



CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society



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Annual Conference News

The 2015 SWCS International Annual Conference will be held July 26-29, 2015, at the Sheraton Hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina. To keep up to date on all annual conference news, visit our website at www.swcs.org/15AC.

Call for Presentations—Deadline Extended

The Soil and Water Conservation Society has extended the Call for Presentations deadline for the 70th International Annual Conference to Thursday, January 8, 2015.

[Click here](#) to download the full Call for Presentations, and visit www.swcs.org/15ac for submission instructions.

70TH ANNUAL
SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION SOCIETY
CONFERENCE
COMING HOME
TO CONSERVATION
PUTTING SCIENCE INTO PRACTICE



Donate to the 2014 Annual Giving Campaign!

There is still time to make a meaningful donation to the 2014 SWCS Annual Giving Campaign. With the financial support of the membership, SWCS continues to be a reputable leader in soil and water conservation efforts.

Donations to SWCS will help the Society

- hold its 70th International Annual Conference,
- support chapters and their work at the local level,
- publish upcoming special issues of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, and
- coordinate specialty conferences related to cover crops, biofuels, edge-of-field monitoring, and more!

Please give a gift of \$15, \$25, \$50 or more this year by logging onto your [SWCS account](#).

Help as much as you are able, and as always, we pledge to use your donation wisely as we implement this coming year's initiatives.

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Iowa Cover Crops Conference Keynote Speaker Announced

The Iowa Cover Crops Conference will take place on February 17-18, 2015, at the Sheraton Hotel in West Des Moines, Iowa. This event will provide a forum for farmers, industry leaders, and agribusiness professionals to exchange information, discuss opportunities for collaboration, learn about successful cover cropping practices, and troubleshoot challenges that may be encountered.

Bill Northey, the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, has been invited to kick off the Iowa Cover Crops Conference on February 17, 2015. Secretary Northey is a fourth-generation

Iowa farmer who grows corn and soybeans on his farm near Spirit Lake, Iowa. He is committed to promoting conservation and stewardship and telling the story of Iowa agriculture. Secretary Northey will be sharing his experience with cover crop use on his farm.



The full agenda, including breakout session topics, can be found at www.swcs.org/15IACC.

To register for the conference at the discounted rate of \$99, [click here](#). Early registration rates are good through January 27, 2015.

Apply Now for National Scholarships

SWCS is offering three scholarships for 2015: the Donald A. Williams Soil Conservation Scholarship for members who are employed in the natural resource conservation field, the Melville H. Cohee Student Leader Conservation Scholarship for members who are full-time junior or senior undergraduate or graduate students, and the Kenneth E. Grant Research Scholarship for members engaged in graduate-level research on a conservation topic. [View the flyer](#) or read more information on the [SWCS website](#). Applications are due February 12, 2015.

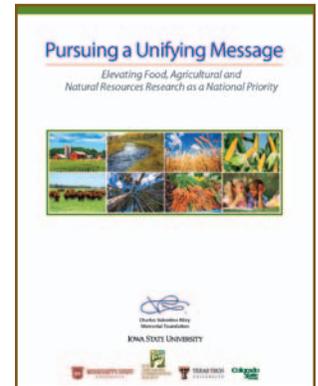
Individual Awards Deadline

The deadline for SWCS individual award nominations will be February 12, 2015. The awards program recognizes individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions in advocating the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. Awards are available to both Society members and nonmembers. Additional information and applications are available online at the SWCS awards page. [Click here for the 2015 awards flyer](#) and feel free to pass this flyer out to others who are interested in nominating candidates!

SWCS Cosponsors Report Advocating Agricultural Research

Recently, SWCS joined the Charles Valentine Riley Memorial Foundation (RMF), Iowa State University, Mississippi State University, Texas Tech University, and Colorado State University in producing and releasing a new report making the case that agricultural research should be made a national priority.

The report, "[Pursuing a Unifying Message: Elevating Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Research as a National Priority](#)," was released and discussed on Friday, December 5, 2014, at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. A recorded webcast of the report announcement and program can be viewed on the [RMF website](#)



The report documents that the United States is in danger of losing its position of international prominence in the scientific research upon which our food, agriculture, and natural resources systems depend. It encourages public and private organizations to work together toward a common goal at a time when global challenges require additional investment in agricultural research. An infographic summary of the report is available on the [RMF website](#).

SWCS Executive Director Jim Gulliford served as an author as well as on the editorial committee for this national project.

