



# CONSERVOGRAM

 > The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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## 78th SWCS International Annual Conference Updates

Des Moines, Iowa  
August 6-9, 2023  
[www.swcs.org/23AC](http://www.swcs.org/23AC)

## Student Moderator Program Application Released

We are excited to announce that applications are now being accepted for the 78th SWCS International Annual Conference Student Moderator Program!

If you've ever thought about experiencing the SWCS International Annual Conference in a hands-on, behind-the-scenes learning capacity, this program may be for you! We will select up to 10 full-time student members of SWCS with a major in conservation and/or environmental affairs to assist with breakout session moderation and room support. In exchange, SWCS will cover conference registration and three hotel room nights for each participant. In addition, students will be granted an all-access pass to attend conference activities when not assigned to a breakout session.

The application deadline is **May 19**. [Read full program details and apply.](#)

Not a student member of SWCS? [Join today!](#)



## Become an Exhibitor or Sponsor by June 7

Be a part of this one-of-a-kind opportunity to connect with a uniquely targeted group of conservation and environmental professionals. Becoming an exhibitor or sponsor gives you an affordable opportunity to market your products and services to a key audience and maximize your organization's exposure. Put your brand in front of those who are directly involved in the decision-making process of purchasing products or those who influence prospective buyers and conservationists.

Download and review the [Exhibitor and Sponsor Guide](#) for full details and to become an exhibitor or sponsor today! Registration deadline is **June 7, 2023**.



**BECOME AN EXHIBITOR OR SPONSOR**

## Upcoming Webinar Series

SWCS hosts several educational webinar series, all of which are free or exclusive to members. Learn more at [www.swcs.org/events/webinars](http://www.swcs.org/events/webinars).

**Lessons from Leaders: Accelerating the Adoption of Conservation Drainage** [webinar series](#) was created to provide a platform for conservation practitioners and producers across disciplines to connect with and learn from leading stakeholders about opportunities and challenges in advancing conservation drainage adoption. The fourth session titled "Industry and NGO Perspectives" is April 26, from 3:00 to 4:15 p.m. CT.

This month's **Conservation Matters** webinar will be Thursday, April 27, at 12 p.m. CT. Join us to hear from authors of articles in the recent special issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, "Climate Change Impacts on Soil and Water Conservation." [Register online](#) and share this opportunity with interested colleagues as well!

The next session of the **SWCS Members Only Book Club: A Year with Aldo Leopold** is April 28, at 12 p.m. CT. Our monthly sessions have been a great success as participants discuss *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold. [Registration details](#) will be sent directly to active members.

## New Member Welcome

SWCS headquarters will host a virtual New Member Welcome on **Wednesday, May 3, from 12:00 to 12:30 p.m. CT**. This event is to welcome new members who joined after January 1, 2023. SWCS Chapter and Community Builder Renee Bouldin and Membership Director Erika Crady will present this welcome via Zoom. They will share tips for making the most of your SWCS membership and connecting with fellow conservationists.

Advanced registration is required. [Register today!](#)

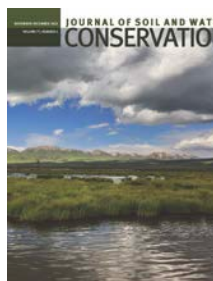


## Journal Research Editor Search

The JSWC is accepting applications for a new role: Research Co-Editor with a social sciences specialization. All are invited to view the position qualifications and apply.

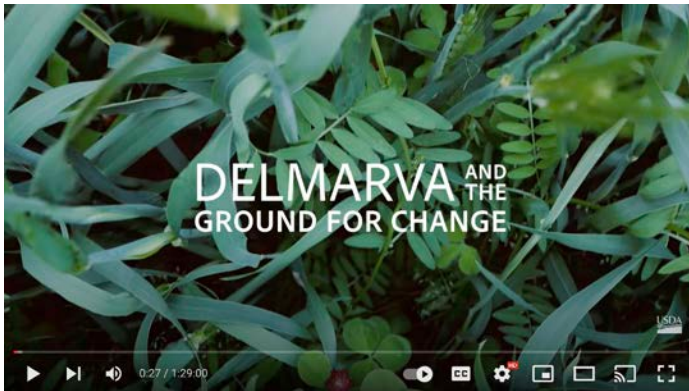
This addition to the Editorial Board addresses the growing number of social science manuscript submissions and ensures the journal will continue to serve as a high quality, *multidisciplinary* conservation publication that informs members and readers working in a range of disciplines and roles. The two Research Co-Editors will be responsible for overseeing the peer-review of manuscripts within their topic areas, will invite new associate editors to join the Editorial Board, and will serve as Editorial Board Co-Chairs. Editors serve for three-year terms with the possibility of renewal.

Applications are due **May 31, 2023**. Learn more on the [journal website](#) and contact [annie.binder@swcs.org](mailto:annie.binder@swcs.org) with any questions.



