Nitrogen loss. Harvest was delayed by frequent rain and cloudy weather. Many were finished by late October with some crops not harvested until December.