

Landscape Agronomy: Restoring Productivity on Eroded Hilltops

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Eroded hilltops (knolls, crests, uplands, summits, etc.) in variable agricultural landscapes generally make up 10-30% of the landscape and typically yield 30-50% of the crop productivity observed in mid- to lower slope positions. Identification of soil properties, landscape factors and past and ongoing management may explain much of the current state of this portion of the agricultural landscape. No-till or reduced tillage systems have slowed soil degradation and stabilized yield potential on eroded hilltops, but this practice alone is not sufficient to return yield potential to a desired goal of 70-80% of the more productive areas in the landscape.

In an effort to increase the productivity of these areas to more closely mimic other parts of the landscape on a more consistent basis, several management strategies will be discussed, outlining the potential benefits, costs and timelines of each practice.