

# CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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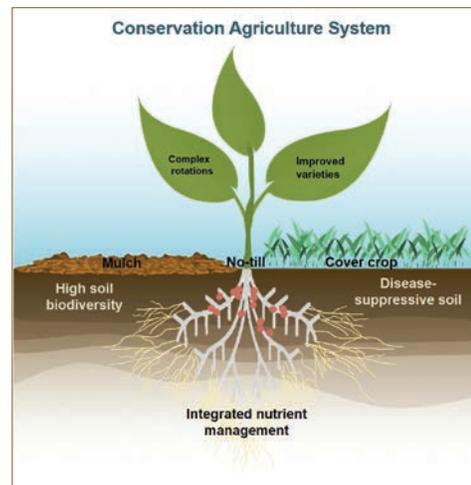
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## May/June Issue of the Journal

The May/June issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* is now available online and will reach mailboxes soon! In the features section, Lal reviews the effect of conservation agriculture on soil carbon sequestration rates and crop yields, while Porter et al. consider the impact perennial grass plantings could have on the Mississippi River Watershed and hypoxia in the



Gulf of Mexico. Research articles include an assessment of contributions to the sediment load due to land use in Wildcat Slough, central Illinois, by Neal and Anders; an evaluation of biofuel feedstocks as stream buffers in the Pacific Northwest by Williams et al.; and a comparison of methods for improving RUSLE R-factor maps for Brazil by Mello et al. Read these and many more articles in the [online journal](#).



Conceptual outline of conservation agriculture based on four basic principles, as seen in "Sequestering carbon and increasing productivity by conservation agriculture" by Rattan Lal.



## 70th SWCS International Annual Conference News

Greensboro Sheraton at Four Seasons  
Greensboro, North Carolina  
July 26-29, 2015  
[www.swcs.org/15ac](http://www.swcs.org/15ac)

### Student Moderator Program

SWCS offers the Student Moderator Program as an opportunity for full-time student members of SWCS with a major in conservation and/or environmental affairs to experience the SWCS Annual Conference in a hands-on learning capacity. Learn more at [www.swcs.org/15ac\\_smp](http://www.swcs.org/15ac_smp). To complete the online application for the Student Moderator Program, [click here](#). The deadline to apply is June 1, 2015.

### How can you make the most of your SWCS Annual Conference Registration?

The SWCS Annual Conference is a prime opportunity to network with your colleagues from across the globe as you attend sessions reporting the latest and greatest conservation research and practices. You will attend two full days of oral presentations and symposia sessions, but did you know there are additional learning opportunities? On Sunday, July 26, SWCS has three interactive workshops offering a unique hands-on learning opportunity in a smaller group setting. Registration for workshops may be purchased in addition to conference registration or as a stand-alone option. For more information about the workshops, please visit [www.swcs.org/15ac\\_workshops](http://www.swcs.org/15ac_workshops).

### COMET-Farm: Agriculture and Forestry Carbon and Greenhouse Gas Accounting at Your Fingertips

Sunday, July 26 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
*Instructors: Matthew Stermer, Colorado State University; Mark Easter, Colorado State University; Kevin Brown, Colorado State University*  
**Fee: \$65 early/\$90 late**

COMET-Farm is the practical, web-based application of the USDA entity-level methods for greenhouse gas inventories. Workshop attendees will receive hands-on instruction on greenhouse gas accounting at the field, parcel, farm, and ranch scale. Attendees will learn how to use and apply the COMET-Farm tool to calculate the entity-level greenhouse balance of farm, ranch, agroforestry, and forestry operations, and will complete conservation scenario analyses. The workshop will focus on how the COMET-Farm tool was developed; practical examples of crop, livestock, agroforestry, and forestry scenarios; and how to interpret and report greenhouse gas inventories.

