



CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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72nd SWCS International Annual Conference

Monona Terrace Convention Center
Madison, Wisconsin
July 30 to August 2, 2017
www.swcs.org/17AC

Making the Most Out of the SWCS Annual Conference

We know you hear it from us every year, and this year is no exception. If you want to make the most out of your time at the SWCS Annual Conference, add a tour and/or workshop to your registration! Both add-ons are excellent opportunities for unique hands-on learning in a small group setting, and both will help to enrich your overall conference experience.

Registration for workshops may be purchased in addition to conference registration or as a stand-alone option. Tours are available as an add-on with conference registration, and participants are welcome to register guests as well. In addition to the technical workshops, the Chapter Development Committee will also be hosting a free workshop focusing on improving chapter communication and outreach. This workshop is available to anyone purchasing full conference registration. For more information about workshops and tours, please [click here](#).

SWCS Pre-Conference Workshops Agricultural Nutrient Management and Water Quality: Emerging Solutions and Ongoing Legal Challenges

Sunday, July 30, 1:00PM – 5:00PM

Science points to runoff from agricultural fields as a cause of elevated levels of nitrogen and phosphorous in our nation's waterways, leading to harmful algal blooms, hypoxia, and other water quality issues, including the impairment of drinking water supplies. This workshop will provide participants with an overview of the legal framework governing agricultural nutrient runoff and different approaches, both voluntary and mandatory, states are taking to address water quality impacts from the surface application of agricultural nutrients. Presentations will cover a range of topics, including agricultural best management practices, the impact of



surface and groundwater interactions, water quality trading programs, development of water quality criteria for nutrients and cyanotoxins, and ongoing litigation challenging agricultural runoff exemptions under the Clean Water Act and other environmental laws. In this interactive workshop, introductory presentations will be followed by facilitated small group discussions in which participants will analyze nutrient management problems based on real-world and hypothetical scenarios.

Using the Adaptation Workbook to Create a Weather and Climate Resilient Pathway to Sustainability

Sunday, July 30, 1:00PM – 5:00PM

Extreme and variable weather creates substantial uncertainty about the future, but it is certain there will be important impacts on agricultural and forestry sectors of the economy as well as wildlife resources. Uncertainty in decision making increases risks and challenges for landowners and farm managers on how to address the impacts of extreme weather and variability in their activities. Further, differences in current management goals and approaches will naturally result in a diversity of adaptation actions. Rather than providing recommendations or a prescriptive set of actions, an iterative process was designed to consider extreme and variable weather conditions as part of conservation planning and project implementation. This hands-on workshop will engage participants in identifying risk/vulnerabilities to their operations and natural resources, and in discussing successful strategies, adaptive management thresholds, and monitoring programs for enhancing the ability of systems to cope with and recover from impact. Participants will also identify what additional resources, information, and tools they need to adapt to extreme and variable weather.

Leadership Development Training

Sunday, July 30, 2:30PM – 5:00PM

Join the Chapter Leadership Committee for a workshop designed for leaders and members who want to see their chapter succeed. Participants will hear from some chapters on how they have built enthusiasm and momentum in a time when everyone is busy. This is an informal discussion about building strong partners, keeping members informed and engaged, making the best use of your time, and maintaining credibility and visibility as a local conservation leader. Whether you are a new chapter member or someone who has been around awhile, this workshop is for you!

Educational Conservation Tours

Tour #1: Sustainable Dairy Tour

Wednesday, August 2, 7:30AM – 5:00PM

This tour, supported by Dairy Management Incorporated, will visit the Goeser Dairy Farm near Plymouth, Wisconsin, and the Sartori Cheese plant. In addition to visiting a state of the art dairy operation, the Goeser farm tour will highlight several sustainable production practices, including manure fiber recycling used for cow bedding and use of feed/nutrient management planning to reduce nutrient

inputs and effectively utilize manure as a fertilizer source. The Dairy Management Incorporated FARM Smart tool, which farms can utilize to assess the sustainability of their farm operation, will also be discussed. A working lunch is planned to share information on a local soil health and watershed protection project that the Goeser farm is participating in. The tour will conclude with a visit to the Sartori Cheese production facility to learn more about the cheese making process and the increasing demands by consumers for sustainably produced food. Lunch will be provided during this tour.

Save taxi fare and bring your luggage along! This shuttle will make a stop at the Dane County Regional Airport before returning to Monona Terrace. If you would like to be dropped off at the airport, please bring your luggage with you on the tour. Secure storage will be available on the shuttle.