## Delmarva and the Ground for Change

By Emma Harper



As conservation professionals, we know it takes knowledge, time, hard work, trial and error, and, most of all, patience to get conservation practices on the ground. However, most Americans have no real connection to farming, leading to many misconceptions about agriculture and what it takes to maintain a productive operation.

*Delmarva and the Ground for Change* is a documentary film that follows the story of three family-owned farms in the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays as they have worked to adopt soil conservation practices over the years. Each farm varies widely in size, commodities, and management practices, but all aim to maintain profitable, environmentally beneficial operations.

Filmmaker Karrah Kwasnik from the USDA Northeast Climate Hub chose this region because of its high rate of soil conservation practices. Maryland (58%) and Delaware (54%) have the country's highest reported use of no-till farming on cropland acres ([Rejesus et al. 2021](#)). Kwasnik points out that the states also lead in cover cropping, with "29% of Maryland and 19% of Delaware cropland acres reported to be 'under cover' in 2017." For comparison, the national average was 3.9% of cropland under cover. She hoped to shine a light on the farms and their work as an example of how soil health practices can be successful.

Throughout the film, the farmers share their knowledge, perspectives, and tips on the following conservation practices: planting green, cover cropping, no-till, rotational grazing, and subsurface drip irrigation.

Kwasnik wants people to have the following two takeaways from the film:

- "Soil health is really important, but it's not new."
- "Many practices that improve soil health also help make farms more climate resilient."
- "This film addresses what modern agriculture looks like."

Farmers depend on their soil to continue producing high yields for years to come. While use of soil health practices is high in Maryland and Delaware, that is not the same nationwide.

Implementing these practices successfully can differ by region, soils, and climate. The farmers in the film have worked with their local extension, conservation organizations, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices, and even researchers to implement soil health practices on the ground. The conservation professional is a crucial link needed to scale up conservation efforts nationwide.

[Click here](#) to learn more and watch the film.

If you want to host a viewing with speakers, contact the filmmaker, Karrah Kwasnik, at [Karrah.Kwasnik@unh.edu](mailto:Karrah.Kwasnik@unh.edu).

*Thank you to SWCS member Curtis Dell for sharing this film resource with SWCS membership.*

## Enter Free Conservation Photo Contest

Enter our free photo contest by May 31 for a chance to win a \$50 e-gift card from Amazon, be selected for display during the 78th SWCS International Annual Conference and on the virtual resources platform following the event, and see your photo on the cover of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*!

We want to see photos that display soil and water conservation and people in action, showcase the beauty of the world's natural resources, and/or inspire conservation professionals working to ensure the future of our natural resources on both private and public lands.

View the photo contest information at [www.swcs.org/23PC](http://www.swcs.org/23PC).



## Upcoming Chapter Events

### [Earth Day Clean Up - Anacostia Watershed](#)

Edmonston, MD  
April 22, 2023

### [Conservation and Conversations: Networking Event](#)

Washington, DC  
April 27, 2023

## Conservation at the Co-op: April Update

*In November of 2019, our partnership with Truterra was awarded over \$1.5 million in funding by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through the project, SWCS and Truterra aim to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices in Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.*

The retailers held their End of Year-3 Meeting in Kansas City on March 21. Staff from all retailer partners attended, in addition to the USDA NRCS National Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) Point of Contact, the project lead at the Soil and Water Conservation Society, and nonfederal project partners at Truterra.

A fundamental element of the project was to support retailers to design business models that enabled them to deliver conservation products and services. The following is a preliminary glimpse at the project's four working models:

**Sales as Lead:** This is a divide and conquer approach. This option is ideal for sales-driven co-ops without a robust agronomy department or a centralized corporate structure, but with a supportive sales department head willing to delegate additional tasks to their sales team. The sales department adopts the project comprehensively into its existing work. The department head sets a goal to recruit a certain number of growers and acres into a new program and tasks sales staff with meeting portions of that goal.

**Agronomy as Lead:** This is a "smaller is better" approach for co-ops with existing capacity to provide conservation agronomy services on a small level, such as through a partnership with a third party for remote sensing, soil testing, or zone nutrient management prescriptions. This department may be a standalone, or it may be a subset of another department. Either way, the co-op already has a couple (at least two) dedicated staff who work together on a routine basis. They are capable of forming their own work plan, delegating tasks, and forming an internal support network independent of oversight from department heads. In a two-person system, one person should provide

administrative support, and one person should provide service delivery, but the roles will likely overlap.

**Champion as Lead:** This approach is similar to the Agronomy as Lead approach, but with fewer resources and support internally. Rather than multiple personnel serving different roles, this model requires a single "Champion," or individual, who assumes responsibility for all elements of the project. This approach works best for co-ops with a large leadership structure that may be apprehensive about spending time and resources on conservation agronomy as an experimental or "skunkworks" project that will not produce an immediate return on investment. Internally, the Champion's role is to execute the project without demanding additional time and resources from department heads and leadership. Externally, the Champion's role is to promote conservation agronomy within the co-op's service footprint.

