

Foreword

It is an honor to bring you *Soil and Water Conservation: A Celebration of 75 Years* and serve as staff during our organization's 75th anniversary. This year has given us, as an organization, the opportunity to reflect on how we started, where we have been, and where we are now.

When we first discussed plans to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), leadership had three goals: (1) to celebrate the work and accomplishments of conservation professionals, (2) to celebrate achievements of the Society, and (3) to provide a thoughtful dialogue on the future of conservation. During our 74th annual conference in Pittsburgh, the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* editorial board enthusiastically supported these ambitions and formed a committee to develop a collection of essays that would reflect on the state of conservation science and practice. The efforts of three dedicated editors and long-time SWCS members—Jorge A. Delgado, Clark J. Gantzer, and Gretchen F. Sassenrath—as well as dozens of expert authors and reviewers have resulted in an exceptional publication that more than achieves our goals.

Authors were given the formidable task of describing their areas of work in soil and water conservation, challenges of the past, progress in the last 75 years, and future goals and opportunities. In addition to 20 chapters with a conservation science and research focus, 9 chapters providing a “Practitioner’s Perspective” highlight on-the-ground experiences through current projects, case studies, and practice implementation. While the chapters serve as introductions to complex and critical topics, many authors have included thorough references and resources for readers wishing to learn more.

Reviewing the important solutions presented in this collection, we ask the question: Could our organization's founder, Hugh Hammond Bennett, have ever anticipated the developments of the past 75 years—modeling, remote sensing, tools and partnerships made possible through an increasingly globalized world—or the complexity of the challenges that conservationists face today under pressures of a changing climate and growing populations? Could Bennett have imagined the dynamic assortment of conservation professionals

that SWCS has assembled 75 years later? Would he have predicted their many contributions that have created a promising future for agriculture, the environment, and society? This collection, completed in just over a year, is a testament to the passion that our members and partners have for sharing their knowledge and communicating their work to a broad audience.

In exploring the past 75 years of human relationships to agriculture and the environment, conservation efforts, and our organization through these pages, a coherent story emerges: the devastation of the Dust Bowl; developments in fertilizer, crop, and equipment technology; the environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s; shifts in policy and funding; effects of a changing climate; and renewed attention to soil health. Most evident to us, however, are the many diverse individuals and organizations whose contributions have had a role in advancing our understanding of soil and water conservation. It is their efforts that we mark in this collection and their commitment to stewardship that we seek to sustain. We must continue to learn from one another, find opportunities for partnership and collaboration, and share the conservation story. It is this community of conservation professionals who work tirelessly to understand, protect, and improve our natural resources that was at the center of the conservation movement 75 years ago, just as it is today.

Clare Lindahl

CEO, Soil and Water Conservation Society

Annie Binder

Director of Publications, Soil and Water Conservation Society