Tour #2: Aldo Leopold Shack

Wednesday, August 2, 1:00PM – 5:30PM

This tour will visit the shack and the landscape made famous by Aldo Leopold in his *A Sand County Almanac*. Tour highlights include a guided tour of the shack where Leopold and his family spent time and an infield visit to view the landscape restoration activities being carried out by the Leopold Foundation.

Tour #3: Sustainable Agriculture in Wisconsin's Driftless Landscape

Wednesday, August 2, 1:00PM – 5:45PM

Participants of this tour will visit three farms utilizing sustainable production methods in Wisconsin's Driftless (unglaciated) landscape. The first stop, Vermont Valley Community Farm LLC, is a family owned and operated vegetable farm that utilizes sustainable production methods and the active participation of its community supported agriculture (CSA) members in the production of the crops they purchase. The second stop, Seven Seeds Farm, is a silvo-pasture based operation that produces grass-fed beef, pork, and poultry (meat and eggs) while utilizing restorative and regenerative agricultural production methods. The final stop, Bickford Organics (John and Halee Wepking), uses organic production methods to grow cash grain crops, including corn and wheat. The Wepkings are currently in the process of establishing a partnership with a milling operation to produce flour for direct marketing to consumers.



News from the SWCS Executive Director



Jim Gulliford

In April, Jim Gulliford made the announcement that he will be stepping down from his position as SWCS executive director later this summer. Your Board of Directors is already working with Jim and SWCS staff to assure a smooth transition to new leadership. Watch our [website](#) for information on the job posting.

Jim will be attending the 72nd International Annual Conference in Madison this August—be sure to say hi and wish him well as he pursues new adventures and opportunities!

Second Annual Photo Contest

We are excited to announce that SWCS's second annual photo contest is now accepting submissions! After looking through all the beautiful river landscape photographs that were submitted to last year's contest, we can't wait to see what you'll come up with this year. We want to see the places that matter most to you—working lands, refuges and preservation areas, sites in need of restoration, urban landscapes, and areas benefiting from or suffering under changes in use or management. The contest is FREE to enter, and you may submit up to three photos. The deadline to submit your photo(s) is June 20, 2017. For more information on how to enter, [click here](#).



The Special Issue of the JSWC is Here!

Don't miss the May/June issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*! This special edition, "Sustainable Corn Production Systems," includes work completed as part of the USDA–National Institute of Food and Agriculture Cropping Systems Coordinated Agricultural Project: Climate Change, Mitigation, and Adaptation in Corn-based Cropping Systems that explores how management practices can affect the agronomic, environmental, economic, and social impacts of corn-based systems under changing conditions. Research articles by Marcillo and Miguez, Rorick and Kladivko, and Beehler et al. report on cover crop effects on corn yield and soil properties, while Schott et al. and Han et al. evaluate drainage management impacts on row crop systems. In addition to management practices, climate variability is a topic of focus within several of the studies. For a full overview of the research scope, be sure to read the short research introduction, "Crops, climate culture, and change" by Morton and Abendroth. Also in



the Features section, Laws interviews five midwestern row crop farmers to learn their views and strategies for managing the sustainability of their operations, and Bashe and Roesch-McNally provide recommendations from farmers for advancing cover crop research and on-farm use. Find all of these articles and more in the [online journal](#) or in your print issue.

Upcoming Events

[Alabama Chapter Annual Meeting](#)

Irondale, Alabama
June 7-9, 2017

[First World Conference on Soil and Water Conservation under Global Change](#)

Lleida, Spain
June 12-16, 2017

[Nebraska Chapter Annual Meeting](#)

Beatrice, Nebraska
June 21-23, 2017

[72nd SWCS International Annual Conference](#)

Madison, Wisconsin
July 30-August 2, 2017



Chapter Spotlight: Wisconsin Chapter

Chapter location: Wisconsin

Current chapter president: Francisco Arriaga

History of the chapter: Chapter records on hand date back to 1955. Several of the founding members of the SWCS Wisconsin Chapter were involved with the development and implementation of the historic Coon Creek demonstration watershed project. Annual chapter activities center around the Annual Conference and a summer field tour.

The Annual Conference is planned by the incoming chapter president and typically focuses on timely conservation issues. Recent topics have included soil health, targeting of conservation/water quality monitoring, cover crops, manure management technology, and phosphorus/nutrient management.

In addition, a summer tour field event is hosted by one of the six regional representatives and typically highlights local conservation challenges and successes.

Please describe your most successful chapter event in the last year. What did members gain from this experience?

