

# CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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## 74th SWCS International Annual Conference

Wyndham Grand Downtown  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
July 28–31, 2019

[www.swcs.org/19AC](http://www.swcs.org/19AC)

### Register Today!

Don't miss out on the \$100 discount on your full conference registration! Visit [www.swcs.org/19AC](http://www.swcs.org/19AC) to register by June 19, 2019. Once your registration is completed, be sure to make your [hotel reservation](#) before the discounted room block ends July 4, 2019.

### General Sessions Announced



*G. Tracy Mehan III,  
Executive Director of  
Government Affairs for the  
American Water Works  
Association*

The Monday, July 29 keynote Pritchard Lecture, "Bridging the Urban Rural Divide for America's Drinking Water," will be delivered by G. Tracy Mehan III, Executive Director of Government Affairs for the American Water Works Association. A widely respected expert in environmental policy and an insightful and thought-provoking writer, Mehan has been on the forefront of advocating for national water policy and projects through the Farm Bill and Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

He will provide insight on what is being described as "an unheard of opportunity" to scale up partnerships between urban stakeholders and agriculture for the protection of our water supplies.



74th SWCS International Annual Conference

## BRIDGING the DIVIDE:

Uniting Rural and Urban Landscapes for Conservation





Matthew Lohr,  
USDA NRCS Chief

On Tuesday, July 30, the general session will open with remarks from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Matthew Lohr. A fifth-generation farmer from Virginia, Lohr provides leadership for NRCS and its mission to support America's farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in their voluntary conservation efforts through a network of more than 3,000 service centers in communities nationwide.

Also on Tuesday morning, a farmer panel will showcase the work of farmer leaders who make a difference in agriculture and conservation across the nation and within their communities. As farmers first, they bring a unique knowledge and skill set to their leadership positions. Each will provide his or her predictions for the future of farming and share strategies for preparing organizations and farms for what lies ahead.

View the [draft detailed conference agenda](#) for a full list of this year's lineup of speakers.

## Exhibitor and Sponsor Opportunities Available

Do you have an organization or know of one that could benefit from increased exposure to over 400 conservation professionals? If so, view the opportunities in our [Exhibitor and Sponsor Guide](#) for details on becoming an exhibitor or sponsor of the 74th SWCS International Annual Conference, "Bridging the Divide: Uniting Rural and Urban Landscapes for Conservation." Contact [events@swcs.org](mailto:events@swcs.org) with any questions.

Thank you to Syngenta, the 2019 SWCS International Annual Conference Presenting Sponsor!

### Upcoming Events

[California/Nevada Chapter Conference:  
Women in Conservation](#)

Reno, Nevada  
May 23-24, 2019

[Oklahoma Chapter Annual Meeting](#)

Davis, Oklahoma  
June 6-7, 2019

[North Dakota Chapter: Good Bugs II Workshop](#)

Hettinger, North Dakota  
June 12, 2019

[North Dakota Chapter: Good Bugs II Workshop](#)

Bismark, North Dakota  
June 26, 2019

[SWCS 74th International Annual Conference](#)

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania  
July 28-31, 2019

Thank You to the 2019 SWCS International Annual Conference sponsors!

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Service Employees

## Conservation Photo Contest

Enter our free photo contest by June 5, 2019, to be selected for display at the SWCS International Annual Conference, July 28-31, 2019, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and for your chance to win a \$50 Amazon e-gift card!

Visit [www.swcs.org/photocontest](http://www.swcs.org/photocontest) for entry details.



