2017 National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health—Recap

Sheraton Indianapolis Hotel at Keystone Crossing
Indianapolis, Indiana
December 7-8, 2017
www.swcs.org/17CCSH

The National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health took place on December 7-8, 2017, in Indianapolis, Indiana. The event brought together over 500 participants from four countries, 44 states, and the District of Columbia. Nearly 30% of the audience was made up of farmers, many of whom have been using cover crops for over 10 years.

The first day of the conference kicked off with a welcome video from Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey and messages from SWCS CEO Clare Lindahl and Indiana State Conservationist Jane Hardisty. The keynote presentation was delivered by award-winning author, David Montgomery, who discussed regenerative practices to build soil health while lowering production costs. Montgomery’s presentation was followed by a panel discussion with three farmer experts from Indiana, Maryland, and Oklahoma. Dan DeSutter (Indiana), Trey Hill (Maryland), and Jimmy Emmons (Oklahoma) are innovators in their respective regions, and they shared their experiences in trying new approaches to improving soil health and the impact these practices have had on their overall farm goals.
On the second day of the conference, Rob Myers, the Regional Director of Extension for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, provided a rundown on the top 10 ways cover crops build soil health. Myers’ presentation was followed by Nebraska farmer and co-owner of Green Cover Seeds, Keith Berns. Berns’s presentation gave a unique approach to looking at the big picture of soil health by comparing the economy of a country to the underground economy of soil health.

Throughout this day and a half conference, over 40 presenters, nearly half of which were farmers, shared their knowledge and expertise during 18 different breakout sessions ranging from topics such as cover crops 101 to advanced practices and insight from farmers who have been using cover crops for many years. The conference wrapped up with two farm tours arranged by the local SWCS Indiana Chapter. These tours visited Rulon Enterprises in Arcadia, Indiana, and the Little Ireland and Starkey Farm in Brownsburg, Indiana.

Thanks to the support of the Howard G. Buffett Foundation, all presentations were recorded. These videos, as well as presentation slides, will be made available through the SWCS website in the coming weeks.

Kim Johnson-Smith Earns Certified Meeting Professional Credential

Kim Johnson-Smith, professional development director for SWCS, has earned the Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) credential through the Events Industry Council.

The CMP exam, administered by the Events Industry Council, is a comprehensive and rigorous exam that covers nine key areas: strategic management, project management, risk management, financial management, human resources, stakeholder management, event design, site management, and marketing. The CMP credential is known globally as the badge of excellence in the meeting, convention, exhibition, and events industry. Upon passing the exam, CMPs are recognized as leading experts who demonstrate the highest standards, ethics, and professionalism in the industry.

Johnson-Smith has more than 13 years of meeting planning experience and will celebrate her five-year anniversary with SWCS in March of 2018. She manages planning and coordination for the Society’s international annual conference, specialty conferences, workshops, distance learning, and other professional development opportunities with regional or national scope.

“The Society is very fortunate to have someone with Kim’s expertise, experience, and enthusiasm on staff,” says SWCS CEO Clare Lindahl. “With this certification, she becomes part of an elite group of professionals, one in only 100 in Iowa and 11,000 worldwide. We look forward to the benefits this certification will bring to our events and sharing this value with our members, chapters, and partners.”

To receive CMP designation, an applicant must have at least three years of professional experience, complete a minimum of 25 hours of specialized professional development, and pass a stringent examination. To maintain the certification, individuals must continue ongoing, industry-specific professional development.

Congratulations, Kim!
Annual Giving Campaign

The Soil and Water Conservation has a long and rich history of working to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation.

Whether you are new to SWCS or have been with us for decades, we can’t thank you enough for the support you have shown the Society by simply being a member. If you would like to extend your support even further, there are a number of ways you can give:

**GIVE ONLINE**

[www.swcs.org/give](http://www.swcs.org/give)

In addition to a one-time gift, you can choose to spread out your gift over 12 months by selecting the monthly giving option.

**MAIL**

Soil and Water Conservation Society
945 SW Ankeny Road
Ankeny, IA, 50023

**CALL**

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**SHOP FOR THE SOCIETY**

Shop for SWCS this holiday season with **AmazonSmile**! Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of purchases when you designate SWCS as your nonprofit organization. Enroll in AmazonSmile and select the “Soil and Water Conservation Society, Ankeny, IA.” Then, download and add our [printable tags](#) to your gifts to show your support!

