Thank You!

Another year in the books, and another HUGE success! SWCS would like to extend our most sincere thank you to the sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, session organizers, tour coordinators, volunteers, and participants who made the 72nd SWCS International Annual Conference possible! I think the Wisconsin Chapter and the Program Planning Committee can speak to the tremendous amount of time and energy that goes into planning behind the scenes to make this event appear like a well-oiled machine, and let me tell you, they made the process seem effortless this year! We truly could not have brought our participants such a quality program without the help of all involved.

I would also like to recognize this year’s group of student moderators. Each year, SWCS provides registration and hotel assistance to a group of SWCS student chapter members who are able to experience the conference from an insider perspective. These students provide volunteer support at the conference but also have the opportunity to attend sessions and network. This year, we would like to thank Lijing Gao (Iowa State University), Bethani Chambers (West Virginia University), Greg Richardson (University of Wisconsin–Madison), Kalyn Diederich (University of Wisconsin–Madison), Meaghan Mechl (University of Waterloo), Kuatbay Bektemirov (University of Arkansas), Sophie Benaroya (Rutgers University–New Brunswick), Shirley Hughes (Missouri State University), Maggie Norton (Iowa State University), and Justin Brackenrich (West Virginia University).
The 2017 conference had the Society’s largest attendance since 2004 with over 500 participants making conservation connections. We had representation from 6 countries and 43 states, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico. The conference program included over 150 oral presentations and symposia, in addition to 70 poster presentations. Specialty topics included a focus on Field to Watershed: Connecting Local Scale Influence with Larger Scale Significance, Benefits and Challenges of Public and Private Partnerships, and Extreme Weather and its Impact on Conservation. The conference program and photos can be found at swcs.org/17ac, and presentations will be available in the next week.

We encourage you to mark your calendars now so you can join us in Albuquerque, New Mexico, July 29 through August 1, 2018, for the 73rd SWCS International Annual Conference!

Photo Contest Winners Announced

As attendees of the SWCS 72nd International Annual Conference spoke with exhibitors and expanded their conservation knowledge through engaging breakout sessions and presentations, they also had a chance to vote in our second annual photo contest. A panel of judges narrowed the submissions down to the top 12 photos, which were then put on display at the conference in Madison. After carefully counting everyone’s votes, we have the People’s Choice winner!

Breathtaking winter view of a field edge monitoring site (station in the middle of the picture) near Grand Falls, New Brunswick, in Canada. Submitted by Sheng Li.

In addition to the People’s Choice (chosen by conference attendees), a panel of judges voted the following submission as the photo that most represented the conference theme, Conservation Connections. Congratulations to both of our winners!

This restored wetland and the surrounding prairie habitat were made possible with the Conservation Reserve Program (CP-23 wetland and CP-25 prairie). The practices were only established in 2016, but are already providing valuable habitat for wildlife while protecting soil and water near the Middle River in Madison County. Submitted by Anna MacDonald.
Annual Conference Photos
We had another great year at the SWCS Annual Conference. Check out our Flickr page to view all of this year’s conference photos.

Incoming SWCS CEO Clare Lindahl visits with Jim Gallilord.

We had over 500 conference participants this year.

With 70 poster presentations to view, our conference attendees had no shortage of research to learn about this year.

Acting Chief of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Leonard Jordan speaks to conference participants.

The La Crosse Seed team waits at their exhibitor booth for the poster and exhibitor reception to begin.

A conference attendee views one of our photo contest submissions.
2017-2018 Board of Directors

Following the 72nd Annual Conference, SWCS transitioned to the 2017-2018 Board of Directors. Each of the Society’s five regions is represented by one elected director. Four at-large directors also currently serve on the Board. For additional Board member photos and bios, visit the SWCS website.

From left to right:
Susan Meadows: North Central Director and Treasurer
Jason Weller*: At-Large Director
Wendi Goldsmith: Northeast Region Director and Vice-Chair
Steve Kadas: Southwest Region Director
Bill Kuckuck: At-Large Director
Bruce Knight: At-Large Director and Chair
Dale Threatt-Taylor: Southeast Region Director
Rex Martin: At-Large Director and Chair
Don Wysocki: Northwest Director and Secretary

*New officer

News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- The Obama administration’s local food initiative at Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) lives on under the Trump administration and appears to have the blessing of Administrator Scott Pruitt.
- Leaders of the Senate Agriculture Committee say they are eager to begin work on a new farm bill that will carry forward the basic structure of the 2014 law with some relatively minor modifications.
- Secretary Sonny Perdue’s leadership team at USDA is taking shape. Indiana Agriculture Director Ted McKinney will become the department’s first undersecretary for trade and foreign agricultural affairs, and Sam Clovis is nominated to be undersecretary for research, education and economics. American Soybean Association President Steve Censky has been named deputy ag secretary. Trump is expected to announce Bill Northey, Iowa’s agriculture secretary, as his pick for undersecretary for farm production and conservation.
- The Trump administration kicked off a 30-day comment period on withdrawing the Obama-era “waters of the US” (WOTUS) rule in July. Once the administration officially withdraws the WOTUS rule, the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers say they will begin the process of developing a new version.
- Stakeholders concerned about flooding along the Mississippi River are sharply split over mitigation measures. Some want wetlands restored and levees removed, while drainage districts want more invested in flood risk management structures.
- The “dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico is bigger than it’s ever been, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said, announcing its estimate of 8,776 square miles.
- The National Conservation Planning Partnership is excited to introduce a new peer-to-peer web conference series to support conservation planning staff and partners.
- The Pollinator Partnership's agricultural pollinator conservation award recognizes the unique contributions that members of the agricultural community make to pollinators where they are needed most. Learn more about this award.
- Linking conservation compliance to crop insurance as well as commodity payments ensures that farmers are motivated to prevent soil erosion and preserve wetlands regardless of whether crop prices are high or low, a new Agriculture Department study (Economic Research Service Report 234) says.

