



COLORADO SWCS

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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MAY 2016

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President's Message

By: Beth Fortman

Happy Spring!

I am looking forward to working with all of you this year. First I'd like to thank our Past President, Rich Rhoades for the awesome job he did (as usual!) for us last year. Also a thank you to the chapter board member and committee chairs: West Slope Director Cathy O'Neil, Director-at-Large Sherri Brandt, who will continue this position for another term and is also the newsletter editor; East Slope Director Aaron Reynolds, Secretary-Treasurer Barbara Gohlke, who has graciously accepted to serve this position another two years. We have a new Awards Committee Chair, Amber Wyndham! Welcome Amber!

As many of you know we lost a great member of SWCS in February, Mike Collins. He had been very involved in the Society for many years in Wyoming, North Dakota and Colorado. He was also on the national Board of Directors in various positions over the years. He is very sadly missed. Mike was working on a soil health symposium for 2017. Those who were working with him are still planning to carry that out. I will post more updates when I receive them.

We are still in need of a volunteer for President Elect to carry on as President in 2017!

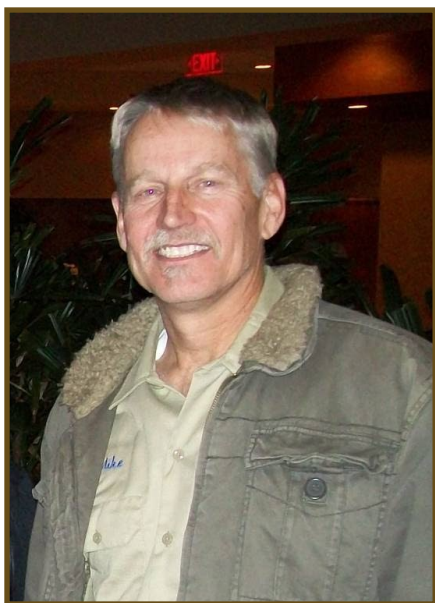
The SWCS International Annual Conference, Great River Landscapes, is July 24-27 in Louisville, Kentucky. You can find more information on the website, www.swcs.org.

Last fall was the first time, that I can recall since I've been a member, that we did not have a workshop in conjunction with CACD. I'm hoping we will be able to have a workshop of some kind this year whether it is with CACD or not. If anyone has any topic, tour or meeting ideas that the Chapter would benefit from attending and/or presenting an exhibit I would be glad to hear from you!

SHERRI BRANDT—
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

In Memory of Mike Collins

We lost our Southwest Representative to the SWCS Executive Council, Mike Collins, in a snowmobile accident on February 27. He was very committed to the organization, but many know him for his tremendous service to the Natural Resources Conservation Service in assisting the agency engage more fully its commitment to healthy soil, to healthy land, and to healthy people. During his service of 29 years with the agency, Mike served in Wyoming, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Colorado. Mike was a dear friend to the San Luis Valley of Colorado and was the person who started the San Luis Valley Soil Health Group in 2010, helping lead and guide it up till his death.



Mike had the audacity to wonder out loud why so much soil blew away every spring in our region and to challenge us to question whether such a symptom of the lack of soil health was inevitable in our practice of farming. Mike's vision to create a forum where farmers, ranchers, conservationists and the general public could engage the topic of soil health on their lands, and engage one another in dialogue, has become a reality in for the SLV Soil Health Group's monthly meetings. You may have met Mike at one of these meetings, or at a soil health gathering held near you. He was inexhaustibly on-the-go, helping advocate for and encourage implementation of soil health management practices with farmers, ranchers, conservationists, and policy makers. He spent far too little time in our midst, and we will miss him dearly. None will miss him more than his family - Mike is survived by his wife Stacey, his son Dustin, and daughter Michelle.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Soil and Water Conservation Society. His passion was Soil Health and he brought this concept to Colorado. This organization can be contacted at 945 SW Ankeny Rd, Ankeny, IA 50023 or by calling 515-289-2331 ext. 118. Donations can also be made on-line at www.swcs.org/Donate/ in Honor of Michael Collins.

2015 Chapter Awards

By: Beth Fortman, past Awards Chair

The Chapter presented two awards at this year's CACD awards banquet. The Soil and Water Conservationist of the Year award went to Anderson Farms from Erie. Jim Anderson attended the banquet to accept the award. Jim is a third generation farmer and has installed thousands of feet of underground and gated pipe. He has planted many trees from the Longmont Conservation District to provide windbreaks and erosion protection for his property. Anderson Farms is the largest Agritainment facility in Colorado and the top 10 in the nation with a 35 acre pumpkin patch and a corn maze.