The 2016 Annual Meeting titled "Soil Health, Crop Production and the Impact on Water" was well attended by a cross-section of members and guests. The program featured a combination of academic/technical speakers and a panel of farmers with hands-on knowledge and experience. The 2017 Soil and Water Conservation Society International meeting in Madison, Wisconsin, will be the high point of our chapter's 2017 activities.

What other activities has your chapter been involved in this year?

The Wisconsin Chapter maintains a relationship with student chapters. A competitive annual scholarship program provides a \$500 scholarship to one member of each student chapter. A significant number of chapter scholarship award winners have gone on to positions of leadership in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), affiliated state agencies, and academia.

What is your membership's preferred method of communication? The Wisconsin Chapter utilizes e-mail and a chapter website as the primary methods of communication with its members.

What would you say are the most important current conservation concerns for your region? The consolidation of agricultural enterprises and intensification of agronomic and livestock management has changed the way that farmers plan and implement soil erosion, soil health, and water quality improvement practices. A high level of agricultural production management is needed to integrate conservation and production principles. Wisconsin Chapter

activities strive to provide the information and network to assist conservation planners with meeting this need.

The time constraints for cropping activities and the management workload juggled by large farm managers have led to larger farm equipment and an inability to intensively manage individual fields to address soil erosion and nutrient loss concerns. A large share of a farm's cropland is now typically being rented, which has changed how conservation practices are planned and installed. Many landlords are not interested in investing their own money into structural conservation practices, and farmers who rent the land are often unwilling to invest unless a long-term rental agreement is in place. This has left conservation implementation to primarily management practices (reduced/no till, cover crops, etc.), which have a limited ability to address erosion on the highest risk fields. Livestock operations also struggle to move large quantities of manure during the short windows available in spring and fall, which can lead to poor management choices.

It is also fair to note that many large farm operations have demonstrated more sophisticated conservation assessment and decision making by hiring professional agronomists and engineering staff to design and implement complex manure storage and land application/management strategies.

What is your favorite part of membership in SWCS? The camaraderie that comes from having similar personal and professional interests with fellow chapter members. SWCS provides a forum for members affiliated with different backgrounds and duties (sometimes with competing interests) to focus on the greater good that can be achieved by working together to engage in solving a problem or addressing a challenge.

What advice would you give to a new chapter? Don't try to overdo it with events and/or newsletters. Members seem to be busier than ever. Focus on a few quality activities that have value to your members and peers. Be active and conduct chapter community building activities (i.e. activities to strengthen the sense of community within the chapter).

Is there any other information you'd like to share about your chapter? Our chapter has talked about hosting the SWCS International meeting for years but was reluctant to take on the challenge. The planning process is well organized and much less overwhelming than expected. If a chapter has been considering hosting the international meeting, we would encourage you to step forward. Chapters who have recently hosted the meeting have been more than willing to share their experiences, and the headquarters staff has the planning process down to a system.

For more information on the Wisconsin Chapter, contact Patrick Murphy at murhpa58@gmail.com or 608-772-2602.

Corporate Member Spotlight: The Fertilizer Institute

We invited The Fertilizer Institute (TFI) to step into the Corporate Member Spotlight to promote their 4R Summit taking place later this summer. If you would like more information on our corporate membership program, [click here](#).

Register Today for the 2017 4R Summit



Registration is now open for the 2017 4R Summit, which will be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 12-13. The

Summit provides opportunities for those interested in nutrient management and stewardship to learn more about the 4R Nutrient Stewardship program and hear how stakeholders across the country are implementing the 4R principles.

With Minnesota as our host this year, attendees will learn about 4R initiatives in the state from state ag leaders. Other sessions will focus on in-field applications of 4R research, expanding 4R certification programs, 4R priorities in the next Farm Bill, and how the 4Rs intersect with the specialty fertilizer market.

Attendees will hear from speakers about agribusiness involvement with 4Rs, government- and nongovernmental organization-supported initiatives, and details on projects funded through the 4R Research Fund. The agenda will feature concurrent breakout sessions, offering participants a choice of speakers and topics.

The 4R Summit will be held in downtown Minneapolis at the Radisson Blu, and a block of rooms will be available at a group rate. Registration and hotel information is available on the [TFI website](#).

Fertilizer is a component of sustainable crop production systems, and the fertilizer industry recognizes the need to efficiently utilize these nutrients. The [4R philosophy](#) is an innovative and science-based approach that offers enhanced environmental protection, increased production, increased farmer profitability, and improved sustainability. The concept is to use the right fertilizer source, at the right rate, at the right time, with the right placement.