## The May/June Issue of the JSWC Is Now Available



The latest issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* is now online and will be arriving in mailboxes soon! Be sure to read “Bridging the Divide,” a feature article by SWCS CEO Clare Lindahl that highlights SWCS efforts to bridge the urban and rural divide in watershed planning and encourage collaborations for the benefit of our natural resources. Also

in the features section, find an article by Grudens-Schuck and Sirajuddin exploring the social impacts of citizen science programs. These authors found that engagement in citizen science water monitoring activities may lead to gains in water quality-related networking and communication skills among volunteers. This issue’s research articles span geographies and conservation topics, with an investigation by Dangle et al. of forestry best management practices at stream crossings in Virginia, a study by Taylor et al. that reveals barriers to agricultural water conservation in the Colorado River Basin, and an analysis by Houser et al. of nutrient management information sources valued by farmers. Find these and many more articles in the [online Journal](#).

## Welcome Joe Otto!



Joe Otto joined the SWCS team in April as the historian of the Society. He is archiving and organizing the Society’s documents and historical records. He is also building interpretation of the Society’s past accomplishments for consumption by both members

and general audiences.



## Science and Policy News

Below you will find a list of some of the latest conservation science and policy news. Links to full articles on the different subjects are included.

- United States plans more aid for farmers amid China [trade](#) spat
- Average [age](#) of hired farm laborers is rising
- [Kansas](#) net farm income climbs, but with a big catch
- Trump economists [quit](#) en masse after reports showing farmers hurt by tariffs
- Fall [Armyworm](#) is projected to spread across most of China’s agricultural regions over the next year
- [Bernie Sanders](#) unveils agriculture plan in Iowa swing
- Clemson researchers packing remedy for [gluten](#) intolerance “right into the grain”
- US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) to hold public meeting on revisions to draft framework on Endangered Species Act process for [pesticides](#)
- US House passes [disaster-aid](#) package
- Climate change takes center stage in [Australia’s](#) election
- Declining rural [infrastructure](#) and what it means for agriculture
- As [Florida](#) continues to reel from citrus greening, growers, processors and researchers explore another option—lemons
- “More than 2,000” mothers and families march through [London](#) demanding urgent climate action
- [Flooding](#) in America is getting more frequent and severe
- As farm bankruptcies climb, agricultural [bankers](#) take action
- An “impossible” change may be coming to California [beef](#) cattle industry
- USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) develops more precise [grain](#) quality test
- [Hemp](#) farming applications swamp Pennsylvania agriculture department; Lancaster County leads the tally
- Stakeholders unite to improve water quality in [Ohio](#)
- California to block food [pesticide](#) that Trump’s USEPA saved from nationwide ban
- Is [Kenya](#) finally ready for rollout of genetically modified crops?
- [Canola](#) time for farms in the South?

*The opinions expressed in these articles are meant to keep SWCS members informed of current conservation conversations and do not necessarily represent the views of SWCS.*

## Career Profile: Marni Thompson



**Marni Thompson,**  
Resource Conservationist,  
USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
(NRCS) Montana

**Career Sector:** Government

**Degrees:** BS in Range  
Management from  
Montana State University

### **Briefly describe your career path from college to today.**

I grew up on a ranch in Townsend, in southwestern Montana. I loved that. We ended up selling the ranch when I was in high school, but the next best thing to living on a ranch was working with private land owners at the NRCS. After I graduated, I applied for a soil conservationist position at the NRCS in Montana. I went to Miles City, in eastern Montana, out on the plains. It is so flat! I hadn't spent any time out there and probably wouldn't have chosen that location, but I loved it right away. I loved working on farms and ranches with producers, and the people were so great. They took us out and showed us farming practices that we didn't even know existed in Montana, like growing sugar beets. I had an awesome mentor that I am still in contact with today. He took me all over and we got to see some super cool stuff. This experience really opened my eyes to the NRCS and everything that you can do with private land owners.

After two years in Miles City, I took a soil conservationist position at the Sheridan field office on the other side of the state. I learned a ton. After a year, I became the district conservationist. I worked with lots of different watershed groups and two Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) boards. I did range work and learned about irrigation, grazing, and engineering. I was in Sheridan for twelve years.