The Chapter also presented the Reporter of the Year award to Brian Allmer of the BARN Radio Network. Brian does an outstanding job covering, promoting and supporting NRCS and Conservation District events on the BARN website and radio.

History Tidbit

Submitted by: Tony Arnhold

Check this out!

I don't know if you've ever heard about the "National Shelterbelt" of the Dirty thirties?

Neat Fact of our history!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Plains_Shelterbelt



Farming Evolution 2016

Submitted by: Farming Evolution Committee

The Phillips County event center buzzed with excitement about a topic many might find uninteresting: the soil.

Folks traveled from over 600 miles away to attend the Farming Evolution event on February 17 & 18. The two day event featured scientist and no-till producer presenters on both days. Both were well received, but there is nothing like hearing from someone who has real experience.

While each of the producers had unique perspectives, motivations and experiences, they also had a common message: 'Farmers need to stop treating their soil like dirt!'

Michael Thompson, Farmer from Almena Kansas talked with the audience about "Parking the Iron-How to improve your soil". Originally, they adopted no-till because he knew the family would have to change how they operated in order for him to come back to the farm. Change is difficult, however "If you really want to do something, you will find a way. If you don't you'll find an excuse" [Jim Rohn], said Thompson

However, adopting no-till alone didn't fix the problems. "We had to change how we viewed our soil" said Thompson, "you need to get a 'brain transplant' and abandon the tillage part of your brain." They started thinking about keeping a living root in the soil as much as possible. Then they added livestock.

In the early 1990's the organic matter on Thompson's farm was 1% or less and he had erosion problems. Today, organic matter levels are 3.6% and there is no erosion on any fields. He has reduced his chemical costs by 19% and Nitrogen costs by 27%.

A rain simulator demonstration by NRCS is what sold John Heerman of Haxtun, CO, on no-till. "Seeing the dry tilled soil and the wet no-till soil when those trays were dumped told me I had to change," said Heerman. My goal is to have a living root in the soil at all times, he said. Heerman gave the audience his insights on his learning curve of improving soil health.

Dietrich Kastens of Herndon, KS, is not new to the Farming Evolution speaker position. This time he shared his family's journey into no-till – the good, the bad, the challenges and rewards.

"For us, the 1990's were all about improving Water Use Efficiency," said Kastens. "The 2000's were all about finding the equipment to move to 100% no till. The early 2010s were still about fixing problems, but also about looking at the whole "system" rather than at specific pieces. The late 2010s will be about Soil Health, and determining how to improve it while remaining profitable in the short run."

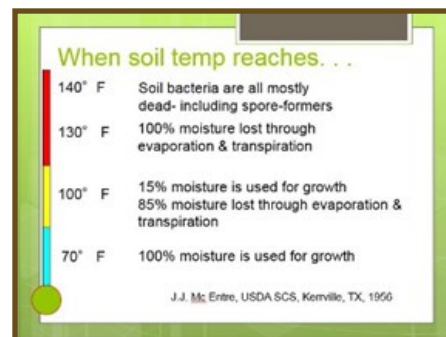
"We know we are doing the right thing (by using no-till)," said Kastens. "We're not using cover crops yet, but we are certainly looking at them."

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More than once the speakers made the point that soil temperature determines soil water availability. When the soil is 70 degrees, 100% of the moisture is used for growth. When soil reaches 100 degrees, 15% of the moisture is used for growth. At 140 degrees most soil bacteria are dead. Plant cover serves as a heat shield.

Adopting no-till, diversifying crops, and adding animals to the land is not without its hazard. There is a learning curve, there will be failures and mistakes. 'But,' the producer speakers asked, 'Conventional farming has all of those too, doesn't it?'



You can watch and listen to the Farming Evolution on the internet. Go to www.barnmedia.net and type 'farming evolution 2016' in the search window on the right, just under the picture banner. The recording is the top link.

Ag producers, where will you be in February 2017?

Farming Evolution 2016 was hosted by the Haxtun, Sedgwick, West Greeley and Yuma County Conservation Districts in Colorado and the Upper Republican NRD in Nebraska. The Colorado State Conservation Board, Phillips County Pheasants Forever and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also supported the event.



EVENTS TO WATCH FOR



😊 **71ST SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE**
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY
JULY 24-27, 2016
WWW.SWCS.ORG/16AC

2016 COLORADO CHAPTER LEADERS



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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Colorado Chapter of SWCS is to promote the wise use of soil, water and related resources through scientific, educational and service oriented functions. The members promote a stewardship ethic that recognizes the interdependence of people and natural resources.