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MISSOURI FARMS AS CARBON STOREHOUSE? NEW STUDY FINDS BIG POTENTIAL

Conservation practices build healthier soil, increase resilience to extreme weather

(KANSAS CITY, MO) — Faced with increasing and more intense extreme weather — heavier downpours, hotter temperatures, more severe droughts — farmers and ranchers in Missouri are turning to proven conservation practices that build more productive soils and make them more resilient to extreme weather. Many of these practices are climate-smart, helping remove carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil. A new Climate Central report, *SOIL SOLUTIONS: Climate-Smart Farming in the Show Me State*, estimates how much carbon could be stored in Missouri soil each year through the use of different farming practices.

"We found the potential carbon savings to be quite significant," said Dr. Eric Larson, a report author and senior scientist with Climate Central. "For example, our analysis showed that using cover crops has the potential to offset and store the carbon pollution created from all cars belonging to residents of Missouri's two biggest cities, St. Louis and Kansas City, combined." Statewide, the authors of the report found the amount of carbon that could be stored in the soil each year through carbon-smart farming practices is more than double the annual carbon emissions from all sources in Columbia, Missouri.

Other findings include:

- For ranchers, the greatest carbon sequestration potential comes with modified grazing practices, like rotational grazing.
- For farmers, the use of cover crops has the greatest potential savings.
- The counties in the state's southeastern Bootheel region have the largest potential for carbon savings. New Madrid is the top county.

For Ethan Miller, who farms with his family in central Missouri and holds leadership positions in area agriculture organizations, the benefits of conservation practices he uses are clear. "The practices help us reach our goals by improving the soil's health, increasing carbon content, adding nutrients and improving the forage base — which, in turn, benefits everyone by improving water and air quality," said Miller. He added he also

wants to improve the land so that it can provide for generations to come, no matter what extreme weather comes their way.

“We know that climate change is making extreme weather worse, and poses a real threat to Missouri agriculture,” said Dr. Larson. “This report shows that Missouri farmers and ranchers can fight back by deploying conservation practices, benefiting themselves and the climate.”

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Climate Central communicates climate science, effects and solutions to the public and decision makers. Its interdisciplinary work is conducted by a team whose backgrounds include natural and social sciences, data analysis, journalism, and other fields.