In 2010, my career took a change for the better. I watched a YouTube video of Ray Archuleta demonstrating the slake and infiltration test. Both of these tests are used as soil health indicators. It was really mind boggling and inspired me. That's when I began having a passion about soil health. In 2011, I became the resource conservationist for the Great Falls area in north central Montana. This position dealt more with contracting work, and I missed the technical work and working with landowners. I did that job for seven years. Now, I am the area conservationist for technology, and I was able to get back to what I really enjoy and am passionate about.

**What was the best advice you received regarding your career?** Never stop learning. Be willing to move and don't get stuck in one spot. Challenge yourself. Take risks.

Do some things that make you uncomfortable. That will make you better. When I first started, it was hard for me to go out to speak landowners because it is intimidating, especially if you're a female. But go out there, show interest, and ask questions. If you don't know the answer, try to find it and get back to the landowner, they really appreciate it.

**Describe the best choices that you have made along your career path.** Moving around the state. It means a lot of traveling, but I have lived in eastern, southwestern, and north central Montana, so I've almost covered the whole state! You get to see so much and learn the different ways that people do things. Also, learning what you are passionate about because you're good at what you are passionate about. So when I learned about soil health, I surrounded myself with that, and it made me a better employee.

**How has SWCS impacted your career or contributed to your continued education and/or professional development?** As a resource conservationist, I was in a position that was all contracting and nothing technical. That was part of the reason that I got into SWCS. I thought, "Well my job may not allow me to do some of the things that I want to do, so I am going to join SWCS so I can stay up on the technical stuff and keep learning."

At our SWCS chapter here in Montana, we do workshops that bring in speakers to help educate farmers and ranchers on soil health. For about eight years, I helped coordinate the soil health workshops that SWCS sponsors. We have brought in soil scientists that do biological testing. We have done tours on farmers' places. At one of our recent big events, we took a big bus with 56 Montana farmers and ranchers to North and South Dakota. It was a three day trip, and we got to visit the places I went on my detail. The producers were so excited about that.

**What advice do you have for college students or early career professionals who might want to work in a job similar to the one you have right now?** Along with science courses, I think communication is a pretty important topic to cover in college. What I see now with younger employees is that it is hard for them to talk to people. It is so important that you relate to farmers and ranchers and learn how to ask questions and be interested. When you are young and don't know a lot, it is hard, and it's intimidating. The more you do it, the better you will get at it. Another thing is just to get out in the field. With any job, a lot of it is just being stuck behind a computer. If you make yourself go out and learn in the field, you'll be a better professional because of that. Take the risks. Go out and look around. Get a shovel. Dig in the soil. That helps you to answer questions and find out what's going on and why it's going on. Don't let the position or the location determine what you are passionate about. Continue being passionate about it and looking for opportunities because pretty soon they are going to come to you.

## New Members

Welcome members who joined in April!

### International

Yalong Liu

### Alabama

Ashley Henderson  
April Hill

### Arkansas—Razorback

Ian Godwin

### Canada—Ontario

Xueming Yang

### Hawaii—Hawaii and Pacific Basin

Sayed Bateni

### Iowa

Aaron Lehman  
Joe Otto

### Iowa—Iowa State University Student Chapter

Matthew Nowatzke

### Indiana—Hoosier

Michelle Hemler  
Emily Usher

### Maryland—Maryland Old Line

Elizabeth Hoffman

### Michigan

Holly Pummell  
David Sting  
Ramon Waltz

### Missouri—Show Me

Chenhui Li  
Lauren Stamp

### North Carolina—Hugh Hammond Bennett

Caitlin Caudle

### New York—Empire State

Paula Bagley  
Han Zhang

### Ohio—All Ohio

Margaret Beetstra  
Chloe Gardner

### Texas—North Texas

Lisa Akinyemi

### Washington—Olympic View

Katherine Naasko

## Corporate Partners

Please contact [memberservices@swcs.org](mailto:memberservices@swcs.org) or [swcs.org/corporatepartners](http://swcs.org/corporatepartners) for more details.

### Gold



### Silver

