



CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

In This Issue

70th SWCS International Annual Conference Recap	1
Photos and Tweets from the Conference	2
News from DC	3
President's Leadership Award Winners	3
2015-2016 Board of Directors	3
Chapter Spotlight: California/Nevada Chapter	4
Watershed Materials Becomes Newest Corporate Member	4
Call for Committee Members	5
Upcoming Events	5
August Reader Question	5
New Members	6
Corporate Members	6
The Future of the Sage Grouse and Nevada Rangelands	7

70th SWCS International Annual Conference Recap

SWCS would like to thank all of the sponsors, exhibitors, presenters, session organizers, tour coordinators, volunteers, and participants who made the 2015 Annual Conference a great success! A special thanks goes to the Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter of North Carolina for welcoming us back to our "Home of Conservation." We'd also like to recognize the student moderators of this year's conference: Angel Cruz and Sean Bloszies (North Carolina State University), Kuatbay Bektemirov (University of Arkansas), Robert (Jeff) Seward (University of Manitoba), Deborah Aller (Iowa State University), and Mark River (Duke University).

More than 475 conservationists, representing 14 countries and 46 states plus the District of Columbia and Guam, gathered to hear about the latest research findings, projects, programs, and technologies in the conservation industry. Photos and PowerPoint presentations from the conference can be found on the SWCS [website](#). The [2015 awards program](#) with recipient bios and the [final program](#) are also available online.

Save the date for next year's annual conference; it will be held on July 24-27, 2016, in Louisville, Kentucky. We look forward to seeing you there!



NRCS Chief Jason Weller speaks to conference attendees.

945 SW Ankeny Road, Ankeny, IA 50023

P: 515-289-2331 | F: 515-289-1227 | pubs@swcs.org



Photos from the Annual Conference

View more photos [here](#).



From left to right: Linda Prokopy, Purdue University; David Muth, AgSolver, Inc; Mark Tomer, USDA ARS; and Deanna Osmond, North Carolina State University, speak during Tuesday's plenary session.



Attendees of the 70th SWCS Annual Conference.



Board members Wendi Goldsmith (left) and Cheryl Simmons (right) enjoy conversation and refreshments during Sunday's welcome reception.



Jeff Seward stops by the Soil Health Partnership booth in the exhibit hall.

The hashtag #SWCSAC was used for online conversation throughout the conference. Thank you to everyone who tweeted with us! Here are a few of our favorite tweets:

- 
Linda Prokopy @lprokopy · Jul 27
 Hearing from the excellent farmers in the Soil Health Partnership. #swcsac @NationalCorn
- 
Hanna Bates @hannatbates · Jul 27
 Great talk by Jerry Hatfield on the importance of #waterquality and #water quantity around the globe #swcsac
- 
DeAnn Presley @soilsdiva · Jul 27
 Predicted chance of multi-decadal drought in Great Plains in 2050-2099 about 80%, says NRCS chief Weller #swcsac
- 
Richland SWCD @RSWCD · Jul 27
 "Loss of farm income due to erosion is estimated at \$100 million per year." -Dr. Jerry Hatfield, plenary lecture. #SWCSAC #conservation
- 
sandcountyyfdn @sandcountyyfdn · Jul 27
 Arbuckle says survey indicated larger row crop farmers more likely to support #Iowa state nutrient reduction strategy. #swcsac
- 
NC Fnd Soil & Water @ncsoilwater · Jul 27
 Hugh Hammond Bennet Chapter hosts #Conservation #Jeopardy! #SWCSAC @NACDconserve
- 
Chanda L. Cooper @ChandaLCooper · Jul 28
 Tweeting a/b Soil & Water Conservation Society Conference as @RSWCD. Just heard great talk by @lprokopy a/b conservation adoption! #SWCSAC
- 
USDA NRCS retweeted
Richland SWCD @RSWCD · Jul 29
 "Farming isn't rocket science...it's more complicated than that." -Ron Nichols of @USDA_NRCS at #SWCSAC. #Hope in #HealthySoil
- 
Linda Prokopy @lprokopy · Jul 28
 Great conference! Thanks @SWCSNews and the NC chapter! #SWCSAC

To continue the conservation conversation, feel free to tweet @swcsnews anytime!

