April 2014

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Annual Conference News

The 2014 SWCS International Annual Conference will be held from July 27–30, 2014, at the Westin Lombard Hotel in Lombard, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. To keep up to date on all annual conference news, visit our website.

Conference Registration Is Open!
Registration for the 69th SWCS International Annual Conference is open! Take advantage of the opportunity to learn about the latest research, policies, and practices in natural resource conservation as well as network and connect with the country’s leaders in environmental affairs. The conference will include workshops, concurrent training sessions, symposia, posters, plenary sessions, and technical tours designed to raise awareness of recent developments in the science and art of natural resource conservation and environmental management. To receive the early registration discount, register online before June 17, 2014. Information concerning the agenda, hotel, and fees is also located online.

Preliminary Program Now Available
The SWCS annual conference agenda features five training tracks with 19 symposia and more than 170 oral and poster presentations. Find details about these educational sessions as well as the other opportunities offered at this year’s conference in the preliminary program. Download your copy today.

Student Moderator Program Now Accepting Applications
The Student Moderator Program is an excellent opportunity for current college students to get a hands-on experience and network at the SWCS annual conference. The program is for full-time student members of SWCS with a major in conservation and/or environmental affairs. SWCS will waive conference registration fees and cover two hotel room nights for up to 18 student members. In return, these students will spend one day assisting conference organizers with tasks such as audiovisual technical support, note taking, and session facilitation. Students will be granted admission to attend educational sessions on the alternate day in exchange for volunteering their time.

Students are responsible for covering the cost of their own transportation and meals as well any workshop or tour fees, should they choose to attend. Full details along with a link to the application may be found online.

Exhibitor and Sponsorship Opportunities Available
Do you have an organization or a business or know of one that could benefit from increased exposure to over 400 conservation professionals? If so, please visit our annual conference web page for details on becoming an exhibitor or sponsor of the 69th SWCS International Annual Conference.

You may also contact Chrissy Rhodes at christine.rhodes@swcs.org to receive further details or to discuss a customized sponsorship package. Exhibitor and sponsor referrals are also greatly appreciated!

Show SWCS Conference Attendees Your Chapter Accomplishments
Chapters can now request informational tables for the 69th International Annual Conference. Setting your chapter table up at the annual conference is a great way to show off accomplishments, activities, scholarships; give other chapters ideas for events; and encourage attendees to join your local chapter activities. Chapter tables are available for the discounted price of $100. Order through the 2014 exhibitor and sponsor registration form found here.

Did You Know?
The very first SWCS Annual Meeting was held in Chicago, Illinois, in 1946, at the Morrison Hotel. During the meeting, H.C. Byrd, president of the University of Maryland gave the keynote address, and the first election of officers was held, naming R.H. Musser president of the Society. It was also during this time, a vote took place to change the name from Soil Conservation Association of America to Soil Conservation Society of America.
Job Posting: Manager of Stewardship and Sustainability Programs for The Fertilizer Institute

SWCS corporate member The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) is seeking candidates for the manager of stewardship and sustainability programs position. This position is responsible for managing and assisting with development of TFI stakeholder implementation and outreach programs to increase the use and adoption of fertilizer best management practices. Specifically, this individual will manage the development and delivery of outreach and education tools to promote 4R Nutrient Stewardship.

To view the entire job posting, go to the Nutrient Stewardship website.

Iowa Chapters Support Local Public Television

On Saturday March 8, about 20 volunteers from the Iowa Chapter and the Iowa State University Student Chapter of SWCS met at the Iowa Public Television (IPTV) studios to take pledges during IPTV’s annual festival. Volunteers were trained to answer phones to take pledges during the airing of the Iowa State Girls Basketball Tournament. The broadcast reached residents throughout Iowa and neighboring states. The Iowa Chapter has been volunteering for this event every year since the late 1990s. The picture below shows the SWCS group that helped out at the IPTV event.

