

# The Soil Health Institute Welcomes New Scientists and Interns to Its Growing Team

NEWS RELEASE BY THE SOIL HEALTH INSTITUTE

MORRISVILLE, N.C. | August 02, 2021 09:02 AM Eastern Daylight Time



Loutrina Staley, Ph.D.

MORRISVILLE, N.C., August 2, 2021 /3BL Media/ - The Soil Health Institute (SHI), the non-profit charged with safeguarding and enhancing the vitality and productivity of soils, has announced that six new scientists and three interns have joined the Institute.

“We welcome this diverse cohort to our growing team who hail from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds,” explained Dr. Wayne Honeycutt, SHI’s President & CEO. “We’re very pleased with the caliber of talent that SHI draws. Adding depth to our team means we can broaden our impact on scaling adoption of regenerative soil health systems to benefit farmers, the environment, and society.”

Meet SHI’s nine newest team members:

**Loutrina Staley, Ph.D.**, joins SHI’s leadership team as a Soil Scientist, where she will help develop grant proposals, manage stakeholder relations, and communicate project

results to end users. Dr. Staley has experience as an Advance Science teacher in the Decatur City Schools where she implemented an innovative STEM program in Agriculture and Food Science. Her previous post-doctoral research focused on the efficacy of plant botanicals and fatty acids as antimicrobials against food-borne pathogens.

**Christine Molling** joins from the University of Wisconsin Space Science and Engineering Center's Cooperative Institute for Meteorological Satellite Studies, where she created models and data sets to assist decision makers in agriculture, environmental resources, and renewable energy. At the Soil Health Institute, Ms. Molling is a Modeling Specialist for the Dairy Soil and Water Regeneration project. She evaluates and works to improve the ability of agroecosystem models to capture the effects of soil health practices on greenhouse gas emissions and water quality.

**Brent Thomas** is an undergraduate student at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff where he is earning a B.S. degree in Agricultural Engineering. Mr. Thomas is a 2021 Intern working with SHI scientists to collect and analyze soil samples for establishing Soil Health Targets. He is particularly interested in identifying and addressing challenges that growers face when adopting soil health systems.

**Jason Ackerson, Ph.D.**, joins from the Department of Agronomy at Purdue University where he was an Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist. His research focused on developing proximal sensors to quantify soil properties and develop digital soil maps. Dr. Ackerson is a Project Scientist for soil carbon measurement and technology discovery projects.

**Quanteria Randle** is a sophomore undergraduate student at Prairie View A&M University where she is earning her B.S. in Biology. Ms. Randle is a 2021 Intern working with SHI's Soil Microbiome Scientist, Dr. Elizabeth Rieke, in analyzing phospholipid fatty acid (PLFA) data from soils sampled across North America. She is also gaining experience in sampling soils for establishing Soil Health Targets.

**Nate Looker, Ph.D.**, joins from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, where he studied the impact of tropical forest succession on soil-based ecosystem services. Dr. Looker is a Project Scientist for field-based establishment of Soil Health Targets for farmers and field conservationists.

**Mara Cloutier, Ph.D.**, joins us from Pennsylvania State University where she conducted research aimed at assessing how conservation management practices that improve soil health also influence soil microbial nitrogen dynamics and nitrous oxide emissions (a potent greenhouse gas). Dr. Cloutier is a Project Manager for the Dairy Soil and Water Regeneration project in partnership with Dairy Management, Inc.

**Robert Jeremiah Fredrick Thomas** is an undergraduate student attending Prairie View A&M University where he is majoring in Agriculture with a concentration in Plant and Soil Science. Mr. Thomas is a 2021 Intern assisting with soil sample collection and data analysis on various projects. He is in the Prairie View A&M University Honors Program, an Eagle Scout, and plans to become an Environmental Research Scientist.

**Vance Almquist, Ph.D.**, joins from the Pacific Ecological Systems Division of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Research and Development where he worked on developing tools for addressing aquatic ecosystem vulnerability to wildfire in the Pacific Northwest. Dr. Almquist is developing quantitative strategies for grouping similar soils to aid in establishing and mapping Soil Health Targets for farmers and field conservationists.

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### **About the Soil Health Institute**

The Soil Health Institute is a global non-profit with a mission to safeguard and enhance the vitality and productivity of soil through scientific research and advancement. We bring together leaders in soil health science and the industry to help farmers, ranchers, and landowners adopt soil health systems that build drought resilience, stabilize yield, and benefit their bottom line. The Institute's team of scientists, holding doctorates in various soil science and related disciplines, has developed highly effective soil health targets and standardized measurements to quantify progress at achieving regenerative and sustainable agricultural systems, and leads the cutting-edge fields of carbon sequestration and decoding the soil microbiome. Healthy soils are the foundation for rejuvenating our land. Together, we can create a secure future for all, mitigate the effects of climate change, and help agriculture and organizations meet production and environmental goals at scale. Visit [www.soilhealthinstitute.org](http://www.soilhealthinstitute.org) to learn more and follow us on **LinkedIn**, **Twitter**, and **Facebook**.

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