News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- The California State Water Resources Board has issued orders shutting down irrigation to many farmers getting water from the Bethany Irrigation District. The district has filed suit in Superior Court asking the order be overturned. A Superior Court judge on July 10 ruled a similar board cutoff against four other irrigation districts constituted a “taking” of their rights and temporarily suspended their enforcement.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee recently approved Fiscal Year 2016 (FY16) spending for the USDA, providing a significant increase for conservation technical assistance. Approved was \$855 million for conservation operations, an increase of \$8.8 million over the previous year, a \$22 million increase over the House FY16 proposal, and a \$24 million increase above the President’s FY16 budget.
- A Senate bill reduced mandatory conservation programs by cutting the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) by \$303 million and providing no mandatory funding for the Watershed Rehabilitation program.
- The US House of Representatives and the US Senate have their Summer Recess period beginning August 3 and ending on September 7.
- Newly revealed memos critical of the Waters of the United States (WOTUS) rule have bolstered Congressional opponents in their argument that the rule is fatally flawed, with major concerns from the Army Corps of Engineers.
- Sixteen states have asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to delay its new climate rule for power plants. The rule mandates a 32% reduction in the power sector’s carbon emissions by 2030.

President’s Leadership Award Winners

The SWCS President’s Leadership Award is given at the discretion of the SWCS President in recognition of exemplary assistance to the President in helping to carry out the goals and objectives of SWCS. Thomas Bass, Tom Buman, and the SWCS Illinois Chapter have received this prestigious award for their achievements in 2014.

Thomas Bass is completing his third and final year as chair of the Annual Conference Program Committee. Chairing this committee is one of the most important leadership responsibilities to the success of each year’s International Annual Conference. Under his leadership, the annual conference committee has identified key conservation issues each year that resulted in compelling program content that has played a key role in the success and growth of the conference.

Tom Buman is receiving the President’s Leadership Award for his service in facilitating the New Member/First-Timer Orientation at the SWCS annual conference. Since the

2009 annual conference in Dearborn, Michigan, Tom has led the orientation, an important networking and informational event for participants new to SWCS. His dedication in taking on this role has assisted staff and the Board of Directors, and his knowledge of the Society and conservation is invaluable to conference attendees. The Society is grateful for Tom’s ongoing commitment to welcoming and growing its membership.

The SWCS Illinois Chapter is receiving the President’s Award for their contributions in planning the 2014 SWCS International Annual Conference. The Illinois Chapter leadership demonstrated their commitment to the success of the SWCS International Annual Conference by coordinating conference volunteer efforts, organizing and facilitating three local conservation tours, and coordinating a silent auction as part of the Exhibitor and Poster Reception. In addition, the Chapter leadership assisted with recruiting local exhibitors and promoting the conference to colleagues and complimentary organizations. The dedication and active involvement shown by the chapter was a large contributing factor to the increased conference attendance and overall success of the event. The Society is grateful for all the time invested by these individuals and is pleased to present the President’s Award for their efforts.

2015-2016 Board of Directors

Following the 2015 SWCS International Annual Conference, the Society transitioned to the 2015-2016 Board of Directors. Each of the Society’s five regions is represented by at least one elected director. Four at-large directors also currently serve on the Board. For additional Board member photos and bios, visit the [SWCS website](#).

Mark Berkland: Southeast Region Director and President
 Mike Collins: Southwest Region Director and Secretary
 Wendi Goldsmith: Northeast Region Director
 Bruce Knight: At-Large Director
 Rex Martin*: At-Large Director
 Susan Meadows: North Central Director and Treasurer
 John Rissler: At-Large Director
 Jon Scholl: At-Large Director and Vice President
 Don Wysocki: Northwest Director

*New officers



Chapter Spotlight: California/Nevada Chapter

Chapter location: Davis, California

Current chapter president: Joe Williams

Please describe your most successful chapter event in the last year. What did members gain from this experience? We held our annual meeting and conference in Reno, Nevada. This was a video teleconferenced forum where speakers attended in Reno and their presentations were broadcast to several locations in Nevada and California.

We are attempting to promote membership and participation by more Nevada residents—our council now includes two members from Nevada.

What other activities has your chapter been involved in this year? Scholarships were offered and awarded to students in California.

What is your membership's preferred method of communication (e.g., email, newsletters, Facebook)? Email and newsletters, both hard copy and electronic; we also have a [web page](#).

What would you say are the most important current conservation concerns for your region? Sage grouse habitat, water conservation, and ground water withdrawals and subsidence.

What is your favorite part of membership in SWCS? Technical training and opportunities to meet with members from other areas.

What advice would you give to a new chapter? Involve new members early. Make it a point to get good participation on the executive board and board committees. Solicit member input on developing a strategic plan and how the plan will be enacted. Set realistic goals. Build partnerships with other groups interested in soil and water conservation.

Is there any other information you'd like to share about your chapter? We have a diverse and active executive board and membership that make things happen! The joint chapter provides a unique opportunity to tackle issues on a large scale.

