Annual Conference News

The 2014 SWCS International Annual Conference will be held from July 27–30, 2014, at the Westin Lombard Hotel in Lombard, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. To keep up to date on all annual conference news, visit our website.

There Is Still Time to Register!
Online registration will remain open for the SWCS International Annual Conference through Friday, July 18. After July 18, participants are encouraged to download the paper registration form, complete the information beforehand, and bring it to the conference registration desk for onsite registration.

Plenary Session Announced
The Tuesday plenary session presentation “International Waters: Protecting and Restoring Water Quality” will address the challenge of protecting and restoring water quality in the border waters of Canada and the United States. Jamshed Merchant, Canada's Consul General based out of Minneapolis, will keynote the session and provide an overview of the economic and environmental importance of these shared border waters and set the stage for a panel discussion to follow. In addition to Merchant, there will be two other presenters—Andrew Manale of the Environmental Protection Agency (retired) and Howard Wheater of the Global Institute for Water Security at the University of Saskatchewan.

Jamshed Merchant began serving as Canada’s Consul General in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October of 2012. He is Canada’s senior representative in the Upper Midwest states of Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. He leads a team of professionals building two-way trade and investment ties, which engages decision-makers and citizens on a range of issues important to both countries and helps Canadians living and travelling in the region.
Andy Manale is recently retired from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) where he served as a program analyst in the Office of Planning, Policy Analysis, and Communications. Prior to the EPA, he served as the senior policy analyst for the Wallace Center for Agricultural and Environmental Policy at Winrock International in Little Rock, Arkansas. His research interests include agricultural and environmental policy, greenhouse gas mitigation, and wetland policy. Manale has also served as chair of the SWCS Science and Policy Committee.

Howard Wheater is the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Water Security and director of the Global Institute for Water Security (GIWS) at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatchewan, Canada. He is a world-renowned expert in hydrological science and sustainable water resource management and has extensive international experience studying and advising on flood, water resource, and water quality issues. Wheater holds a PhD in hydrology from Bristol University in the United Kingdom and a first-class degree in engineering science from the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Platinum Co-Sponsor Spotlight

By Nick Goeser, Manager of Soil Health and Sustainability for the National Corn Growers Association

The Soil Health Partnership (SHP) is very pleased to act as a cosponsor with Monsanto and participate in the Soil and Water Conservation Society’s annual conference. SWCS put together an excellent conference agenda to focus on challenges and progress in nutrient management, erosion, sediment control, and other great topics. Fortunately, the main objectives of the SHP align quite well with the broader messages and efforts of SWCS and specifically the theme of this year’s annual conference in Lombard, Illinois.

The main goal of the SHP is to demonstrate the benefits of improved soil health, which include increased agricultural productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability outcomes through the adoption of best management practices such as conservation tillage, cover crops, and advanced nutrient management. Cropping system advances to improve soil health—fostered through the SHP project—will result from the unique interprofessional collaboration implemented by the SHP, farmers, private industry, and academic personnel.

The SHP is working toward conservation goals through farmer-led demonstrations and outreach efforts. These conservation goals that the SHP strives for include developing a network of demonstration farms in key crop production regions of the United States; developing recommendations to farmers on a variety of soil management practices aimed at improving productivity, profitability, and environmental outcomes; increasing adoption of those recommendations beyond the network of demonstration farms; increasing the visibility and importance of sound soil management and agricultural sustainability to crop producers and the general public; and quantifying the economic impacts (to individual crop producers and in aggregate) of adopting various practices intended to improve soil health.

Initial demonstration and outreach farms throughout Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin have been established to initiate a network of proactive crop producers. Integrated system approaches will be implemented on the working farms of a growing network of proactive and high profile crop producers. The producers will then serve to evaluate advanced agronomic systems techniques to improve soil health and economic profitability; serve as peer-to-peer farmer mentors interested in adopting sustainable cropping system practices; and host hands-on communication events and field days to highlight the latest integrated agronomic technologies, such as cover cropping, no-till, crop rotation, nutrient management, and precision agriculture technology.

A few of the SHP farmers will be highlighted during a breakfast panel on Monday, July 28, 2014, at the SWCS conference. These farmers will tell share stories and their history of adopting conservation practices and discuss what they hope to gain from participation in the SHP. The invited panel farmers, along with SHP representatives, are excited to participate in the SWCS conference and look forward to the interactions and discussion surrounding conservation agricultural practices that will occur throughout the course of the conference.
2014 Chapter Awards Announced

SWCS would like to congratulate the 2014 chapter award winners. Awards and scholarships will be presented at an awards luncheon on Tuesday, July 29, 2014, at noon during the 69th International Annual Conference in Lombard, Illinois. Continue to watch our website and social media for the release of the 2014 Awards program to read full details on these chapters and all of the award winners’ accomplishments.

