

CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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SWCS Goes to Washington

SWCS CEO Clare Lindahl concluded her stay in Washington, DC, this month. In her last few weeks she spent more time with the local SWCS National Capital Chapter, met with a number of conservation allies, and continued to advocate for conservation professionals with every networking opportunity. Some of her highlights include the following:

- met with individuals from The Nature Conservancy, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Association of State Foresters, and National Association of Conservation Districts
- attended a farewell event hosted by SWCS National Capital Chapter
- met with USDA NRCS Chief Terry Cosby and Chief of Staff Alyssa Charney; USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie; and Senior Advisor for Climate in the Office of the Secretary Sean Babington

Read Clare’s full report in her own words through her exclusive, [members-only briefing](#).



A farewell conservation networking event with Washington, DC, conservation professionals.

77th SWCS International Annual Conference Updates

Denver, Colorado

July 31–August 3, 2022

www.swcs.org/22AC

The Countdown Is On!

The June 22 early bird registration deadline for the 77th SWCS International Annual Conference, July 31–August 3, 2022, at the Hilton Denver City Center in Denver, Colorado, is quickly approaching, and we don't want you to miss out on a \$100 discount on your full conference registration!

This year's conference will feature the latest ideas, technologies, and practices and foster a dialogue around their scaling. Through workshops, sessions, symposia, tours, exhibits, and demonstrations, cutting-edge research and practice developments in soil health, water quality, and resource management will be shared.

For complete conference details and to register, visit www.swcs.org/22AC. Once your registration is completed, be sure to make your hotel reservation before the discounted room block ends June 21.

Thank You to Our 77th SWCS International Annual Conference Sponsors

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Association Of Retired Conservation Service Employees

Upcoming Events

[Nebraska Chapter Annual Tours and Meeting](#)
Norfolk, Nebraska
June 23-25, 2022

[Southern New England Chapter Annual Summer Meeting](#)
Kingston, Rhode Island
July 20, 2022

[77th SWCS International Annual Conference](#)
Denver, Colorado
July 31-August 3, 2022

[11th International Drainage Symposium](#)
Des Moines, Iowa
August 30-September 2, 2022

Presenting Sponsor Spotlight: Syngenta

By Caydee Savinelli, Stewardship Team and Pollinator Lead

Conservation is all about the careful maintenance and upkeep of natural resources to prevent them from disappearing. Through collaboration across disciplines and industries, organizations and individuals are working together to preserve, replenish, and protect our world's resources. With a growing global population and everchanging climate conditions, conservation is more essential than ever before.

This year's SWCS International Annual Conference theme—Elevating Conservation to New Heights—encapsulates the shared vision held by conservationists around the world to scale work, repair ecosystems, and create resilient working lands. The common goal of conservation brings us together, and we can all play an important role in being good stewards of the land and resources we have.

Stewardship itself is much more than any one project or program. Rather, it is the culmination of these efforts. Along with conservation, it consists of biodiversity, pollinator health, proper product use, and pesticide education, just to name a few. Stewardship encompasses the interconnectedness of agriculture, the natural world, and society.

At Syngenta, we make it a priority to collaborate, advocate, and educate for stewardship—to safely feed and care for our planet—through the responsible use of our products. For example, we have long worked with farmers to increase soil health and biodiversity, two key pillars of sustainable agriculture.

We understand that ensuring a sustainable food supply requires each of us to play a part in preserving our land—and protecting pollinators and other beneficial insects. Biodiversity is essential for plant breeding, crop diversity, and more. The interconnectedness of agriculture and nature is at the heart of our commitment to help biodiversity flourish. To benefit certain endangered and candidate species, we participate in conservation projects. By supporting different organizations across the United States, such as the California Rice Commission, Iowa Soybean Association, and The Bee and Butterfly Habitat Fund, we are able to help support farmers in promoting biodiversity through habitat restoration for bees, fish, and butterflies.

We continue to partner for impact and put stewardship into action as a member of the Growing Matters coalition. We've worked with the group since 2013 to help feed a growing population, enhance the beauty of our land, and sustain an industry commitment to protect the environment and wildlife. Since 2019, the group's *BeSure!* campaign has reminded farmers, applicators, and retailers across the United States to use best management practices

when using neonicotinoid insecticides while protecting pollinators, maintaining environmental sustainability, and preserving soil and water quality. Over the last three years, the campaign is estimated to have reached millions of people, providing access to a wide range of resources to help them use crop protection products responsibly and avoid exposure to pollinators and wildlife.