Please provide a contact name and email address for questions about the chapter/membership.

Joe Williams
joe.williams@ca.usda.gov

Rob Roy
robert.roy@ca.usda.gov

Watershed Materials Becomes Newest Corporate Member

Corporate membership provides organizations with an opportunity for national and international visibility, identification with a conservation mission, and an opportunity for involvement in policy development within the Society. We are pleased to welcome Watershed Materials as the newest bronze-level corporate member of SWCS! We asked Watershed Materials to introduce themselves to our members as we begin this partnership:



The history of Watershed Materials is rooted in the dark, rich soils of Central Ohio and the red clay foothills of North Carolina. Our founders grew up in farm country—Carl Hamman has farmed in Ohio his entire life, and Garret Rhyne grew up on and around the small family farms of western North Carolina. After many years of working on and around the farm, the founders of Watershed Materials felt that there was need for someone to focus on supplying products that would improve the quality of our nation's waterways. As the oil and gas pipeline prepared to crisscross some of America's most fertile and productive farmlands, we felt the time was right to offer new and improved products that could help to lessen the impact of the pipeline construction as they moved through surface and subsurface waterways. We believe strongly that deteriorating water quality is one of the most serious environmental problems facing our world. We believe that improving the performance and health of our nation's waterways and watersheds is a key component in protecting the quality of our nation's fresh water supply.

Watershed Materials is working to bring innovation and technology to the products that farmers, land improvement contractors, and forestry workers use in their daily work environments. Operating from our base in southeastern Ohio, our products include Mad Dog Foam Bridges, Full Flow Perforated PVC Pipe, Nancy's Ritter Kind Straw Blankets and Wattles, and Soil Saver Pins and Mallets. Each of these products is designed to improve the performance and health of surface or subsurface water flows, and you can find more information on all of them at www.watershedm.com.



Watershed Materials at the 70th SWCS Annual Conference.

Call for Committee Members

As a member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, there are several ways for you to play an active role in carrying out the Society's mission. One opportunity is volunteering to serve on a committee. Joining a committee is a great way to strengthen leadership skills, as well as an opportunity to network with your peers.

Below, you will find a list of SWCS committees and brief descriptions of their charges. If you are interested in joining a committee or would like to learn more, please email your name, phone number, committee of interest, and any other notes to Chrissy Rhodes at christine.rhodes@swcs.org by August 31.

Professional Development

- Select overall professional development focus each year based on needs of the Society.
- Assist chapters by producing and distributing documents, tools, and/or presentations to deliver professional development opportunities at the chapter level.
- Assist Annual Conference Committee in selection and review of workshop submissions for Annual Conference.

Chapter Development

- Annually updating and encouraging submission of the Chapter Core Activity Report.
- Coordinating the Chapter Development Workshop at the SWCS annual meeting. The goal of the workshop is to help chapter leaders and members develop leadership skills that will enable them to be more effective as chapter leaders and conservation professionals.
- Assisting regional teams in conducting annual Regional Chapter Development Workshops. (*This is the responsibility of the Regional Teams, but committee members are on the team.*)
- Maintaining and creating new Chapter Leadership Guides (joint activity of Chapter and Professional Development Committees).

Awards

- Assist the SWCS Board of Directors in the selection of recipients for Society awards.
- Promote SWCS awards and scholarships and encourage award nominations from chapters.
- Review applications and make recommendations to the SWCS Board of Directors for approval.

International

- Provide support to international individuals and organizations who are engaged in networking and educational efforts and assist the Board in establishing liaisons with organizations and leaders in other countries.
- Encourage people outside the United States and Canada to become SWCS members and to attend Society annual meetings and specialty conferences.
- Facilitate international exchanges of experts in the fields of soil and water conservation through SWCS interaction.

Science and Policy

- Serve as the planning and action committee to enhance the work of the Society in the areas of science and policy.
- Identify emerging scientific and policy conservation issues for possible SWCS programming and publications.
- Assist SWCS staff in developing proposals for grants and other types of fundraising.

Nominations

- Nominate candidates who meet regional board member qualifications for election to regional board of director positions.
- Solicit recommendations from Society members and chapters for nominees.

Upcoming Events

[SWCS Michigan Chapter Summer Tour](#)

Kalamazoo, Michigan
August 28, 2015

[Nebraska Chapter 19th Annual Golf Tournament](#)

Lincoln, Nebraska
September 9, 2015

[Wyoming Chapter Technical Workshop: Know Your Rights: Current Water Rights and Issues in the Region](#)

Cheyenne, Wyoming
October 1, 2015

[Nutrient Management and Edge of Field Monitoring: From Great Lakes to the Gulf](#)

Memphis, Tennessee
December 1-3, 2015

August Reader Question:

What was the most memorable part of the 2015 SWCS International Annual Conference?

