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# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## On World Soil Day, Astronomy Meets Agronomy with ‘Out of this World’ Message

**STILLWATER, Okla., Nov. 30, 2016**—When it comes to soil, most think agronomy not astronomy.

But a new public service campaign featuring astronomer Laura Danly, Ph.D., suggests there’s a universal connection between the stars, the soil and all of the residents of planet Earth. It’s a connection that is especially significant on Dec. 5, which the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has deemed World Soil Day.

Danly, who is the curator of the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, Calif., and a former NASA astronomer, recently teamed up with USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to lend her voice in a new [public service campaign](#) to highlight the importance of improving the health of Earth’s living and life-giving soil.

“The more I learn about our amazing universe, the more I realize what a special home we have within that universe—right here on planet Earth,” Danly said. “One of the things that makes planet Earth such a special place is its living soil.”

“Unfortunately, soil is one earthly resource that’s often overlooked, underappreciated and too often degraded,” said Steve Alspach, NRCS State Soil Scientist for Oklahoma. “Especially on World Soil Day, it’s important to recognize that healthy soil and the teeming life within it, could very well help us address some of planet Earth’s biggest challenges.”

“Not only does soil feed and clothe us, but we now know that improving the health of our soil can help us mitigate climate change impacts, improve water quality and quantity, increase food production and improve wildlife and pollinator habitat,” Alspach said.

Through NRCS’ [“Unlock the Secrets in the Soil”](#) campaign, Alspach hopes urban consumers will become more aware of the role soil health plays in their environment, food, lives and futures. “In rural areas, we’ll be connecting with actual farmers, ranchers and landowners who can adopt soil health management systems—which is good for the farm, the environment and the farmer’s bottom line.”

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Danly, who is also a frequent guest on the History Channel's "The Universe," said recognizing the connection between the stars and the soil is something that she wants to help her fellow Earthlings more fully understand and appreciate.

"Ours is the only planet we know that has life on it, so it's natural for me to want to talk about Earth and share some important messages with people about how we can make it healthier. We can reach for the stars," Danly said, "but we must cherish the soil."

For more information on how NRCS is working with farmers to "Unlock the Secrets in the Soil," visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov).

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