Chapter Achievement Award
The SWCS Chapter Achievement Award recognizes up to five chapters for significant achievement through a single activity conducted during the year. This year’s Chapter Achievement Awards go to the Montana Chapter, Kansas Chapter, and North Texas Chapter.

For a second consecutive year, the Montana Chapter participated in organizing the North American Envirothon (NAE), a week-long competition and educational event for high school students. This year there were approximately 550 participants in teams from 47 states, 9 Canadian provinces and 1 territory in the NAE. Seven Montana Chapter members helped with the coordination of the day at Yellowstone Park, followed by a BBQ and Rodeo. Coordinating an event of this size and scope for high school students demonstrates Montana Chapter’s commitment to youth and the future of natural resource conservation.

The Kansas Chapter cosponsored the sixth Kansas Natural Resources Conference in January of 2014 in Wichita, Kansas, providing an opportunity for professionals and students to get together and discuss natural resources issues. Three hundred and eleven people participated in the conference, as well as 16 Kansas Chapter members. The chapter demonstrated a commitment to young people as well as professionals, collaborating with six other professional natural resources societies and nonprofit organizations to bring a variety of presentations to hundreds of participants on topics covering the theme “Under Attack: Invasive Species in Kansas.”

The North Texas Chapter is selected for a Chapter Achievement Award for voluntarily solving a drainage problem in their community. Ten chapter members actively addressed the flooding problem at the Southwest Community garden with the aid of global positioning system (GPS) units to regrade the slope of the site. Now the garden site has gravity flow during rainstorms. A further step was to reroute the run-off into an existing raised bed for irrigation. The active participation of the SWCS chapter with other community groups is an example of connections in soil and water conservation issues to both urban and rural citizens.

Outstanding Chapter Award
The Outstanding Chapter Award recognizes one chapter from each region for its success in carrying out its overall program during the past year. This year’s Outstanding Chapter Award goes to the Razorback Chapter, which has been outstanding this year in promoting education for their members and the agricultural community. Razorback cosponsored the Arkansas Cover Crop Conference with the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts for 165 participants, which speaks to the interest in soil and water conservation in agriculture. At the December 2013 meeting, chapter members also toured two irrigation projects in the local vicinity (Plum Bayou Project and Bayou Meto Pump Station). Chapter members also promoted knowledge through a publication in the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation entitled, “A statewide network for monitoring agricultural water quality and water quantity in Arkansas;” articles on cover crops for the Cover Crop Conference; a report on the Bayou Meto Basin Project; and a chapter newsletter. The chapter also actively supported their local Envirothon, SWCS award nominations, and a student scholarship in the amount of $1,000. For 2014, they plan to continue their participation in upcoming events and their chapter newsletter communication, and add new social media outreach. Their effort to develop and implement a strategic plan is a model for the future.

July/August JSWC Is Out!

The current issue of the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation opens with an article reflecting on 30 years of progress at a collaborative research farm near Mandan, North Dakota. Other A Section articles include a bibliometric review by Li et al., which uses citations and keyword searches to identify trends and influences in the field of nonpoint source pollution modeling research, and an article by Wan et al. detailing a LiDAR-based approach for choosing optimal sites for constructed wetlands. In the Research Section, a pair of articles by Kladivko et al. and Malone et al. discuss the results of simulation studies to evaluate the impact that cover crop adoption could have on nitrate leaching in the Midwest. Find these articles and more in the online Journal or in your print issue.
Southern New England Summer Meeting

The Southern New England Chapter (SNEC) will host a Wildlife Habitat Management Workshop with field tours on July 25, 2014, in Franklin, Connecticut. This program will concentrate on the New England cottontail, which is the only rabbit native to northeastern United States from the Hudson River Valley of New York eastward. The program will include stops at the Franklin Wildlife Management Area, the Bear Hill Wildlife Management Area, and the Bozrah Rod and Gun Club.

This event will provide a great educational opportunity for anyone involved wildlife management and the success of overcoming the decline of successional habitats. Find additional information and registration materials are on the Chapter website or by contacting Jeff Anliker, SNEC executive director, at 413-213-6885 or anliker@charter.net.

Upcoming Events

Arizona Chapter Summer Meeting
Flagstaff, Arizona
July 18, 2014

2014 SWCS International Annual Conference
Lombard, Illinois
July 27-30, 2014

21st Century Watershed Technology Conference and Workshop—Improving Water Quality and the Environment
The University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand
November 1-7, 2014
New Members
Welcome members who joined in June!