**SHOW SOME LOVE – Combined Federal Campaign**

Are you a federal employee? Then “Show Some Love” and participate in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC)! SWCS Charity Code: 11797.

Be part of the future—make a gift to the Society in 2017. All donations are tax-deductible.

**Gift a Membership**

Have you heard about our great deal on gift memberships? Introduce a friend to the benefits of an SWCS membership with a discounted rate of $58 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! Download the [gift membership form](#) and return it by mail with a check to:

Soil and Water Conservation Society
945 SW Ankeny Rd.
Ankeny, IA 50023

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**Upcoming Events**

**Colorado Chapter Farming Evolution**
Holyoke, Colorado
February 13-14, 2018

**Southern New England Chapter Winter Conference**
Stubridge, Massachusetts
March 16, 2018
Redesigned SWCS Website

On Monday, December 11, SWCS launched a redesigned website. With streamlined navigation and an integrated publications store, the website makes it faster and easier to find information and resources. The new design is also responsive, which means it is built for use on tablets and phones as well as desktop computers. While the site look has changed, the member login and account for accessing member and subscription information will remain the same. Watch the site for up-to-date Society and conference news in the coming year!

News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue is moving ahead with some controversial reorganization.
- The Nebraska Public Service Commission issued the go ahead for TransCanada to build the Keystone XL pipeline through the state, clearing one of the last regulatory hurdles for the controversial project.
- Representative Vicky Hartzler of Missouri has introduced the “Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Grazing Flexibility Act,” which would allow farmers to graze livestock on their enrolled CRP acreage as an authorized mid-contract management practice.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers are proposing to extend the effective date of the 2015 “Waters of the US” rule for two years in order to eliminate confusion that may arise from a Supreme Court ruling on where the challenges to that rule should be heard—in the federal district courts or the federal circuit courts of appeals.
- Iowa is launching a first-in-the-country “good farmer discount” for cover crops through crop insurance premiums.
- The EPA’s budget would suffer a $150 million cut next year under a bill served up by the Senate Appropriations Committee.
- In his latest blog post, SWCS Board Member and past Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Bruce Knight, highlights the potential for a reverse auction in CRP and Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) to maximize easement enrollments, use conservation dollars more efficiently, and open up opportunities for beginning farmers to start or expand their operations.
- State and federal officials are looking ahead to 2025 to take into account population growth, farming, and land use changes to update their goals for nutrient and sediment reduction in Chesapeake Bay next year.

Conservation NewsBriefs: Popular Articles from November

Are you up-to-date with news about soil and water conservation research and policy? Conservation NewsBriefs is a highly informative e-news brief that delivers the most relevant content to your inbox each and every Thursday. Below are links to some of the most read articles from over the past month:

- New study finds timing is key in keeping organic matter in wet soils (Iowa State University via ScienceDaily)
- Farmers can boost crop yields and contribute over 1 gigaton of emissions reductions (The Nature Conservancy)
- Easing the soil’s temperature: Cover crops shield soil from extreme temps (American Society of Agronomy via Phys.org)
- The truth about tillage (Corn+Soybean Digest)

Click here to sign up and start receiving your weekly Conservation NewsBriefs today!
New Members

Welcome members who joined in November!

International
Didik Suprayogo

Arkansas—Razorback
Steven Cleland
Helen Denniston
Larry Gray
Kaitlyn Maloch
Morgan Morrissett
Phillip Owens
Kennard Williams

California/Nevada
Andrew Sheldon

Canada—Ontario
Jaclyn Clark
Jocelyn Pitcher

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island—Southern
New England Chapter
Lorraine Joubert

Iowa
Brent Larson
Mike Slade

Illinois
Timothy Laatsch

Louisiana
Lisa Fultz

Minnesota
Sherry Shifflet

Missouri—Show Me
Joshua Payne

North Dakota
Marisol Berti

New Jersey—Firman E. Bear
Celia Rodrigues

New York—Empire State
Megan Myers

Texas—Golden Spread
Sanjit Deb

Texas—Heart of Texas
Gary Mach

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