



# CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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## Make Your Voice Heard: Participate in the Conservation Practitioners Poll 2024

In 2021, SWCS worked with Iowa State University to create the very first Conservation Practitioner Poll, and this month, SWCS will release the second poll!

The Conservation Practitioner Poll is a survey to regularly collect data on the needs and recommendations of conservation practitioners. Conservation practitioners are those who work hand-in-hand with farmers to put conservation practices on the ground—they are the delivery system for conservation across the nation. They provide technical assistance, target and implement funding, work with farmers to understand their land and resource concerns and translate the farmer’s long-term goals to the landscape. And yet, the voice of conservation practitioners is largely absent. **Through this poll, we are changing that.**

Because the poll seeks to reach conservation practitioners, those who offer technical assistance to farmers, the poll will be sent to USDA NRCS soil conservationists and soil conservation technicians, soil and water conservation district/department employees, watershed coordinators, and state soil and water conservation agency staff in the Mississippi River Basin.

The results of the 2021 poll have been presented to thousands of partners across the nation and referenced in published research, incorporating the voices of conservation professionals in both the science and practice of our industry. We are eager to hear conservation practitioners’ current needs and share your voice with industry leaders at the national level.

### 2021 Conservation Practitioners Poll Results

If you received an email from [swcs@qualtrics-survey.com](mailto:swcs@qualtrics-survey.com), congratulations! You have been specially selected to participate in this poll. Please take 10 to 15 minutes to complete the survey so your voice can be heard and shared to enact positive change in the conservation profession.

## Federal Lawmakers Grapple with Budget and Farm Bill Delays

Rachel K. Owen, SWCS Senior Advisor



The Soil and Water Conservation Society uniquely brings the voice of interdisciplinary conservation professionals to policy conversations. In this role, we can help to find common ground and practical solutions to conservation challenges. In January, I traveled to Washington, DC, to talk with members of Congress to check in on their upcoming priorities and share updates from the conservation professionals' community. Below are highlights of two big issues that impact conservation professionals—the federal budget and the farm bill.

### Federal Budget Deadline Looming

Each year, Congress must approve a budget to fund the federal government by September 30—the end of the federal fiscal year (FY). However, if Congress can't agree on a budget by September 30, they must pass a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government to avoid a government shutdown. Dealing with budget constraints and complex political dynamics, Congress has extended the 2024 (FY24 - Oct. 1, 2023 to Sept. 30, 2024) budget deadline multiple times. The next deadline to fund the USDA is set for March 1, 2024. While Congress is moving forward with the spending bills, the offices I spoke with last month have mixed outlooks on a spending bill passing by the March 1 deadline. This likely means there will continue to be uncertainty for USDA employees in the coming months.

Despite the budget challenges for FY24, members of Congress will soon start collecting requests for the FY25 budget. Be on the lookout for ways to engage on behalf of SWCS!

### Farm Bill on Hold Until the Budget is Resolved



The farm bill is a large package of proposals governing USDA programs and priorities. The legislation is reauthorized every five years, and the current farm bill was set to be renewed in 2023. The House and Senate Agriculture committees have been holding hearings about the farm bill since early 2022, but despite their early work, neither the House nor Senate have released a draft of the farm bill yet. In late 2023, Congress extended the 2018 Farm Bill for one year, giving Congress until the end of 2024 to pass the reauthorization.

One key factor delaying the farm bill is the federal budget process. It is unlikely that Congress will be able to consider the next farm bill until they have passed the FY24 budget. In the meantime, Democrat and Republican leaders of the Agriculture committees are working to reconcile some substantial differences in priorities, including:

- Incorporating the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) conservation funding
- Bolstering the farmer safety net through commodity and crop insurance support
- Maintaining support for federal nutrition programs
- Creating new programs and increasing support for current programs under a tight budget reality

As the 2024 election approaches, it will become more challenging for Congress to pass a farm bill this year. We will continue to share updates about the farm bill and highlight opportunities for conservation professionals to share their perspectives. Right now, there are two updates conservation professionals should be aware of:

- [NRCS is currently seeking input on eight conservation practices](#)
- [USEPA has outlined implementation approaches for the Endangered Species Act Pesticide Policies](#)

## Chapter Reports Due February 28

The annual [Chapter Activity Report](#) must be submitted through the online form by **February 28, 2024**. The information provided is used to submit charitable applications and will be used by the national organization to ensure we provide chapters with the best support possible. This report is combined with the chapter awards nomination form, allowing chapters to easily apply for two annual awards when filling out the report.

Information regarding Chapter Activity Reports has been sent to chapter leaders. Please contact [memberservices@swcs.org](mailto:memberservices@swcs.org) with any questions. [Learn more.](#)

## Submit Your SWCS Award Nomination or Scholarship Application



Celebrate your conservation work! Champion your organization and your colleagues! Submit a nomination through the SWCS [awards program](#) and recognize the individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions in advocating the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

SWCS headquarters also has **three scholarship opportunities** for all members. Take advantage today and apply!

