

# CROSSROADS ON THE ROAD BUS TOUR

## June 30-July 2, 2025

In lieu of an indoor Crossroads Conference this year, we put attendees' boots on the ground on successful regenerative farms and ranches across Oklahoma. The "Crossroads on the Road Soil Health Bus Tour" was spearheaded by No Till On The Plains with support from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission. Garfield County Conservation District returned as a major sponsor.

Around 50 participants boarded the bus in Wichita, Kansas or at the first tour stop, Tom Cannon's Goodson Ranch in Blackwell, OK. Tom told his story of adopting regenerative farming practices and giving back to young people in his community. His nearly 30 year track record of managing for soil health makes him one of the movement's pioneers in Oklahoma.



The bus then traveled south to Noble Research Institute's Oswalt Ranch in Marietta, OK. Spanning over 5,000 acres, the ranch was donated to Noble in the early 2000s. The Noble team's biggest management priority is controlling the brush that covers much of the ranch, causing serious constraints to

grazing. They are using a combination of mechanical and chemical practices, multispecies grazing and prescribed burning to restore native grasses to previously brush-covered acreage. Tour attendees got to see hundreds of

Spanish goats and their livestock guardian dogs being managed by contract grazier Zane Manley.

The second day of the tour brought us to Mountain View, OK and Fusjon Ag. Brett Peshek is a first-generation farmer, rancher and seed company owner. He showed the crop of Hairy Vetch seed he's raising in a stand of Bermudagrass, a practice known as "pasture cropping". On the same acreage he is able to graze both warm and cool season forage, as well as harvest a marketable seed crop.



Brett Peshek's swather stands atop a windrow of "pasture-cropped" vetch, from which he will sell seed.

The next stop on the tour was Smith Farms in Elk City, OK. Jimmy and his son Spencer Smith are dryland cotton farmers. They are Leopold Award winners who operate the land Jimmy's great-grandparents



Spencer and Jimmy Smith show the modifications they made to their planter, to interseed rye without damaging cotton bolls.

bought in 1913, and have been planting rye as a cover crop for 50 years. The Smiths also started 4-Ag Manufacturing, which makes specialty equipment parts to meet the challenges farmers face in regenerative cotton production.

The bus's next stop on day 3 was in Okarche, OK at Matt and Jerry Alig's farm. They too are some of the state's earliest adopters of soil health practices. Once a grain farm, the land now grows a constant chain of annual and perennial forages for sheep and cattle. Wool often costs more to shear off the sheep than it sells for, so the Aligs have invested in a wool pelletizing machine. They are now turning wool into a natural mulch and fertilizer product that is gaining popularity with farmers, gardeners and vegetable growers.



The tour wrapped up with a stop at Thomas Land & Cattle in Ames, OK. Mark and Annette Thomas moved to the area and started their ranch 15 years ago.

They use regenerative practices such as no-till planting of annual forages, rotational grazing and biological soil amendments to heal formerly damaged crop ground. Animal welfare is a high priority in their grass-finished beef business. All of their conception-to-consumption beef is marketed directly to consumers. On the tour, Mark and Annette showed off the portable shade structure they built to improve cattle comfort. Participants also got to see what it takes to grow finishing-quality forage.



Feedback from bus tour attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Though No Till On The Plains organizes bus tours regularly, Oklahoma was a new location for such an event. Participants' eyes were opened to the possibilities for healthy soil in ecoregions that can be very challenging for agriculture. The tour also led to lasting collaborative relationships between producers and the organizations that worked together to make it happen.

