



SOIL
AND WATER
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY



**SWCS
STUDENT CHAPTER AND
AFFILIATE ORGANIZATION
GUIDE**

2025

2026

YOUR YEAR OF IMPACT STARTS HERE.

DEAR STUDENTS AND ADVISORS,

Welcome to the **2025–2026 Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Student Chapter and Affiliate Organization Guide!** We're so glad you're here. Whether you're a first-year student discovering conservation for the first time or a seasoned leader ready to take your chapter to new heights, you're part of a growing network of people who care deeply about soil, water, and community.

This isn't just a guide—it's your step-by-step playbook for creating change and building your future. Inside, you'll find:

- **Ideas that work** – Discover events, projects, and campaigns that spark conversation and inspire action.
- **Connections that count** – Meet professionals, mentors, and peers who can open doors to internships, jobs, and unexpected opportunities.
- **Tools that help** – Find planning templates, outreach tips, and resources to make your projects smoother and stronger.
- **Growth that lasts** – Build leadership skills, boost your résumé, and gain experiences that stand out in any career.

Whether you're starting a new chapter, supporting an existing club, or just exploring, this guide will help you move from *idea* to *impact*. The more you use it, the more your influence and network will grow.

So don't just click past this—keep this online guide bookmarked and ready. Scroll through it, save your favorite ideas, and try one out. Then check back next month for something new to level up your chapter or club. It's packed with ways to make a real difference, meet people who get what you're about, and build skills that will help you long after graduation. Bookmark it in your browser, share the link with your crew, and let it spark your next big move for conservation.

Here's to a year of learning, leading, and building a future you're proud of. Let's get started!



Clare Lindahl
CEO, Soil and Water Conservation Society



YEARLY OVERVIEW

In addition to these opportunities, we recommend students hold meetings bi-weekly or monthly to engage members and keep up momentum!

SEPTEMBER



- Host a kickoff meeting
- Fill out the [primary contact form](#)

OCTOBER



- Participate in the Student T-shirt Contest

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER



- Receive swag from headquarters
- Brainstorm conservation event ideas

JANUARY/FEBRUARY



- Plan an event

MARCH/APRIL



- Host an event!

MAY



- Complete the [end-of-year survey](#)

RESOURCES

Find helpful information using the thumbnail links below.



Starting a Student Chapter



Options for Student Organizations Within SWCS



Registering as a Student Organization



Advisors



Governing Options



Outreach



Officer Roles and Elections



Meeting Resources



Event Planning Resources

Stay connected and learn about new opportunities in real time:



GAINING OFFICIAL SWCS AFFILIATION

Become an official SWCS student chapter or affiliated partner organization by completing the following steps. Affiliation comes with a host of benefits, including

- Listing on the SWCS website
- Use of the SWCS Student Chapter Logo/Affiliate Logo
- A swag package from SWCS headquarters
- SWCS tools and support
- \$200 reimbursement for meeting/event expenses (must complete the [end-of-year survey](#) and have at least five active SWCS members)

AFFILIATION CHECKLIST

- By November 1:** One member or an advisor must fill out the [primary contact form](#) for your chapter or affiliate club. The person completing this form and co-leaders listed will receive leadership and planning resources from SWCS monthly. We recommend having an advisor fill out the form.
- Optional:** Obtain official student organization standing at your school. Refer to the governance resources to learn more about this process.
- (Optional) After your event:** Send in photos and a brief description of your event to renee.bouldin@swcs.org for a chance to be featured on SWCS social media platforms.
- By May 15:** Take the [end-of-year survey](#) to provide feedback on your year with SWCS. Include basic details of any meetings or events held and your thoughts on the chapter program. Also, provide a primary contact for the next school year.

Organizations that complete the primary contact form by November 1, 2025, will receive official affiliation resources and a swag package. To receive a \$200 reimbursement for meeting/event expenses, groups must also complete the end of year survey (by May 15, 2026), have held an event in the 2025-2026 school year, and have had at least five active SWCS members.

Please note that group affiliation is different from SWCS membership. To access full SWCS member benefits, including scholarships and Journal of Soil and Water Conservation access, [become an SWCS member](#). Start your journey with SWCS today!

STUDENT CHAPTERS VS. AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

	What It Means	Why Choose This Path
Start an Official SWCS Student Chapter	Form a recognized campus chapter dedicated to soil and water conservation.	Build leadership skills, create your own governance structure, and lead conservation-focused events and initiatives.
Affiliate Your Existing Club with SWCS	Add SWCS benefits to your current student organization (e.g., environmental club, ag club).	Keep your group's identity while gaining access to SWCS resources, opportunities, and a national conservation network.

SWCS MEMBERSHIP

SWCS student membership connects you to a national community of conservationists, career resources, scholarships, and leadership opportunities. You'll gain access to events, funding support, and tools to grow your impact on campus and beyond.