The awards and scholarships application deadline is **March 27, 2024**. Winners are celebrated through SWCS media platforms and at our Awards Luncheon at the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference.

## Seeking a SWCS Science and Policy Student Representative

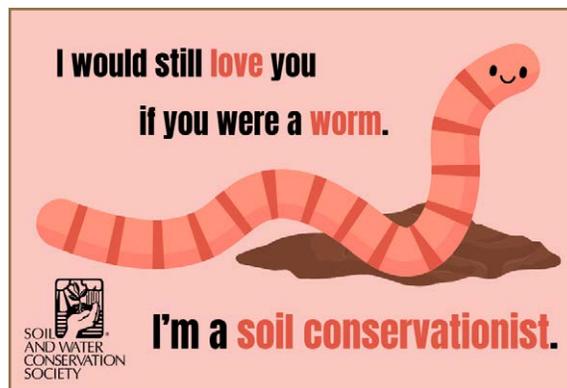
Attention Undergraduate and Graduate Students!

Are you interested in conservation science policy? Are you looking for a leadership opportunity that will grow your professional network globally? Apply to be our Science and Policy Committee Student Representative.

[Click here to learn more and apply.](#)

## Spreading the Love with Free Sticker

Happy (belated) Valentine's Day! At SWCS we are sharing the love with you, our amazing members. We want you to all know that we would still love you if you were a worm! ;)



If you would like one of these cute new SWCS stickers, fill out your [contact information](#) in the form and we will get you one to keep or to share with someone that you would still love if they were a worm!

## SWCS Student Leader Internship



The Soil and Water Conservation Society, in partnership with the [Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees](#), is looking for a summer Student Leader Project Intern. Are you or do you know of a hardworking student interested in conservation and event planning? This is the perfect opportunity! Not only will the student learn the inner workings of an international nonprofit and help plan an international event, but they will also connect with national leaders in the agriculture and conservation industry. Plus, they get to attend the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, with all expenses paid.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 23, 2024**

Apply Today!

## 79th SWCS International Annual Conference Exhibitor and Sponsorship Opportunities

The 79th SWCS International Annual Conference is a 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 and 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!

Exhibitors and sponsors will be recognized in the preliminary program if the contract, payment, and logo are received by **March 18, 2024**.

[View Exhibitor and Sponsor Opportunities](#)

## Enter the Free SWCS Conservation Photo Contest



*2023 Peoples Choice Winner by Darren Newville*

You know what is really photogenic?

CONSERVATION!

As fellow conservationists, we know you have hundreds, if not thousands, of pictures of soil, water, conservation practices, and the cute little creatures that improve the health of our natural resources [including the people ;)], and we want to see them. Select your best photos, and enter the SWCS Photo Contest for FREE!

Winners will receive a \$50 e-gift card from Amazon and be selected for display during the 79th SWCS International Annual Conference, July 21-24, 2024, in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and see your photo on the cover of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*! Submissions are due **May 1, 2024**. Apply today!

View the photo contest information at [www.swcs.org/24PC](http://www.swcs.org/24PC).

### Upcoming Events

[Southern New England Chapter Annual Winter Conference](#)

Warwick, Rhode Island  
February 16, 2024

[Professional Development Webinar Series Session #8: Crafting a Personal Mission](#)

Virtual Event  
February 21, 2024 (5 p.m. EST)

[Southwest Iowa Winter Soil Health Conference](#)

Atlantic, Iowa  
March 6, 2024 (10 a.m. - 3 p.m. CT)  
\*Emerging Leader Hosted Event

[Michigan Chapter 2024 ANR Seminar](#)

St. Johns, Michigan  
March 8, 2024 (9 a.m. - 3 p.m. EST)

\*Our 2023-2024 Class of Emerging Leaders are planning and hosting their conservation events. View the [calendar](#) to search for an event near you!

## New Members

Welcome members who joined in January!

### Alabama

Chellie Maples

### California/Nevada

Jon Christenson

### Canada—Alberta Chapter

Tom Goddard

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

Matthew Gustafson

Emily Perko

### Iowa

Marshall McDaniel

### Illinois

Blessing Aleladia

### International

Madhavan Natarajan

### Kansas

Jessica Bezerra De Oliveira

### Kentucky—Bluegrass Chapter

Robert Ellis

### Maryland—Old Line Chapter

Amanda Cather

### Michigan

Russell Williams

### Minnesota

Darren Newville

### Missouri—Show Me Chapter

John Lehman

Ashley Taylor

### Mississippi—Mississippi State University Student Chapter

Mark Hill

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

Alam Ramirez Reyes

### North Dakota

Md Shazzadul Islam

Franklin Omeye

### SWCS

Dalmo Vieira

### Tennessee

Nutifafa Adotey

## New Conservation Community Member

North Carolina  
Chatham SWCD

## 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

We are actively looking for a Silver Level sponsor. If you are interested in sponsoring, please contact [memberservices@swcs.org](mailto:memberservices@swcs.org).

### Bronze