Conservation is an ongoing effort, which is why we are always looking for new ways to help farmers on their sustainability journeys. Earlier this year, we launched our Sustainable Outcomes in Agriculture standard enabled through our Cropwise Sustainability app. The one-of-its-kind tool provides growers with a performance report, including actionable insights to progress sustainability in areas such as water impact, soil health, biodiversity and habit, community leadership, and more. The platform also allows growers to benchmark against others in their region.

Together, we can help secure a sustainable food supply while preserving resources and protecting pollinators. Collaboration helps ensure that no matter the role we play, important tools remain available to help farmers provide us with food while creating a world in which biodiversity and conservation are at the forefront.

Please stop by the Syngenta booth at this year's Soil and Water Conservation Society conference or attend our sessions at the event to learn more about key initiatives and partnerships. We are looking forward to hearing about your soil and water conservation efforts and are eager to share information about some of our ongoing initiatives that help farmers grow crops more efficiently and protect the environment.



Board of Directors Election Results

SWCS Welcomes New Southeast Region Director, Amanda Gumbert



Amanda Gumbert serves as an extension water quality specialist with the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. Amanda collaborates with university personnel and federal/state/local agency partners to deliver water quality information and technical assistance to Kentuckians through the Kentucky Cooperative

Extension Service. A major program focus is the Kentucky Agriculture Water Quality Act and implementation of agricultural conservation practices, with linkages to the Mississippi River basin. Her work also extends to streamside buffer zones in urban and rural areas, where she engages with watershed organizations to promote the installation and management of riparian areas. In addition to her extension appointment, Amanda teaches an introductory course on issues in agriculture, food systems, and the environment. She holds BS and MS degrees in plant and soil science and a PhD in soil science from the University of Kentucky. Amanda attributes her passion for agriculture and natural resources to growing up on a farm in rural Kentucky, which she now owns and manages with her husband and young son. Amanda's term will officially begin at the end of the SWCS International Annual Conference on August 3.

Congratulations to Steve Kadas, Elected for a Second Term as Southwest Region Director



Steve Kadas is the owner/operator of Soil Health, LLC, and program manager for the New Mexico Association of Conservation Districts. Steve retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2021 as the state resource conservationist after a 34-year career. He has worked for NRCS in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and New Mexico at

Estancia, Clovis, and Albuquerque as a district conservationist and soil conservationist. Steve has a degree from New Mexico State University in crops and soil science. He has served as SWCS chapter president in

both New Mexico and Wyoming and has held many other chapter positions. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of SWCS. Steve was raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. His second term will begin at the end of the SWCS International Annual Conference on August 3.

11th International Drainage Symposium

Des Moines, Iowa

August 30–September 3, 2022

www.swcs.org/22IDS

Early Bird Registration Ends July 1

Take advantage of the early bird registration fees and register by July 1 for the 11th International Drainage Symposium, August 30-September 2, 2022, in Des Moines, Iowa.

Solutions to agricultural drainage challenges and opportunities will be the focus of this year's symposium. Two days of sessions will highlight drainage research, practice design, implementation, and policy. The third day of the symposium will feature field tours highlighting some of the innovative drainage work happening in the local area. The symposium will provide an opportunity for the research, agency, industry, and practitioner communities to interact, share experiences, and address emerging issues related to agricultural drainage.

For complete conference details and to register, visit www.swcs.org/22IDS. The early registration cutoff is July 1, 2022, and the online registration cutoff is August 19, 2022.

Order Your New SWCS Gear by July 3

The SWCS merchandise store is back open with new additions in the mix! Whether you're a "Lover of Cover" or support "Healthy Land, Clean Water, For Life," we hope to see you in Denver wearing your SWCS gear!

Order at <https://www.bonfire.com/store/swcs/> by July 3.



Conservation at the Co-op: June Update

In November of 2019, our partnership with Truterra was awarded over \$1.5 million in funding by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through the project, SWCS and Truterra aim to accelerate the adoption of precision nutrient management and soil health practices in Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska.

“Why go out to a restaurant when I can just buy food from the store and cook it myself?” This was one farmer’s answer to the question about why he doesn’t buy many products from his local co-op anymore. He likened the co-op to a restaurant that charged too much for a meal that he could make at home for much cheaper, and with locally sourced ingredients he had on hand or were bought from a grocery store.

