



CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

In This Issue

Awards and Scholarships Deadline: February 29, 2016	1
Board of Directors Regional Elections	1
SWCS Welcomes New Special Projects Director	2
Annual Conference News: Call for Poster Presentations Still Open!	2
News from DC	2
Chapter Activity Report and Awards Reminder	3
SWCS at the NACD Annual Meeting	3
Conservation NewsBriefs: Popular Articles from January	3
Upcoming Events	3
New Members	4
Corporate Members	4
From the Leadership—Agricultural Advocacy: No time to lose, leadership requires starting a conversation <i>By At-Large Director Rex Martin</i>	5

Awards and Scholarships Deadline: February 29, 2016

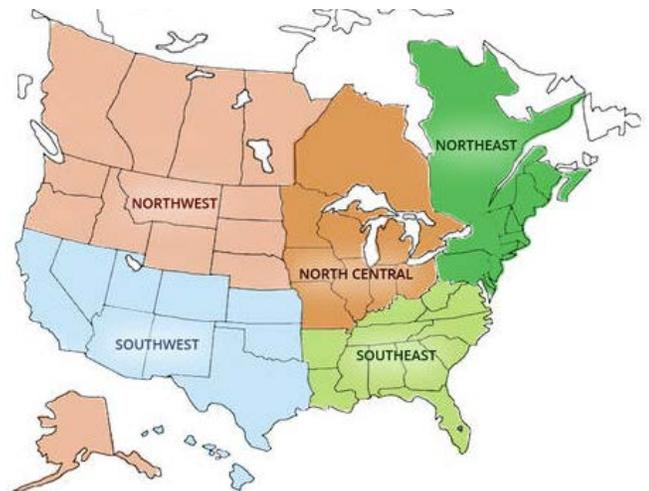
February 29, 2016, is the last day for award nominations and scholarship applications. Log onto www.swcs.org/awards or www.swcs.org/scholarships for details.

SWCS has eight award opportunities designed to recognize individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions in the world of natural resource conservation. Awards are available for both members and nonmembers and are a great way to honor nominees for their work, dedication, research, and efforts to protect natural resources and educate the community.

There are three scholarship opportunities at the national level. These scholarships are open to all members who have been with the Society for at least one year prior to the application deadline. Need financial support for your conservation future? Apply today!

Board of Directors Regional Elections

The ballots for the 2016 SWCS Regional Elections for the North Central, Southeast, and Southwest regions were emailed to members in these regions on Tuesday, January 19, 2016 (mailed to members without an email address). The email came from "electionbuddy." Please remember to check your spam folder for this important election ballot. If you have questions regarding the election, please contact Chrissy Rhodes at christine.rhodes@swcs.org or at 515-289-2331 ext. 114. The deadline to vote is 11:59 PM Central on February 22, 2016.



SWCS Welcomes New Special Projects Director

Welcome James VeVerka! James recently joined the SWCS staff as the special projects director located at the Ankeny, Iowa, headquarters. James's professional background includes work on water quality efforts, and he recently completed a Master of Science degree in soil science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. His graduate research focused on soil health applications and associated conservation practices. In his new positions, James will be working with Jim Gulliford, SWCS executive director, and project partners Iowa State University and the Agribusiness



Association of Iowa to implement optimized water quality wetlands across Iowa landscapes to target nutrient reduction loads to Iowa surface waters. More information about the goals of this three-year project can be found in the [January 2016 Conservogram](#).

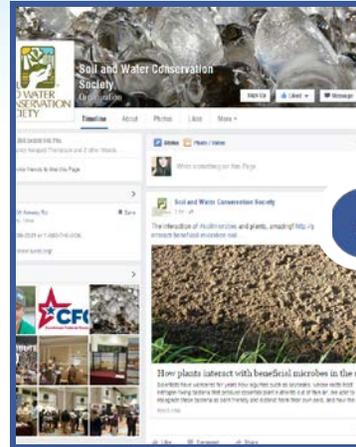
James looks forward to working with the great staff and members of SWCS! You can reach James at 515-289-2331 x 117 or james.veverka@swcs.org.

Annual Conference News

The 2016 SWCS International Annual Conference will be held July 24-27, 2016, at the Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kentucky. To keep up to date on all annual conference news, visit our website at www.swcs.org/16AC.

Call for Poster Presentations Still Open!

Posters may be submitted for the 70th International Annual Conference through February 29, 2016. To submit a poster, please visit the [conference website](#).



“Like” the Soil and Water Conservation Society on Facebook to keep up with the latest Society news and conservation current events!

News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Jason Weller's meeting with conservation partners was held February 11, 2016.
- USDA Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden announced that she will step down from her position at the end of February. Michael Scuse, the undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Services, will serve as acting deputy secretary.
- An agreement announced recently will protect 85% of one of Canada's most magnificent stretches of land: The Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia.
- Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) is moving the upper chamber toward ending its debate on a wide-ranging energy reform proposal. The leader filed cloture on the legislation from senators Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Maria Cantwell (D-Washington) after senators rejected a slate of partisan amendments.
- The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) conducted a briefing on Wednesday, February 10 discussing the climate deal that came out of the 2015 Paris climate change conference, as well as what lies ahead for the 185 countries that pledged to reduce their emissions.

The USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) has updated its data sets, which provide information on “population, income, education, employment, federal funds, organic agriculture, farm characteristics, farm financial indicators, top commodities, and exports (for each state in the United States).” These fact sheets can be found [here](#).*

**Thank you to Caron Gala of the Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (C-FARE) for notifying us of this newly available and valuable resource.*

Chapter Activity Report and Awards Reminder

The 2015 chapter reports and chapter awards nomination deadline is March 15, 2016. The chapter awards nomination forms are now combined with the chapter activity report, making it easier than ever to nominate your chapter for their work! Click [here](#) for details, and contact memberservices@swcs.org or your chapter leader with questions.

SWCS at the NACD Annual Meeting

Chrissy Rhodes, SWCS program coordinator, recently represented SWCS at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting, "Conservation: Historical Legacy Guiding a Brighter Future." The NACD conference brings together partners in conservation and is a great opportunity to discuss current issues that are affecting the future of our natural resources. Events like this are where ideas are generated, relationships are formed, and future projects are discussed. These are key steps to deliver conservation techniques, tools, and programs to the public.

SWCS understands the value of working with individuals and organizations who have similar missions and goals and looks forward to NACD's involvement at the 71st International SWCS Annual Conference this July.



Chrissy Rhodes (left) greets visitors of the SWCS booth at the National Association of Conservation District's Annual Meeting.

Conservation NewsBriefs: Popular Articles from January



Are you always 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:

[Waters of the US — The unending saga of one of EPA's most controversial rules](#) (Southwest Farm Press)

[Researchers test a possible drought solution by flooding an almond farm](#) (Los Angeles Times)

[How plants interact with beneficial microbes in the soil](#) (Phys.org)

[Commentary: Pied Piper of failed river policies saw this flood coming](#) (St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

[Click here](#) to sign up and start receiving your weekly *Conservation NewsBriefs* today!

Upcoming Events

[Michigan Chapter ANR Week Seminar](#)

East Lansing, Michigan
March 4, 2016

[SWAMP THINGS: Installation and Restoration of Temporary Wetland Crossings](#)

Sturbridge, Massachusetts
March 11, 2016

[71st SWCS International Annual Conference](#)

Louisville, Kentucky
July 24-27, 2016

New Members

Welcome members who joined in January!

International

Charles Biolders
Daniel Mugendi

Arkansas—Razorback

David Feilke

Canada—Quebec

Jure Simundic

Georgia

Amelia Hines

Iowa

Miranda Haes

Iowa—Iowa State University Student Chapter

Hunter Mezera

Louisiana

Haley Vincent
William Waltman

Minnesota

Jessica Nelson

Missouri—Show Me

Jake Wilson

Ohio—All Ohio

Debbie Helms

Virginia

Blake Rogers

Corporate Members

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

Gold



Silver



Bronze



From the Leadership

Agricultural Advocacy: No time to lose, leadership requires starting a conversation

By At-Large Director Rex Martin



Judith Martin, better known as Miss Manners, once said, “Let us make a special effort to stop communicating with each other, so we can have some conversation.” In this world of social media, texts, and emails, Judith’s point is one I agree with whole-heartedly. Those of us involved in agriculture

spend a great deal of time talking to each other, whether it is external message branding, such as advertising, or by blasting the universe with tweets and blog posts. However, those are not the only ways to engage with the end consumer. They might not even be the most effective ways.

The general public is, in many cases, several generations removed from the farm. If our farms and way of life are to be passed down to the next generation, we have no time to lose; we must be proactive by leading conversations about how we produce food and fiber. Our conversations must be built on a foundation of honesty, integrity, and transparency. A more direct, one-on-one discussion, rather than the shotgun approach, can enlighten the public one consumer at a time. Think about it—why are there more restaurants that buy local or people getting up early to go to a farmers market on a weekend morning? They want a personal engagement with producers that allows them to feel comfortable with the food choices they make. Where is our leadership to guide that relationship?

Okay, you say, that all sounds good, but it is not that easy. However, engagement at a personal level for each of us happens every day. The opportunities are endless. It is a casual conversation at church, between pitches at your local softball game while watching your kid play, or

even at your local caucuses and other political meetings. People are curious by nature. We know through many surveys that the further removed from the farm, the more likely a person may question where their food was produced and how it was produced. Millennials, people between the ages of 18 and 37, consider sustainability and environmental practices in their eating decisions. When one considers that Millennials are the largest generation in US history, representing nearly 30% of the population, there is fertile ground for discussions. It cannot just be a discussion on Facebook or a text with emojis, it has to be real and peppered with texture. All the advertisements and endorsements that worked on many of us in the past don’t work today. Create a dialogue, invite those with questions to come to your farm, and show them in a hands-on manner how you are good stewards of the land. So, what is the texture? As we all know, communication is a two-way street. Good stewardship practices and intentions are not enough. Science is on our side, but we must listen instead of just talk. We, in agriculture, do not have a monopoly on all the winning ideas. If we listen, perhaps we can increase trust and consumer confidence. Take that leadership position today and fill the factual void that exists outside of agriculture. If we don’t, we could find ourselves out of business.