Learn more and join today: swcs.org/join
Explore student resources: swcs.org/students

STUDENTS AT THE SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The SWCS International Annual Conference offers an exciting platform for students to engage with professionals, expand their knowledge, and showcase their work in the conservation field. The 2026 conference in St. Louis, Missouri, will be July 26–29. Share these opportunities!

WHY ATTEND?

- **Professional Networking:** Connect with hundreds of industry leaders, academics, and fellow students passionate about conservation.
- **Learning and Growth:** Gain insights from experts through presentations, tours, and discussions on cutting-edge conservation practices. Practice your professional communication skills.
- **Showcase Your Work:** Present your research and projects to an interdisciplinary audience, enhancing your visibility and resumé.
- **Explore Career Opportunities:** Meet with potential future employers, learn about different career paths, find graduate positions, and more.



HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- **Attend the Conference:** Join the conference as an attendee and participate in workshops, oral presentations, poster presentations, networking sessions, tours, and luncheons! Hear about the latest research, implementation, and policy from our interdisciplinary presenters. Make the most of discounted student rates and register early to secure your spot. [\[Registration open April through July 2026\]*](#)
- **Present Your Work:** Prepare a poster or oral presentation proposal based on your research or conservation projects. This is an excellent opportunity to practice public speaking and refine your communication skills. We also host a student poster contest with multiple prizes. [\[Abstract submissions open December 2025 through January 2026\]*](#)
- **Apply for a Scholarship:** SWCS offers three scholarships at the international level to student members studying conservation to support their academic careers. Winners are presented with their certificates at the Annual Conference Awards Luncheon. [\[Applications open November 24 through February 10, 2026\]*](#)
» *SWCS chapters also offer scholarships; connect with your local chapter to inquire about their opportunities.*
- **Apply for the Student Leadership Internship:** SWCS hires a student intern who assists with a variety of organizational projects and takes an active role in the conference. This remote, part-time paid position is a great resumé-building experience and provides a student the opportunity to attend the event. [\[Applications open January through February 2026\]*](#)
- **[Availability of Opportunity TBD] Apply to Be a Student Moderator:** Assist with breakout session moderation and room support at the event. In exchange, SWCS provides complimentary conference registration and three complimentary hotel room nights. [\[Applications open March through May 2026\]*](#)

**Dates listed are estimates. More detailed information and updates will be available at www.swcs.org/26AC.*



MONTH-BY-MONTH PLAYBOOK

Use this guide to structure your
chapter's year!



KICKOFF!

GOAL: Hold Your First Meeting

Host a kickoff meeting to determine your campus community's interest in SWCS!

Search for an advisor and review the governance and event planning resources at www.swcs.org/studentchapters.

Provide information to SWCS so we can support you with tools and updates throughout the year.

TO DO:

- Fill out the [primary contact form](#). The person filling out this form and those they will receive leadership and planning resources from SWCS. We recommend having an advisor fill out the form.
- Use the [flyer template](#) to create a meeting flyer to share on campus and social media.
- Use the [meeting agenda suggestions](#) to help structure your first meeting.
- Begin designing for the Student T-shirt Contest (submissions open September 16 through October 8).

Priorities for Your First Meeting

- Confirm a faculty advisor
- Determine your group's leadership structure
- Discuss your goals for the year
- Set a consistent meeting time and place (typically every other week)
- Begin tracking meeting attendance (names and emails of attendees)
- Determine how you will communicate with your members (e.g. Facebook group, Instagram, email)



Members of the Kansas State University Soil and Water Conservation Society Student Chapter.



BUILD MOMENTUM

GOAL: Win the Student T-shirt Contest!

Let's keep up the momentum and make sure you're on a path to success for this year. Didn't have a chance to find an advisor last month or hold your kickoff meeting? Didn't fill out the [primary contact form](#)? That's okay, get it done this month!

TO DO:

- Participate in the Student T-shirt Contest by submitting a design and/or voting for your favorite design on SWCS social media.
- Gain official SWCS affiliation by submitting the [primary contact form](#) by November 1 (groups who submit by this date will receive affiliation resources, including official logos and a swag package).
- Register as an official registered student organization through your school. Each college or university has its own requirements; [learn more](#) about why you should register.



Congratulations to the 2024 winning design submitted by Dani McArthur from North Central Texas College!

Student T-shirt Contest

Students submit designs and our conservation community votes for their favorite on social media. The winner's design will be included in the SWCS store and they will receive three free shirts!

Submissions accepted: September 16-October 8

Online voting: October 20-24



NOVEMBER

FINISH THE SEMESTER STRONG

GOAL: Set Yourself Up for Spring Semester

Keep hosting meetings and build up a strong group of members and friends. Start discussing holding a conservation event in the spring and gauge what types of events and topics interest your group.