Upcoming Events

North Dakota Chapter Good Bugs Course
Minot, North Dakota
August 22, 2017

Nebraska Chapter 21st Annual Golf Scholarship Fundraiser
Lincoln, Nebraska
September 8, 2017

Wyoming Chapter Annual Technical Workshop
Green River, Wyoming
September 13, 2017

North Dakota Chapter Farming with Healthier Soils Field Trip
Mandan, North Dakota
September 15, 2017

Razorback Chapter Annual Fall Meeting
Booneville, Arkansas
October 5, 2017

California-Nevada Chapter Annual Meeting
Reno, Nevada
October 19-20, 2017
New Members
Welcome members who joined in July!

Canada—Ontario
Jordan Graham

DC—National Capital Chapter
Miles Royce

Delaware/Maryland—Pokomoke
Clarissa Havelow

Iowa
Katie Beck
Heidi Dittmer
Nick Dumke
Bridget Durst
Max Eness
Sarah Feehan
Samantha Frundle
Gabriel Johnson
Jim Jordahl
Lindsey Kaufmann
Olivia LaGrange
Kaitlin Little
Joya Magee
Sean McMahon
Dan Meier
Derry O’Connor
Dakota Rasmusson
Adam Rodenberg
Neil Shaffer
Hunter Slifka
Taslima Stephen
Jeri Thornsberry
Becky VanWey
Hannah Vorrie
Joel Zook

Illinois
Colin Geisenhoffer

Indiana—Hoosier
Lucas Fedderman
Joshlyn Held
Paige Hobson
Frances Podrebarac

Kansas
Chuck Rice

Maryland—Old Line
Naomi Fukagawa

Minnesota
Cindy Penny

Missouri—Show Me
Bin Hua
Guolu Zheng

Montana
Bonnie Thies

South Dakota—South Dakota State University Chapter
Seth Vishal

Tennessee
Chris Hancock
Levi Stutts

Washington—Olympic View
Leif Fixen

Wisconsin
Abby Augarten
Jeremy Freund

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Ecosystem Services Exchange
Valuing Conservation
From the Leadership: Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future

By Jim Gulliford, SWCS Executive Director

Stepping down from my position as executive director of the Society made this year’s annual conference memorable in many ways. Most important was how successful this conference was. Attendance continues to increase, the program content was excellent, and sponsorship and exhibitor participation added a positive dimension to networking and learning. It was great to see so many familiar faces and meet first-time attendees.

For me, the conversations were a bit different this year. There were many questions about me and my future. Regarding my future, I intend to stay involved in agriculture and conservation work as a project and policy consultant. I don’t see myself working full-time, but I can’t imagine myself not working. I intend to stay engaged with the Society and expect to see many of you again next year in Albuquerque.

Other questions dealt with accomplishments and changes over the past 7+ years. Below are several that I feel have made a difference for the Society. It is important to note that all of them have been the result of collaborative work on the part of our members and your Society staff.

First, I have been very pleased with the continued growth of the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation. International contributions are up, and the Editorial Board now includes more international members. There have been more economics and social science contributions to content. These disciplines help us better understand how and why farmers make the conservation decisions they do. Also, I am very pleased to see the rising number of special issues published in recent years. These issues address timely, multidisciplinary research collaborations that our members and colleagues are engaged in. The Journal is in good hands. You can expect it to continue to be timely and relevant to our conservation work.

Second, there have been many important conferences and workshops that we have partnered with colleagues to convene. Three standout events were:

- **The 2013 Science Assessment Workshop with state and federal agencies from Mississippi River Basin states.** This workshop examined the science and economics of water quality protection practices to reduce nutrient contributions to basin lakes, streams, and rivers and also contributions to gulf hypoxia.

- **The 2014 National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health.** This activity brought farmers, agribusiness, agency leaders, and scientists together to examine the potential for cover crops and conservation systems to improve soil health. Key conference participants followed up examining science and policy needs to further soil health and cover crop efforts.

- **The 2015 Nutrient Management and Edge-of-Field Monitoring Conference.** This conference convened researchers and practitioners in the field of agricultural water quality protection to examine the state of practice implementation and results monitoring. It addressed the expanding need of farmers to understand nutrient contributions to water quality protection and conservation systems designed to address these concerns.

The Soil and Water Conservation Society will continue to be a “convener of stature” and leader in the presentation of important science-based conservation information.

Perhaps the biggest milestone event of recent years was the work of your Board of Directors to reinvent themselves. Over a two-year period, they examined the administrative structure of the Society’s governance, and proposed bylaws revisions in 2013 to streamline the Board membership and capture the diversity and broad interests of an expanding soil and water conservation community. These member-endorsed changes have resulted in a comprehensive balance of vision, leadership, and governance skills that make the Society a more relevant and productive organization. I saw the effectiveness of this Board in the aggressive and productive effort they made to transition from my resignation to the selection of Clare Lindahl as your next staff CEO.

Finally, the most unique question came from colleague Ellen Bergfeld of the Science Societies, who asked about the funniest event of my time at SWCS. My answer related a story of a Saturday morning chair assembly event at the office that took an unexpected twist—but that’s a story best told in person. You’re going to have to look me up to hear that one. By the way, that’s an invitation!

It has truly been rewarding to have been your executive director. Working with you has always given me more than I contributed, and that’s the way it is supposed to be. I leave you in the capable hands of your Board, Clare, the staff, and most importantly—you, the members. The Society is, and always will be, yours to engage with, contribute to, benefit from, and grow in service of soil and water conservation.