Holiday Gift Idea from SWCS

Introduce a friend to the benefits of an SWCS membership with a discounted rate of \$45 for a first time member. Your gift will not only support local, national, and international soil and water conservation, but will allow the recipient to receive professional education, networking opportunities, and all the other great member benefits you enjoy! Plus, they'll receive an introductory welcome packet, too! Contact memberservices@swcs.org for more information.

SWCS Holiday Hours

SWCS headquarters will be closed December 24, 2014, through January 2, 2015, for the holidays.

IECA's Environmental Connection Conference SWCS Member Discount!

The International Erosion Control Association (IECA) will be having its educational conference for erosion, sediment control, and stormwater industries on February 15-18, 2015, in Portland, Oregon. More details can be found [here](#).

Our friends at IECA have graciously offered to discount SWCS members' conference registration fees. To receive a registration discount, type SWCSPortland in the coupon code box on the first page of registration.

Upcoming Events

Missouri Natural Resources Conference
Osage Beach, Missouri
February 4-6, 2015

Iowa Cover Crops Conference
West Des Moines, Iowa
February 17-18, 2015

Wisconsin SWCS Chapter Annual Conference
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Wisconsin
February 27, 2015

Michigan Chapter SWCS Seminar
East Lansing, Michigan
March 6, 2015

SWCS International Conference
Greensboro, North Carolina
July 26-29, 2015

December Reader Question:

What do you think is the most effective way to reduce nutrients entering our waterways?

We ask that our readers answer the question via email (to amy.thompson@swcs.org) or respond through social media, and in the next issue, we will post some of the responses as well as ask a new question. We hope that this will provide a discussion forum for our readers and us!

Chapter Spotlight: Kentucky Bluegrass

Chapter location: Kentucky (state wide).

Current chapter president: Tibor Horvath. Tibor also served as chapter president of the Empire State Chapter in 2006 and as chapter president of the California/Nevada Chapter in 2012.

History of the chapter: Established in May 11, 1949, Kentucky had originally three chapters: Heartland Chapter, Kentucky Lake Chapter, and Bluegrass Chapter. The three chapters were consolidated into one chapter in 2004 called the Bluegrass Chapter. The current membership is 56 members. In 1991, the Bluegrass Chapter hosted the 46th International Annual Conference.

What was the most successful chapter event in the last year? Our chapter has three scholarships offered for \$1,000 each: H.H. Bailey, William Zimmerman, and the Bluegrass Chapter Conservation Scholarship. We also had a fruit tree sale, which was a success. It generated funds for our chapter, and members had a chance to work together in a group unboxing the tree seedlings and packaging the individual orders.

What other activities has your chapter been involved in this year? We are hosting a Kentucky Soil Health Forum in December, where we invite successful growers who have great experience in their own operation improving soil health. These successful farmers will share their knowledge and give good advice to all other participants.

What is your membership's preferred method of communication? We utilize email for communications and organizational work in the chapter.

What would you say are the most important current conservation concerns for your region? Definitely soil health and water quality. Kentucky has grown tobacco for many years that put a strain on soil health degradation. Many new feedlots emerged lately in Kentucky due to the cattle prices and to the cheap feed source—bourbon distillery grain (a byproduct of alcohol distillery operations and ethanol plants).

What is your favorite part of membership in SWCS? Organizing public educational events for growers.

What advice would you give to a new chapter?

Recruit members from a diverse source, not just from governmental agencies and institutions. Focus on private environmental groups and individual concerned citizens.

Is there any other information you'd like to share

about your chapter? We are getting ready to host the International Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, in 2016.

Contact name for more information about the chapter:

Tibor Horvath, President, Tibor.Horvath@ky.usda.gov.



Top picture: Chapter President Tibor Horvath presenting at the 69th International Conference's Nitrogen Workshop in Lombard, Illinois. Bottom picture: the Soil Health Workshop hosted by the Bluegrass Chapter in 2013.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in November!

California/Nevada

Jonathon Mello

Canada—Ontario

Kevin Tryon
Patrick Wong

Colorado

Thomas Lynch
Amber Wyndham

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island

Kim Kelly

Washington DC—National Capital

Otto Gonzalez
Matt Stellbauer

Iowa—Iowa State University

Hillary Pierce

Indiana—Purdue University

Aruthur Franke
Daniel Misch
Samantha Smith

Minnesota

Katy Nannenga

North Dakota

Dean Hulse

New Jersey—Firman E. Bear

Ryan Kiska

South Dakota

Michael Larson

Texas—North Texas

Anne Stine

Virginia

Timothy Durham

Virginia—West Virginia University

Chad Ingram
Stefany Scagline

Corporate Members

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

Gold

Agri Drain
CORPORATION

DOW Dow AgroSciences

DU PONT

PIONEER

Hickenbottom Inc.
Look for the bright orange inlet - Hickenbottom's Trademark®

Silver

AGREN

The
Fertilizer Institute

Nourish, Replenish, Grow

Bronze

CTIC
CONSERVATION TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION CENTER