This was not an ordinary farmer; he grows cover crops—cereal rye—at scale on a commercial grain operation in a midwestern state. He sources his crop seed directly from the wholesaler, and he sources his cover crop seed from the farm itself—by using a grain table mounted on a combine to catch all the rye seeds, which are then augured into a gravity fed wagon and covered with a tarp. Before seeding time, he takes the seed to be professionally cleaned by a custom seed cleaning operation who happens to operate nearby. This seed cleaner business soon hopes to offer mobile, on-site cleaning services, which this farmer would very much enjoy and happily pay for. No need to source rye seed from anywhere, much less a drill.

He learned about the benefits and profitability of cover cropping from other farmers in his area. He hired a custom seeding and terminating outfit to show him the ropes, making sure to stress that he was going to shadow the operators the entire time, to learn from them, and ask lots of questions. Through his relationship with custom applicators, he knew where to find used equipment, such as an old John Deere 750 No-Till drill and a small sprayer. As he got into it, he learned that termination could be replaced with an additional implement—a roller/crimper—that ran ahead of the planter to flatten the rye dead. This method of “planting green” ensured complete ground coverage and eliminated any need for herbicide application. The roller/crimper was such an exotic implement in his area that he had to buy it directly from a manufacturer in a neighboring state.

The issue of sourcing nitrogen (N) was a bit more complicated. Some of it came from liquid hog manure, also sourced from his farm, but he admitted to needing to supplement that N with synthetic fertilizers from time to time, which he bought from various retailers in his area and sometimes used the co-op. But he had been hearing from other regenerative farmers that it was now possible to eliminate the need for synthetic fertilizer entirely by growing your own soil microbes in a Johnson Su Bioreactor. Similar to a bread starter kit, you compost

microbial-friendly raw materials in a large pit, cover it, babysit it for a year or so, and then harvest the compost, along with all the microbes, for use as a natural fertilizer. He likes not using synthetic fertilizer because it means his farm is safer for his family’s health; he can raise his kids on a farm that is mostly chemical free, and with more peace of mind knowing the next generation won’t spend a lifetime handling chemicals and inhaling fumes.

When asked if his local co-op had any support for that kind of work, he laughed and replied, “Remember what I said about the restaurant?” His co-op was like a fast-food restaurant—a basic menu of services and products, sold with the standard retailers’ markup, but that are increasingly available from other sources for less. And the regenerative ag products and services he needed and would willingly pay for were nowhere to be found on the co-op’s menu. Like a good millennial, he wants to “buy local,” but the supply just isn’t there to meet demand.

But what if his local co-op was less like a fast-food restaurant and more like a farmers’ market? Sourcing things would have been much easier for him when he was getting started—locally sourced cereal rye seed, with recommendations for mixing in other species; custom services for application, termination, harvest, cleaning, and storage; rental of spreaders, drills, sprayers, and even the new-fangled roller/crimper; and even completely natural N, locally grown, in the co-op’s Johnson-Su Bioreactor—all of this purchased along with the trusted technical support that only the co-op’s Conservation Agronomy Department can offer. That wasn’t possible for this farmer. With nobody else doing this kind of work, there are many a business opportunity out there for retailers interested in trying out new products and services that cater to the small but growing number of farmers who enjoy buying local and all-natural.

Early adoption of the innovative activities just mentioned is now underway. A younger generation of farmers is seeking new ways to sustain their businesses while also promoting the health of their families, lands, and communities. They would certainly welcome advice, support, and encouragement from their local co-op. That is the purpose of SWCS’s Conservation at the Co-op project—to support retailers in the exploration of new products and services that profitably benefit co-ops, their clients, and the environment.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in May!

International

Daniel Aviles Ribera
Tasaddaq Younas

Alabama

Craig Allen
Blake Clarke
Chris Davis
Darby McCollough
Nick Williams

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island—Southern New England Chapter

Andrew Gorman
Denise Savageau

DC—National Capital Chapter

Makayla Brister
Todd O'Boyle
Sharon Perrone

Georgia

Thomas Christensen
Chris Groskreutz

Indiana—Hoosier

Will Fett

Michigan

Sarah Fronczak

Minnesota

Aaron Frankl

South Dakota

Bret Lang

Virginia

Leonard Peyronnin
Dave White

Wisconsin

Angie Doucette

Corporate Partners

Please visit www.swcs.org/corporatepartner for more information on how to become a corporate partner.

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Bronze