TO DO:

- Host a meeting to discuss a spring event. Determine your group's interests and options. This is the pre-planning phase, so just get some ideas flowing and have an open conversation on what you would like to accomplish with your event. Review the [student event planning resources](#) to assist you.
- Order your SWCS swag from our [online store](#) during our pre-holiday campaign (follow us on social media to be notified when the campaign drops).
- For those chapters who applied for SWCS affiliation, you should receive your swag package from SWCS this month to the address given on your [primary contact form](#).



Scholarship applications released at www.swcs.org/scholarships.

DECEMBER

Ace those finals and remind your members to attend your next meeting in the spring semester!



Conference Callout

The Call for Presentations is released! Submit an abstract to be able to present at the conference.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY

WELCOME BACK! LET'S PLAN YOUR EVENT.

GOAL: Plan Your Conservation Event

In January and February, choose what type of event you want to host and set a time and place! Utilize the [student event planning resources](#) to support you in the planning phase. Some options for events include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Professional Development Activity | Site Visit |
| Speaker Panel | Cleanup or Service Event |
| Networking Event | Workshop |
| Company Tour | ... and more! |



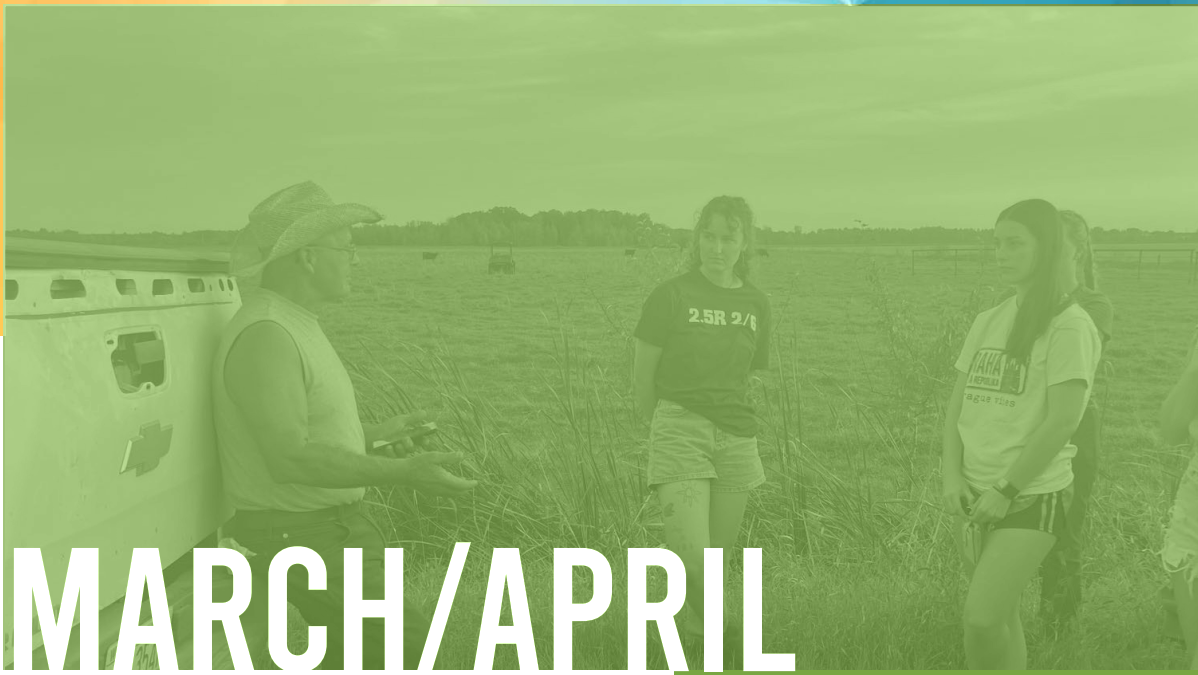
University of Massachusetts Amherst SWCS Student Chapter Welcome Meeting.

TO DO:

- Determine the type of event you'd like to host. What will be most valuable to your group? Utilize our [template due date spreadsheet](#), [template budget spreadsheet](#), and [template agenda](#) to help you get started.
- Find a location to host your event (this will depend on the type of event you choose). Confirm your location and set a date and time for your event.
- Decide if you'll need to find speakers or guides to help you with your event. Send out requests and confirm their participation using our [template speaker invite email](#), [template speaker confirmation email](#), and our [template speaker form](#) to organize their information.
- Think details! Determine if you'll need participants to register or RSVP for the event ahead of time (if so, use this [template registration email](#)). Will there be a limited number of spaces available? Will you need to coordinate carpooling?
- Start spreading the word about your event using the [template promotion spreadsheet](#)! Create an event flyer using our [event flyer template](#). Share information on social media, tell your friends, and add your event to the [SWCS events calendar](#) using the [event submission form](#).