**Conservation Agronomy as Lead:** This approach is for co-ops with a centralized corporate structure and a department dedicated to conservation agronomy, or the alignment among leadership to add that capacity prior to the project. The department head is the project lead, and their support staff carry out administrative and field work tasks. This added capacity means less reliance on other departments, such as sales and accounting. The Conservation Agronomy Department develops its own sales and recruitment plans and sets a goal to maintain financial stability during the startup phase by actively forming public-private partnerships with public agencies and nonprofit organizations. External funding removes the investment risk in hiring additional personnel into a new department, while also providing the co-op with built-in marketing and networking opportunities through service and outreach activities.

## Science and Policy Committee Update: March Meeting

*Courtesy of Gretchen Sassenrath*

The SWCS Science and Policy Committee met on Thursday, March 9, for our regular monthly meeting. We had an animated discussion of current and emerging issues related to conservation. The committee is developing an editorial manuscript for publication in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* about issues relevant to the new farm bill legislation. The manuscript will serve to identify goals, foster discussion around critical conservation issues, and develop consensus.

Key topics that were discussed included the following:

- Interdisciplinarity, interagency collaboration, and the importance of whole-farm planning to integrate across each aspect of farming, including row crops, livestock, woodlands, wildlife areas, and water resources
- Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion to expand the scope of conservation
- Water issues, including quality, quantity, and water security; issues of flooding and wetlands; and understanding of the role soil health plays in the water cycle
- Soil health and realistic metrics for soil health beyond artificial measurements; research and development to perform soil health assessments at scale; and understanding of nutrient and water cycles within the soil ecosystem
- Nutrient issues, including changes in climate, precipitation, and discharge, as well as opportunities to explore recycling of nutrients
- Air quality and the integration of the full ecosystem—air, water, and soil
- Climate-smart agriculture, especially in relation to adopting new technology and impacts on water quality, quantity, and security
- Incentivization for conservation practices and the need to create markets for new or alternative products
- Outreach to make conservation initiatives more accessible to more people, including those in urban systems
- Legacy issues, including long-term versus short-term carbon storage and legacy sources of nutrients

The SWCS Science and Policy Committee is composed of members interested in connecting conservation research to the policies that support conservation professionals, science-based conservation, and the greater adoption of conservation practices. The committee's membership

includes researchers, academics, and practitioners, who meet monthly to exchange ideas and discuss the latest developments in conservation science and policy.

The committee is open to any members of the Society. For information on joining the committee, please contact Joe Otto at [joe.otto@swcs.org](mailto:joe.otto@swcs.org).

## Science and Policy News

Below you will find a list of some of the latest conservation science and policy news. Links to full articles on the different subjects are included.

- Green groups sue US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) over decades-old [water pollution](#) rules
- [Colorado River](#) cities and farms face dire trade-offs with new federal review
- USDA allocates [\\$75 million](#) to advance organic transition
- Study shows [soil pollution](#) in urban green spaces and natural areas is similar
- USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) now stewarding the [Rangeland Analysis Platform](#)
- Lawmakers find common ground on [soil health](#) bill
- Study offers insights on reducing [nitrate contamination](#) from groundwater recharge
- [Federal funding](#) for climate change opens up access to USDA conservation programs

*The opinions expressed in these articles are meant to keep SWCS members informed of current conservation conversations and do not necessarily represent the views of SWCS.*

## New Members

Welcome members who joined in March!

### International

Yiwen Luo

### Alabama

Will Rich

### Arkansas—Razorback

Chandler Arel  
Diego Della Lunga  
Riley Joe Swofford  
Hannah Vickmark

### California/Nevada

Jessica Rudnick

### Colorado

Hunter Koperweis

### Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island— Southern New England Chapter

David Sadowski

### Georgia

Nick McGhee  
Julie Roberts

### Iowa—Iowa State University Student Chapter

Eric Henning

### Kentucky—Bluegrass

Anna Tucker

### Massachusetts—University of Massachusetts— Amherst Student Chapter

Theint Thandar Bol  
Alex Fink  
Timothy Nsubuga

### Maine—Pine Tree

Paul Peters

### Michigan

Steve Robertson  
Sarah Thong

### Missouri—Show Me

Selma Mascaro

### Mississippi—Mississippi State University Student Chapter

Amanda Nelson

### Montana

Morgan Bell  
Tiara Whitmus

### North Carolina—North Carolina State University Student Chapter

Abbegail King

### Ohio—All Ohio

Toni Chinchar  
Kaustubh Kumar  
Chris Vondran

### South Dakota

Lina Proudfoot

### Utah

Ashley Beazer

### Virginia

Tamar Gorgadze

## Corporate Partners

Please visit [www.swcs.org/corporatepartner](http://www.swcs.org/corporatepartner) for more information on how to become a corporate partner.

### Platinum



### Gold



### Silver



### Bronze