News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- Officials at a meeting of the Environmental Council of the States, which represents state environmental agencies, expressed concern over cuts in President Trump's budget plan for fiscal year 2018. The Trump plan proposes to slash state grants by nearly \$500 million.
- The Senate confirmed Sonny Perdue as the 31st US agriculture secretary with an 87 to 11 vote. However, there are still a lot of vacancies at key positions at USDA.
- On April 25, President Trump signed an executive order setting up a government task force to spotlight regulations deemed to be burdensome on farmers so they can be changed or eliminated. The task force—led by Perdue—is expected to focus mainly on regulations coming out of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and the Interior Department.
- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service is gearing up for the 2017 Census of Agriculture and urges farmers and ranchers to “make sure you are counted.”
- USDA has posted [more than 14,000 comments](#) on whether it should approve a checkoff program for organic products. The comments appear to be broadly supportive of the idea.
- The USDA will attempt to follow the congressionally mandated schedule to create a plan for mandatory [disclosure of genetically modified ingredients](#) in food by July of 2018.
- The [National Association of State Conservation Agencies](#) (NASCA) will be hosting a webinar on May 16 to showcase success stories of voluntary, incentive-based conservation work led by conservation districts, state conservation agencies, and their partners. [Register](#).
- The Natural Resources Conservation Service has announced its [Resource Stewardship Evaluation Tool](#) (RSET) will be available for use on grazing lands in addition to crop lands. RSET is a new tool that helps producers identify ways to improve conservation outcomes on their operations.
- The Irrigation Association is bringing back a popular webinar series where participants hear from industry experts on issues affecting irrigated agriculture and the benefits of water management. Registration is free. Visit the [Irrigation Association's website](#) to register to attend. “Bringing Water to Life” also has a [weekly podcast](#) available.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in April!

Arkansas—Razorback

Laurie Green
Brett Hale

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island

Eric Hesketh
Mike Papa
Kris Van Naerssen
Kevin White

Iowa

Zachary Strong

Illinois

Lesley Deem
Aaron Hager
Sean Jenkins
Jean McGuire

Massachusetts—University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Student Chapter
Jed Waddell

Michigan—Grand Valley State University Student Chapter

Mary Parr

Minnesota

Jason Weller

Nebraska—University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Student Chapter

Alexa Davis
Autumn Dunn
Matthew Greiner
Bailey Monroe
Scott Volpert

Ohio—All Ohio

Ben Howard

South Carolina

Rongzhong Ye

Wisconsin

Natasha Macnack

Corporate Members

Please contact corporate.info@swcs.org for more details.

Gold



Silver



Bronze



From the Leadership: The 72nd International Annual Conference

DeAnn Presley, Program Planning Committee Chair



DeAnn Presley

We are already halfway through May, and the SWCS 72nd International Annual Conference is just around the corner! The focus of this year's meeting is **"Conservation Connections: Creating Pathways to Sustainability."**

Conservation of soil and water resources is connected in both physical and social ways. There are the physical pathways of fields connecting to fields connecting to streams, and so on. There is the social aspect where a landowner or manager connects with others, such as other landowners, technical advisors, educators, organizations, or social media, for a few examples. For any changes that are made in a positive direction for soil health or water quality, there are always people behind those efforts, and I often find myself wondering about the backstory. Where did it start? Was it a tour that a landowner attended that caused a lightbulb moment? Was a landowner approached by someone who said, "I'd like to show you something"? I find the stories that I learn at this conference not only inspiring, but practical examples that I can take home, modify, and implement.

This year I have the honor of being program planning committee chair and have been impressed by the quality, breadth, and diverse representation of disciplines of the 2017 abstracts submitted. There are over 210 symposia, papers, and posters to choose from this year; these presentations represent a range of important topics for conservationists from protecting water quality to improving the health of our soil resources. Many presentations exemplify the excellent and creative work our members have accomplished. SWCS continues to represent the best of conservation practices and strategies.

In addition to our strong presentation offerings, we've organized two great networking events this year: a Regional Forum and Flavor Sunday night kickoff event and reception, "Conservation Connections within the Yahara Watershed," and a Monday Exhibitor and Poster Reception. Don't miss these opportunities to enjoy the company of hundreds of fellow conservationists!

We hope you will join us and encourage you to connect with your old friends and colleagues and forge some new connections too!



CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS

Creating Pathways to Sustainability

SWCS 72nd International Annual Conference

July 30 - August 2, 2017 • Madison, Wisconsin