Upcoming SWCS Events

- **SWCS Northern Plains Regional 2014 Technical Conference**
  Billings, Montana
  May 28-29, 2014

- **SWCS Oklahoma Chapter Annual Meeting**
  Robbers Cave State Park, Wilburton, Oklahoma
  June 6-7, 2014

- **21st Century Watershed Technology Conference and Workshop—Improving Water Quality and the Environment**
  The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
  November 1-7, 2014

- **2014 SWCS International Annual Conference**
  Lombard, Illinois
  July 27-30, 2014
Book Review: Restoration Agriculture
By Jacqueline Pohl

What does soil conservation mean? For years, I have taken this term literally—that it simply means conserving the soil, preventing it from blowing away, and preventing it from washing away.

But what if there is another way? A better way? What if we could not just preserve the soil but actually increase it? Not just prevent soil degradation but actually improve the quality and quantity of this valuable resource?

Mark Shepard tells us how to do exactly that in his book, Restoration Agriculture: Real-World Permaculture for Farmers. Even better, Shepard tells us how to improve the soil while increasing overall harvest, conserving water, and building a hedge against fluctuating commodity prices and against turbulent weather. With 20 years of experience managing his 110 acre permaculture farm, Shepard demonstrates a reality that many would dismiss as impossible. He explains his success in this book with clear, straightforward descriptions that kept me fascinated from the first page to the last.

Shepard’s success with his permaculture farm stems from diligent research and his intricate observations of nature. He writes, “Farmers and ranchers are actually in the solar energy collection business…Since farmers are in the business of capturing solar energy, wouldn’t it make sense to utilize systems that have as large a surface area as possible in order to capture as much sunlight as they can?”

Shepard designed his farm using a natural ecosystem template—a savannah to be exact. Instead of destroying species diversity in favor of raising a single crop, he employs diversity deliberately. Shepard chooses plants that are mutually beneficial and that support each other. For example, nitrogen fixers grow together with annual crops, and ground covers preserve moisture for roots while protecting them from the wind and the sun. Together, his crops grow stronger, and almost everything Shepard grows, he can harvest.

Shepard’s approach to rainfall is rare as well. Instead of tiling his fields to make the water disappear, he uses keyline design techniques to move the water where it is needed. Keyline design also gives rainfall time to soak deep into the ground. These strategies slow the water down, prevent soil runoff, and encourage moisture retention that gives his farm an added boost when rainfall is scarce. In the event of erosive rainfall, Shepard also points out how tall perennial plants can protect delicate soil: “The gentle drip of rain beneath the tree is yet another benefit that we get from this three-dimensional structure.”

As a native Iowan, I read this book with typical Iowan biases: land must be cleared in order to grow crops, and farms must be tilled every year, planted every year, fertilized every year, and harvested every year. Of course, I was also aware of how much damage these practices incur. Shepard has brought a new perspective to my life that I can’t wait to implement on my own land.

You probably have more questions, and this book probably addresses them. There are hundreds of brilliant details in this book that describe, in intricate detail, how natural elements harmonize in a permaculture system in a way that is both profitable and less work intensive. Read this book. I promise you will learn something, and I hope it also inspires you to try something new on your land.

Come join me on the SWCS Network! I have created a discussion about this book in the permaculture group, and I would love for you to share your thoughts with me about this book. I hope to see you there!

Jacqueline Pohl graduated with a BS degree in Biology and English from Iowa State University in 2006. She spent five years as editorial assistant at the Soil and Water Conservation Society. Since then, Pohl has copyedited How to Build Better Agricultural Conservation Programs to Protect Water Quality: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture—Conservation Effects Assessment Project Experience. She is currently employed as a communication specialist at Iowa State University.

To submit a review of a conservation-related publication, contact Amy Thompson at amy.thompson@swcs.org.
New Members
Welcome members who joined in March!