### Nitrogen Tools Workshop

Sunday, July 26 from 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
*Instructors: Jorge A. Delgado, USDA ARS; Tibor Horvath, USDA NRCS; Chris Gross, USDA NRCS; Zahangir Kabir, USDA NRCS*  
**Fee: \$65 early/\$90 late**

The Nitrogen Tools workshop will provide training on the Nitrogen Index for Windows XP and Windows 7. Attendees of the workshop will receive handouts to follow along with the presenters' examples. Workshop participants will gain hands-on experience using these tools (the Nitrogen Index, Phosphorus Index, and N<sub>2</sub>O Index), which can be used by Technical Service Providers (TSP), conservationists, nutrient managers, and others. The ultimate goal is to improve nitrogen use efficiency at the farm level to maintain yields, increase economic returns for farmers, and minimize nitrogen losses to the environment.

Please note: Presenters will contact participants prior to the workshop to share software installation instructions. Participants should plan to bring their laptop with installed software to the workshop, allowing for a hands-on learning experience.

### Tips for Successful Grant Writing

Sunday, July 26 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
*Instructors: Denis Ebodaghe, USDA NIFA; James Hill, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)*  
**Fee: \$65 early/\$90 late**

Advance planning and preparation are the keys to successful grant writing. In this interactive workshop, presenters will demonstrate how goals and objectives, when well-articulated, can result in successful receiving funding for a project. This workshop will touch on tools needed to submit a grant that accurately addresses key areas such as evaluation criteria, qualifications and experience to carry out project work, funding to conduct project work, evaluation of project work, project sustainability beyond the expiration of the grant, and electronic submission. By the conclusion of this workshop, attendees will have the opportunity to prepare and critique examples of short grant proposal submissions.

**70<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL**  
— SOIL AND WATER —  
CONSERVATION SOCIETY  
" CONFERENCE " —  
— COMING HOME —  
— TO CONSERVATION —  
**PUTTING SCIENCE INTO PRACTICE**



## Annual Conference Sponsor Spotlight

By Ann Bryan, Senior Manager of External Communications, Syngenta

Syngenta is proud to be the Presenting Sponsor of this year's SWCS International Annual Conference. We welcome the society, its members, and conference participants to Greensboro, North Carolina, the home of our largest site in North America. We are a global agribusiness operating in more than 90 countries with more than 28,000 employees. Besides Greensboro, we have two other major United States sites in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, and Minnetonka, Minnesota.



This year's SWCS conference theme, "Coming Home to Conservation: Putting Science into Practice," is well-suited to Syngenta. We strive to help farmers grow more crops, using less land and water. Our company invests \$3.9 million every day into research and development to create agricultural products that help farmers produce healthy, abundant crops to meet the world's demand for affordable food. This dedication to increasing crop productivity encompasses protecting the environment and improving health and quality of life as well. The following products are extensively tested for both human health and environmental safety:

- herbicides to prevent or eliminate weeds and reduce soil erosion;
- fungicides to prevent or cure crops from diseases;
- insecticides to help control damaging insect pests;
- seed treatment to protect the seed from insects and disease so it can get a strong and healthy start; and
- a variety of seeds, such as corn, soybean, wheat, alfalfa, sunflower, sugarbeets, vegetables and flowers.

### The Good Growth Plan

Syngenta's aspiration to grow its business responsibly and to sustainably feed a growing population led to the launch of The Good Growth Plan in 2013. Today, a billion people go to bed hungry each night. By 2050, there will be 2 billion more mouths to feed, when the world population is expected to reach 9 billion.

This is going to be one of the world's biggest challenges. The world's resources—including land, water and energy—are already overstretched. Every year, millions of acres of land are lost to erosion, degradation, and urbanization. And the earth is losing biodiversity and habitats for pollinating birds and insects, which are critical to food production.

Syngenta's business and the world's food security depend on sustainable natural resources, healthy ecosystems, and thriving rural communities. This brings us to The Good Growth Plan, Syngenta's ambitious and bold promise centered around three big ideas—more food, less waste; more diversity, less degradation; more health, less poverty.



We aim to achieve these goals by 2020 through six specific commitments:

1. increasing the average productivity of the world's major crops by 20% without using more land, water, or inputs;
2. improving the fertility of 25 million acres of farmland on the brink of degradation;
3. enhancing the biodiversity on 12 million acres of farmland;
4. reaching 20 million smallholders and enabling them to increase their productivity by 50%;
5. training 20 million farm workers on safety practices, especially in developing countries; and
6. striving for fair labor conditions throughout our entire supply chain network.