The Nature
Conservancy
SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH

WHITE RIVER
IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Ecosystem Services Exchange
Valuing Conservation

From the Leadership

Reflections on Conservation Planning

By Mark Berkland, President

When I was asked to write an article for the *Conservogram*, I thought about a topic for a long time and decided to write about something that has always been very important to me—something which I always thought I was pretty good at—conservation planning.

My first experience with conservation planning came early in my career with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). I was a student trainee between my sophomore and junior year at Iowa State University (ISU). I reported to work at the Emmetsburg, Iowa, SCS office and met my first supervisor—Henry Tordoff. Henry was an enthusiastic person who truly believed in soil and water conservation and that conservation happened as a result of good conservation planning. Not only was Henry enthusiastic about conservation planning, but as I would find out later, he was really good at it.

I had only worked a week or so before Henry told me that both of us were going to meet with a farmer later in the week to assist him in developing a conservation plan. Henry gave me an aerial photo and a soil map of the farm. He then had me color the soil map based on severity of erosion: green, yellow, and red. Being an upcoming junior at ISU, I was not all that excited about being assigned to a job involving coloring! However, the task taught me a lot about soils that I had not learned at ISU. By the time we went out to the farm, Henry had already acquainted himself, especially with the soils on the farm. As the farmer and Henry were talking, I noticed that the farmer was impressed that Henry knew so much about his farm. For 2 to 3 hours we walked or drove all over that farm, and by the time we left, the farmer had agreed to implement several conservation measures. I was impressed; the conversation had seemed rather casual but was always focused on conservation. I told Henry on the way back to the office that I was impressed with how he had gotten the farmer to make several farming changes. Henry said that's salesmanship. I remember saying that I'm not sure this is what I want to do—I don't like sales. Henry told me, "Mark, no matter what you do in life, you are in sales. First you have to sell yourself, and then you either sell a product or an idea." In conservation planning, we sell ideas. By being prepared with maps and knowledge of the soils on the farm, Henry had sold himself to the farmer, and then he started selling conservation ideas to the farmer.

I was next introduced to the ten steps in planning. Yes, in the beginning there were ten steps. After a while, they came out with the three phases and ten elements of conservation

planning. The phases are (1) collection and analysis, (2) decision support, and (3) application and evaluation.

Phase 1:

Element 1: You identify conservation problems and opportunities with the farmer. If you see a conservation problem, e.g., a gully, you ask the farmer if that has caused him any problems.

Element 2: Determine the farmer's objectives. What does the farmer want? This can range from total land use changes to just minor changes in crops produced.

Element 3: You inventory resources. This ranges anywhere from condition of livestock to crop yields.

Element 4: You then analyze those resources. This should include such things as estimating the amount of soil being lost as a result of sheet and rill erosion.

Phase 2:

Element 5: You formulate alternatives. Here you come up with ideas with the farmer on how to resolve conservation issues previously identified.

Element 6: You evaluate the alternatives. Here in discussions with the farmer you go over the pros and cons of each of the alternatives identified in the previous element.

Element 7: Here the farmer identifies what changes he wants to make.

Phase 3:

Element 8: This is where the changes to the farming operation are made and/or conservation practices are installed.

Element 9: This is where in discussions with the farmer you conclude whether the changes that were made are proving to be beneficial and if additional changes need to be made.

When I was first exposed to these steps/elements, I made the mistake of forcing them to be used in sequence. I finally came to the conclusion that conservation planning was a process, and that these steps/elements were simply tools to be used. The tools could not be used effectively in a nice neat sequence, but rather they were dynamic in the conversations you have. I became more comfortable with conservation planning, and I found I was most effective when I started thinking that conservation planning was really an art based on science. To be effective, both the art and the science are required. All the technical information in the world (science) is useless if the art (ability to effectively communicate to the farmer) is absent. Likewise, it is ineffective to have just the art without the science. The science is needed to back up the ideas discussed with the farmer.

I learned a lot about conservation planning from Henry during those summers I spent with him as a student trainee. Those experiences served me well throughout my career with the SCS/Natural Resources Conservation Service. They continue to serve me today as a private agriculture consultant.