SWCS internship applications open.



MARCH/APRIL

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

GOAL: Host Your Conservation Event

It's time to host your event! This is it, what you've been working toward! Use SWCS resources to help make your event a success. Don't forget to take lots of photos and share them with headquarters.

TO DO:

- Send out event reminders to your co-planners, your speaker(s)/guides(s), and your participants! What should they know before attending your event? Will they need to be dressed to work outside or are you hosting a business casual event? What will they need to bring? Will there be any food? Adapt the [template attendee final information email](#) and [template speaker final information email](#) as you see fit!
- Prepare presentation materials for the event using the [SWCS presentation template](#) and [template backdrop slide](#) (if applicable).
- Print out and share the [SWCS Student and Early Career Opportunities flyer](#) with your attendees.
- At your event, make sure you take attendance. Also, take lots of photos! Send photos and a brief description of your event to renee.bouldin@swcs.org for a chance to be featured on SWCS social media platforms.



Conference Callout

March: Student Moderator Program applications open! Check website for availability.

April: Conference registration opens! Don't miss the early bird registration deadline to get a discount.

STUDENT EVENT EXAMPLES

University of Oklahoma Student Chapter Pensacola Dam Trip. Members received a private tour of the Grand River Dam Authorities' water testing lab and hydropower facilities and learned about native plants and nearby soil systems.



University of Massachusetts Amherst SWCS Student Chapter Welcome Meeting. Members discussed the goals of reviving the student chapter and voiced their interests for potential events and tours.



University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point Rotational Grazing & Aquaponics Tour. Chapter members toured a local farm owned by Carl Flaig who collaborates with the chapter on a long-term research project examining the effects of rotational grazing on soil health and carbon storage on his farm.



Kansas State University Student Chapter Networking Night with NRCS, hosted in collaboration with the Kansas SWCS Chapter. This event provided students with the opportunity to connect with soil scientists, environmental engineers, administrators, and other experts working across various conservation fields within NRCS and other organizations.



WRAP UP YOUR YEAR

GOAL: Submit the End-of-Year Survey

You did it! Before you roll into summer, don't forget to reflect on the work you've accomplished this year. Use the [end-of-year survey](#) to let headquarters know what you've been up to and set yourself up for next year. If you've completed the necessary steps, by taking this survey you will also be eligible for a \$150 expense reimbursement.

TO DO:

- Fill out the [end-of-year survey](#) by **May 15**. You will receive a \$150 reimbursement if you are eligible.
- Determine who will be the primary contact for your group in the next school year. Give them the necessary tools and resources like mailing lists and login details for group accounts to ensure a smooth handover.
- Communicate to your members that you will be continuing next year and how they can stay involved!

SUMMER

Enjoy your summer! Congratulations on all you've accomplished this year!



Conference
Callout

Prepare to attend the 81st SWCS
International Annual Conference!

LET'S RECAP

NEXT STEPS

Congratulations on exploring the exciting possibilities of leading an SWCS student chapter or affiliate organization! By joining the Soil and Water Conservation Society's vibrant community, you're taking the first step towards making a positive impact on our environment and future generations.

Now, it's time to turn that enthusiasm into action! Let's recap your next steps:

- 1. Start Your SWCS Journey:** Gather your fellow students and reach out to potential advisors to kick off your SWCS student chapter or affiliate organization.
- 2. Embrace Resources and Guidance:** Our dedicated SWCS team is here to support you every step of the way. Make the most of the governance resources, event planning tools, and helpful tips available at www.swcs.org/students.
- 3. Get Recognition:** Follow the steps outlined in the guide to get your official affiliation with SWCS. This will unlock access to valuable resources, affiliate logos, and free swag.
- 4. Spread the Word:** Utilize social media, campus networks, and community outreach to share your journey and engage with like-minded individuals who care about conserving our precious natural resources.
- 5. Participate in the Student T-shirt Contest:** Don't miss the chance to showcase your creativity and win free SWCS gear!
- 6. Plan Your Conservation Event:** Set your sights on hosting a conservation event that aligns with your group's interests and passions. Utilize the planning resources provided to ensure your event is a success.
- 7. Reflect and Renew:** As the year comes to a close, remember to complete the end-of-year survey to share your achievements, provide valuable feedback, and prepare for an even more impactful next year.



By taking these steps, you'll be part of a network of students and professionals dedicated to natural resources conservation. Together, we have a big impact. For any questions or assistance, don't hesitate to reach out to our team at memberservices@swcs.org.

Thank you for building communities dedicated to conservation. Let's build a sustainable future together!

-SWCS Team