Syngenta is not doing this alone. We are working with farmers, governments, NGOs, and others. To learn more about Syngenta's Good Growth Plan, visit [www.goodgrowthplan.com](http://www.goodgrowthplan.com).

In addition to The Good Growth Plan, Syngenta collaborates on many other biodiversity and pollinator forage improvement programs in the United States, with groups such as Conservation Technology Information Center, Delta F.A.R.M., North Carolina Botanical Garden, North Carolina State University, US Bureau of Land Management and the Center for Plant Conservation, Project Apis m, Trees Forever, and the Cotton Foundation.

We look forward to sharing more about our stewardship efforts during the conference symposium, "Syngenta Crop Protection's Watershed Monitoring and Stewardship Program," Tuesday, July 28, at 10:30 a.m.

For more information about Syngenta, please visit [www.syngenta-us.com](http://www.syngenta-us.com).

For information on becoming an exhibitor or sponsor at the annual conference, contact Chrissy Rhodes at [christine.rhodes@swcs.org](mailto:christine.rhodes@swcs.org).

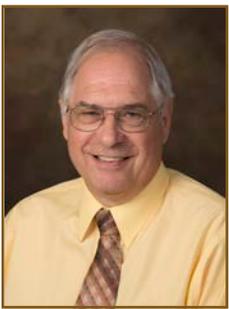
## Awards and Scholarships

Through the Awards and Scholarships Program, SWCS honors individuals, organizations, and chapters who have exhibited exemplary service to the conservation community. This year's award and scholarship recipients join us in our mission to advance soil, water, and natural resource conservation efforts to achieve sustainability. Nominees and applicants competed on an international and national level against others who demonstrated leadership, creativity, and dedication in conservation efforts by delivering assistance to landowners, communities, or local governments.

### Hugh Hammond Bennett Award

*The Hugh Hammond Bennett Award recognizes extraordinary national and international accomplishments in the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.*

Douglas Karlen is this year's Hugh Hammond Bennett Award recipient.



Doug Karlen is a research soil scientist at the USDA Agricultural Research Service National Lab for Agriculture and the Environment. Karlen's career has been devoted to soil and water conservation issues, including research, teaching and policy development. He is a recognized leader in efforts to develop soil health indexes and technology transfer programs, produce sustainable cropping systems, and in the use of agricultural crops for bioenergy production. Among his many activities, Karlen has been asked to assist with a variety of important conservation and scientific efforts, such as being a member of committees of the United Nations Environment Program, the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology, American Society for the Advancement of Science, and others. Karlen's unique contributions to these activities has been his ability to build teams; lead and conduct integrated soil and crop management research; and publish information bridging environmental quality, agricultural productivity, and soil conservation aspects of complex problems for which there is no simple answer. Last, but definitely not least, is Karlen's outstanding character and demeanor. He is always ready to help others and take leadership roles of difficult tasks. He has great integrity, honesty, and persistence. He is passionate about soil conservation and always ready to support and defend soil and water conservation issues, as was the namesake of this award. As a consequence to his outstanding achievements in agronomic and soils research, and society in general, Douglas Karlen is highly deserving of this year's Hugh Hammond Bennett Award.

### Fellow Award

Andrew Sharpley  
Richard Web  
Birl Lowery

### Conservation Research Award

Linda Stalker Prokopy  
Robert Scott Van Pelt

### Merit Award

The North Dakota State University Soil Health Team

### Outstanding Service Award

S. Corey Brubaker  
Lena Bohm

### Commendation Award

Jason Dalrymple  
Kathya Hattaway  
Susan Samson-Liebig  
David Moore  
Andrew Oxford  
Katherine Rudolph  
Walter Valasek

### Melville H. Cohee Student Leader Conservation Scholarship

Brittany Iverson—University of Wisconsin Platteville

### Kenneth E. Grant Research Scholarship

Lauren Smith—Oregon State University

## Journal of Soil and Water Conservation Awards

### Best Research Paper Award for Impact and Quality

R.P. Richards, D.B. Baker, J.P. Crumrine, and A.M. Stearns. 2010. Unusually large loads in 2007 from the Maumee and Sandusky Rivers, tributaries to Lake Erie. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 65(6):450-462.