California/Nevada
Kay Joy Barge

Colorado
William Owsley

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island—Southern New England
Kevin Hoyt
Sonia Marino
Mark Massoud
Gregory Pidluski

Florida
Maria Silveira

Iowa
Sally Logsdon
Jeremy Overstreet
Mary Skopec

Iowa—Iowa State University
Andrew Corbett
Jacob Kemner
Sam Shanks

Illinois
Vincent Conte
Ivan Dozier
George Geatz
Kelsey Mehl
Elizabeth Miernicki
Jelita Pertiwi
Abigail Petersen
Casandra Roberts
Rachel Welch
Jennifer Woodyard

Indiana—Hoosier
Heath Hurst

Indiana—Purdue University
Katie Fagan
Tiffani Goodman
Isaac Greeson

Michigan
Zouheir Massri

Minnesota
Brenda Miller

Montana
Scott Morton

All Ohio
Mike Hall
Christina Kuchle
David Lewis
Ted Lozier
Clifton Martin
Ken Mauer

South Carolina
Gilbert Sigua

Tennessee
Wesley Mattingly

In Memoriam
We remember those friends who have passed on and keep their families in our thoughts.
David Langemeier was a member of the Nebraska Chapter

Current Corporate Members
For more information about corporate membership, please contact Chrissy Rhodes, 515-289-2331 x 114, corporate.info@swcs.org.

Gold
Agri Drain Corporation
DuPont Pioneer
Hickenbottom Inc.

Silver
Agren Inc.
The Fertilizer Institute

Bronze
Conservation Technology Information Center
Ecosystem Services Exchange
Forrest Keeling Nursery
The Nature Conservancy
White River Irrigation District
From the Leadership

Learning Conservation As We Go

By Bill Boyer, Northeastern Director

Fifty years ago I was running barefoot through the barnyard and helping my father milk 52 registered Holstein dairy cows. Forty years ago, and after two years of college, I got a summer job at the Harford Soil Conservation District in Bel Air, Maryland. After that job, I was hired by the Soil Conservation Service as a part-time employee. Unfortunately, after three months in that position I was let go because of budget issues. In those six months of learning mapping, basic plan development skills, and visiting farms to talk with farmers about how best to correct problems on the land, I decided that this was the career for me. It was in part because I enjoyed the people I worked with: Frank Richardson, the district conservationist; Pat Tunney, the technician; and Connie and Dave, the district secretary and manager. The other reasons I enjoyed the job were using the skill of reading the land, understanding the farmers’ issues, and solving problems. Solving a problem didn’t just mean words on paper, but identifying the cause, surveying the land, designing the solution, and working with the farmer to build a conservation practice.

I’m sure each of you have memories and unforgettable experiences throughout your career. I hope you think back on them fondly or at least see them as good learning experiences. Some changes may not seem to be in the best interest of the field conservationist; every year we are asked to do more, manage more, and be more—with less support and employer resources. The typical field conservationist used to focus his or her efforts on soil erosion and water quality on production land, but current field conservationists now manage financial programs and contracts as well. This trend is not just in the Federal Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) area like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, but in state conservation agencies, local and national nongovernmental organizations, university research, and other conservation partners. This is good news because it brings a dynamic focus on natural resources and financial assistance to landowners, but alternatively, it has certainly expanded our responsibilities.

SWC’s new focus on soil health is an interesting and welcome change in our business. I think that soil health incorporates many components of conservation technology and application that we have known and used for many years. We are familiar with all the pieces, but it is now a more holistic approach, like the hub of a wagon wheel with soil and soil health at the core. For most farmers implementing soil health is change and may require costly adjustment to their farming practices. It’s not an absolute science to identify the right mix of cover crops that works for each farmer according to their soils, climate, and needs—it takes knowledge, training, and experience. Some of that knowledge can come from observing what works for local farmers, blended with our knowledge of soil and water resources and conservation practices. The professional conservationist is the vital link to farmers.

Farmers still depend on the professional conservationist. Congress and state legislatures still rely on the professional conservationist. The future and security of our world will continue to need conservationists.

Each employer, such as NRCS, tries its best, but changes come slowly and are usually hampered by the costs to develop training as well as the many responsibilities already tasked to the employee. This is the point where professional organizations like SWCS can help fill the gaps. SWCS is well situated to bring professionals together and facilitate an information exchange at the national, regional, and local levels. The professional conservationist, like any professional, needs to keep current with the latest technology and information. Is SWCS achieving that or can we do better? If you think our organization could improve, we need to hear from you. You’ve heard the expression, “see something, say something;” maybe we should change it to “need something, say something.” SWCS is an important tool, and we need to make sure it meets the needs of conservationists.