Canada—Ontario
Merrin Macrae
Richard Petrone
Hui Shao

Connecticut/ Massachusetts/Rhode Island—Southern New England
Deb Jones

Florida
Christy Crandall
Amita Jain
Odemari Mbuya
Katherine Milla

Iowa
Christine Borton
Hao Li
Pat Reeg

Iowa—Iowa State University
Andrea Basche
Ligia De Oliveira Serrano

Illinois
William Deppe
Brian Grebliunas
Jonathon Manuel
Richard Roth
Michael Ruffatti
Brendan Thompson
Kelly Warner

Illinois—Southern Illinois University
Molly Walker

Indiana—Hoosier
Sheila Christopher
Kara Salazar
Jennifer Tank

International
Yousef Alrumikhani

Michigan
Saichon Seedang
Laura Young

Minnesota
Patrick Conrad
Zach Gutknecht
Greg Wilson

Missouri—Show Me
Kimberly Griffin
Colby Lehman

In Memoriam
We remember those friends who have passed on and keep their families in our thoughts.

Robert Hicks was a member of the Michigan Chapter.

Current Corporate Members
For more information about corporate membership, please contact Chrissy Rhodes, 515-289-2331 x 114, corporate.info@swcs.org.

Gold
Agri Drain Corporation
DuPont Pioneer
Hickenbottom Inc.
Dow AgroSciences

Silver
Agren Inc.
The Fertilizer Institute

Bronze
Conservation Technology Information Center
Ecosystem Services Exchange
The Nature Conservancy
White River Irrigation District
From the Leadership

The Social Component of Conservation: An Ontario Perspective

By Tom Prout, North Central Region Director

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

The SWCS mission is to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation. Our work targets conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources on working land—the land used to produce food, fiber, and other services that improve the quality of life. This is a lofty mission, especially when the power to actually make all of it happen rests with many different groups, all of whom need to provide a leadership role. Leadership is needed from the Society membership, owners of farm land, managers and operators of farmland, government groups, nongovernmental organizations, and private sector industry. Conferences, workshops, and documents provided through the leadership of the Society help bring these leaders together to advance our mission, as does research and government incentive programs. However, the rate at which decisions are made by farm owners, operators, and managers in response to the most recent precision farm equipment, new seed genetics, and the latest herbicide and commodity prices can override and overrun the efforts of the Society and/or government to encourage more conservation practices and conservation ethics.

Historically, at least in Ontario, Canada, the private sector's response to high commodity prices has inevitably resulted in increased soil erosion and poor water quality. During times of excellent commodity prices farmers don’t spend more money on conservation practices. They spend money on larger and faster equipment, more land, and more tillage, and they return marginal lands to production. High erosion rates and pollution of surface water quickly follows. Historical years of high crop prices include 1918-1919, 1974-1975, and 2009-2012. All of these periods were followed by high soil erosion rates. Soil erosion contributes significantly to water quality problems and lost cropland productivity. In soil and water management, causes and effects are often inseparable.

I am very pleased to see as part of this year’s SWCS 69th International Conference sessions on social sciences. The Society and government need to find ways to enlist the help of the private sector to achieve its desired water quality and soil care objectives. Sessions that explore these issues include

- Farmer Behavior as Related to Conservation Practice Type: Jordan Lake Watershed, NC
- Women Caring for the Land: Improving Conservation Outreach to Female Non-Operator Farmland Owners
- Investigating Iowa Farmers’ Use of Nutrient Management Strategies
- Human Dimensions of Puget Sound Ecosystem Health and Recovery: Social Sciences Scale and Scope
- Understanding the Human Component of Land Management Stewardship
- Implementing State Nutrient Reduction Strategies – We Need Your Help!
- Designing a Program with Moving Environmental Targets and Changing Agricultural Landscape

Don Lobb, an 1987 SWCS Honor Award recipient, wrote a short article in January of 2014 titled “Betrayal, Exploitation and Consequences—A Topsoil Issue.” In this article Don talks about the 1980s efforts of the Federal and Provincial Governments as well as local conservation agencies to invest seriously in support of soil conservation. By the 1990s, significant parts of Ontario croplands were planted without primary tillage. Lobb states that

“High commodity prices have brought a new set of drivers with rapid farm expansion, usually on rented or leased land. Much land is now managed by people who do not have a stake in its future so we see windbreaks and fence rows removed to enlarge fields. Tillage has returned to speed up the planting operation. It also exploits the benefits of increased soil biota, improved soil structure and organic matter that is found in fields where no-till has been practiced. Precision farming is being used to accommodate field productive variability when reduced tillage and soil building practices should be used to reduce the variability problem. When the soil care ethic is lost, everyone pays—forever!”

I don’t like rules and regulations any more than anyone else; however, I believe that we need the help of the entire farming community as well as farm organizations to achieve water quality objectives. Better leadership from the farm industry (primary producers and processors) around soil health and water quality could maintain the current exemptions enjoyed by agriculture. As an industry, agriculture still receives many exemptions that other industries do not. The risk of having these exceptions lifted should be enough incentive for them to be influential leaders in soil and water conservation.

It’s not simple, but historically governments pressured by single issue lobby groups have made some strange new rules and regulations. There is no doubt that the farming industry can contribute in a significant way to better surface water quality. If conservation groups, including SWCS, can guide the farming sector to show the right ethics around this issue, the farming community will become some of the most vital leaders of the century.