### Best Research Paper Award for Impact and Quality—Honorable Mention

R. Lal, J.A. Delgado, P.M. Groffman, N. Millar, C. Dell, and A. Rotz. 2011. Management to mitigate and adapt to climate change. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 66(4):276-285.

### Editor's Choice Award

R. Lal. 2014. Societal value of soil carbon. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 69(6):186A-192A.

### Editor's Choice Award—Honorable Mention

J.L. Printz, D. Toledo, and S.C. Boltz. 2014. Rangeland health assessment: The key to understanding and assessing rangeland soil health in the Northern Great Plains. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* 69(3):73A-77A.

## News from DC

*Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson*

- The following are Budget Resolution and Appropriations updates from the Farm Bill Coalition meeting of April 8th.
  - a. A draft “big tent” sign-on letter to ag appropriations subcommittee leadership is in the works regarding the need to support funding for farm bill conservation and to reject the President’s proposed cuts.
  - b. The House ag appropriations bill will not be among the first wave of spending bills produced. We can expect to see the ag appropriations bill out in mid-May to early-June.
- USDA’s Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Farm Service Agency (FSA), and Risk Management Agency (RMA) released the Conservation Compliance Interim Rule, which now requires producers to be in compliance to be eligible for federally subsidized crop insurance as a result of the 2014 Farm Bill.
- The week of April 26, 2015, marked the 60th Anniversary of Soil and Water Stewardship Week.
- The Environmental and Energy Study Institute (EESI) and the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) invite you to an [Infrastructure Week](#) briefing about how transit investments affect the nation’s competitiveness.
- The Highly Erodible Conservation and Wetland Conservation Certification form ([AD-1026](#)) on file with local [USDA service center](#), is due by June 1, 2015.
- The Fiscal Year 2016 Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Announcement for Program Funding (APF) has been published, and NRCS is now accepting applications for the program [here](#).
- SWCS signed two letters of support in April. The first is support for increases in President Obama’s Fiscal Year 2016 budget for honey bee research activities, which includes a \$7 million increase to the USDA’s Agricultural Research Service (ARS) budget for the Pollinator Health Initiative and \$500,000 increase for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to further analyze honey bee colony losses and pollination costs for the Pollinator Health Initiative. The second letter supports the passage of House Concurrent Resolution 30 and Senate Concurrent Resolution 10 that recognize the importance of soil health and locally led conservation using voluntary incentive-based farm bill conservation programs.

## Conservation Conversation

The following are some of your responses to April’s reader question. Be sure to check out the reader question for this month and participate in the conversation through our [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) pages. You can also send responses via email to [pubs@swcs.org](mailto:pubs@swcs.org).

### What can production nurseries, greenhouses, and other artificial growth environments do to contribute to soil and water conservation efforts?

- Convert to an aquaponics system, it uses 10% of the water a traditional growing system would use in the same space to grow the same amount. – Bernadette Luncsford
- You should clarify the term “production nursery”—with your reference to artificial growth environments I presume you mean a container nursery and not the traditional “ball and burlap”, both of which are abundant in my area. B-n-B can take advantage of “traditional” conservation efforts fairly easily, containers less so. Runoff management can be a much more challenging issue with container and greenhouse production. – Michael Fernandez

### May Reader Question:

#### What is your definition of sustainable agriculture?

We ask that our readers answer the question via email (to [pubs@swcs.org](mailto:pubs@swcs.org)) or respond through social media, and in the next issue, we will post some of the responses as well as ask a new question. We hope that this will provide a discussion forum for our readers and us!

### Upcoming Events

[Iowa Chapter Summer Meeting](#)  
Iowa State University campus, Ames, Iowa  
June 12, 2015

[Northwest Region Technical Meeting](#)  
Pierre, South Dakota  
June 16-18, 2015

[Oklahoma Chapter Annual Conference](#)  
Medicine Park and Wichita Mountains  
Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma  
June 18-19, 2015

[70th International Annual Conference](#)  
Greensboro, North Carolina  
July 26-29, 2015

## New Members

Welcome members who joined in April!