We ask that our readers answer the question via email (to pubs@swcs.org) or respond through social media, and we will highlight some of the responses. We hope that this will provide a discussion forum for our readers and us!

New Members

Welcome members who joined in July!

International

Honghu Liu
Yifeng Wang
Zhigang Wang

Alabama

William Puckett

Arkansas—Razorback

Niroj Aryal

California/Nevada

Sacha Lozano
Robert Maurer
Jill Sohm

Colorado

Eric Frame

Connecticut/Massachusetts/

Rhode Island—Southern New England

Richard Blodgett
Clara Rubin

DC—National Capital

Thomas Fonseca
Zeke Spears

Illinois

Neilson Conklin
Rachel Welch

Indiana—Hoosier

Jon Gotz
Susan Vance

Indiana—Purdue University

Student Chapter

Sarah Letsinger

Kansas

David Hernandez
Larry Shivers

Minnesota

Mark Dittrich

Mississippi—Mississippi State

University Student Chapter

Laura Wilson

Missouri—Show Me

Kris Rebstock

North Dakota

Jasper Teboh

New Jersey—Firman E. Bear

Patricia Hester-Fearon

Oklahoma

Liana Wagner

Oregon

Amanda Grisa

South Carolina

Dianne Greenfield
Chris Workman

Virginia

Dennis Jones
Miguel Semedo

Washington—Olympic View

Robin Buckingham

West Virginia—West Virginia

University Student Chapter
Bethani Chambers

Corporate Members

Please contact corporate.info@swcs.org for more details.

Gold



Silver



Bronze



The Future of the Sage Grouse and Nevada Rangelands

By SWCS California/Nevada Chapter Council Member Phil Hogan, district conservationist, USDA NRCS, Woodland, California

I fell in love with the sagebrush vastness of northern Nevada when I drove west on I-80 from Denver to my first-ever job with the then USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS). That was January, 1981, and this desert seemed to go on forever; I could easily imagine that this is exactly what it looked like over 100 years ago. A couple of years later, I took a Greyhound bus home for Christmas to Denver. The travel through Nevada was at night, there was a full moon, and I could easily make out the snow-covered peaks. I still, to this day, do not know why I just did not pack up my bags and move to this, what seemed to me, heaven on earth.

Over the years, I have attended numerous meetings and conferences in Reno. However, I did not have the opportunity then to venture out into the wilderness. Every year, the air would get dirtier and dirtier in Reno, especially in the winter with the inversions they have. I have also flown east over Nevada many times and have witnessed, with horror the parcelization and urbanization of this beautiful state. Yes, 81% of Nevada is public land, but the ever-expanding cities there are making room for the tens of thousands every year fleeing California and other crowded places, seeking a better quality of life. So, when I registered for the SWCS California/Nevada Chapter annual conference that took place this July 22 and 23, I was preparing myself for witnessing, on the ground, this development.

The theme for this conference was "The Science and Success of Sage Grouse Conservation." Our group listened to speakers and went on a tour led by Heather Emmons, public affairs specialist, where we learned that the sage grouse, the iconic bird of the sagebrush rangelands, may have once roamed nearly 464,000 square miles, from the Dakotas to California and from Canada to New Mexico. Sadly, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the sage grouse demonstrated significant population declines.

Straddling the California-Nevada border is the Bi-State Distinct Population Segment of sage grouse, where biologists estimate that there are between 2,500 and 9,000 of these ground-dwelling birds. In 1995, the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies determined that reported population declines were real, with the potential result of the bird being protected under the Endangered Species Act.

The decision was made not to list the sage grouse as endangered due to the development of the Bi-State Action Plan, partners working together over the last 15 years to secure \$45 million in funding. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service has played an important role in protecting the sage grouse on private land. Over 7,300 acres of key summer habitat have been protected through easements, with an additional 4,500 acres in process. The US Forest Service is beginning work on improving habitat on 29,000 acres, and the USGS is a key partner in monitoring the bi-state population and interpreting the data.

I learned that there are hundreds of people, both professionals and volunteers, that are working hard to protect the vast landscapes of northern Nevada and the habitat they provide for the sage grouse. At the end of the day, I felt much more assured that these landscapes will be there for future generations of not only the sage grouse, but for our kids as well. It is my wish, and dream that every person, at least once in their lifetime, has the opportunity to experience these magical lands.