### International

Melis Cercioglu  
Ji Yeon Kwon  
Soon Wook Kwon

### Arkansas—Razorback

Nelson Benson  
Miguel Oliveras-Berrocales

### Canada—Ontario

Louise Heyming

### Colorado

Francine Lheritier

### Georgia

Alisa Coffin

### Iowa

Jeff Berckes  
Laura Frescoln

### Idaho

Jeremy Bunch

### Illinois

Annie Cerminara  
Michael Maierhofer

### Louisiana—University of Louisiana at Lafayette

**Student Chapter**  
Jenica Guidry

### Missouri—University of Missouri

**Student Chapter**  
Dong Won Shin

### North Carolina—North Carolina State University

Joseph Taylor

### Nebraska—University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Student Chapter**  
Rupinder Sandhu

### Oklahoma

Chris Clemens

### Utah

Esther Thomsen

### Wisconsin—University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

**Student Chapter**  
Derrick Raspor

### Wisconsin

Callie Herron  
Sam Hess

## Corporate Members

Please contact [corporate.info@swcs.org](mailto:corporate.info@swcs.org) for more details.

### Gold .....



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### Bronze .....



SAVING THE LAST GREAT PLACES ON EARTH



## From the Leadership

### Response to “Fulfilling Ontario Agriculture’s Social Contract: Future Farming Practices”

By Tom Prout, North Central Region Director

Commissioned by the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO) and prepared by the Wheeler Group Inc, a new report titled “Fulfilling Ontario Agriculture’s Social Contract: Future Farming Practices” was published this spring (an abridged version can be read [here](#)). This document looks at Ontario agriculture’s social contract with Ontario citizens, considering the benefits and obligations of each party. The CFFO has a history of providing leadership for Ontario’s agri-food industry through the sponsorship of critical policy discussions. I want to acknowledge the initiative and foresight of the CFFO for commissioning this report. Hopefully it will generate discussion and debate, and move Ontario farming practices in a direction that fulfills agriculture’s social contract.



The concept of a “social contract” is not new. In this report the term signifies “that we are all, as members of society, obliged to contribute to the broader good; that we must forego some personal interests and embrace some responsibilities as a trade-off for the benefits received from our social structure.” Individual farmers will have their own beliefs of the farming community’s social contract obligations. Likewise, consumers will have their own beliefs regarding farmers’ social contract obligations. This report gives both groups something to think about.

The report looks at seven candidates for social contract attention: environmental impacts, animal care, human health impacts, plant and animal health/biosecurity, invasive species, protection of biodiversity, and soil productivity retention and enhancement. I would suggest from a soil conservation perspective that this seventh candidate should be “soil health.” The report then poses the question, “Which (of those candidates) are, or will in the near future be, of sufficient importance to warrant industry/societal action?” The answer to this

question sheds a light on who is creating the landscape for new farming practices. The large food retailers may answer differently than the consumers, who may answer differently than the farmers. I would further suggest that SWCS should consider promoting soil health as a key candidate for measuring how well agriculture is fulfilling its social contract.

The impact of the retailer and the demands of the consumer warrants thought. The report looks at the impact of trends set by large food retailers such as Walmart, Tim Hortons, and others. These giant retailers develop marketing tools such as a Sustainable Food Indices or Loblaw’s Sustainable Seafood Commitment, which states they believe that healthy oceans are vital to a healthy planet, and that sourcing sustainable seafood, fish and shellfish, whether wild-caught or farm-raised, requires greater protection of aquatic habitats and more attention to careful harvesting.

What will these large food retailers’ impact be on future farming practices? Should the farm community be proactive and initiate social contract discussions with retailers before they are forced there? What is the consumer’s part in the social contract? I would suggest individual members of society want to believe they are doing their part to help the environment, and if they can purchase sustainable produced products, they will—even if they don’t know what sustainability really is. Consumers want perfect produce at the lowest possible price, and as a group they aren’t as concerned with where it comes from. Those who understand that purchasing locally produced food, with less packaging, less transportation, and maybe a few blemishes, contribute significantly to their part of the social contract.

I would encourage farmers and consumers alike to have a look at this report and rethink what they are doing as their part of the larger social contract.