



CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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2018-2019 SWCS Annual Report



The [2018-2019 SWCS Annual Report](#) is now available online. To conserve resources, the report is not mailed and is only accessible as a PDF download from the SWCS website. Please take a look at the Society's accomplishments over the last year, including two conferences, launch of the [Conservation Media Library](#), and several new conservation career development opportunities

for students and early career professionals. Also included are chapter activity highlights, most-read journal publications, and a financial report. Our achievements are the product of our members' dedication to conservation efforts both locally and nationally. Thank you for your ongoing involvement and support!



Time to Update Your Information

Have you moved recently? Has your email address changed? Here at SWCS we are doing a bit of “house cleaning” and need your help! Please take a moment to review and update your account and contact information so you can be sure to stay up-to-date with all of the news and events happening at SWCS. Please log on to members.swcs.org to access your membership account and update your information. Thank you for your help!



members.swcs.org



Combined Federal Campaign

For over 70 years, SWCS has been working to educate land managers and promote natural resources conservation practices. These efforts are made possible through contributions from supporters like you. Payroll deductions are an easy way to have a valuable impact on the Society's work. Please show some love for the land



during this campaign by supporting the Soil and Water Conservation Society. **The Charity Code for the Society is 11797.** Thank you for supporting the future of soil and water conservation!

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.

- Six key takeaways from the [US-Japan](#) trade deal
- Small farms are struggling – now there's a [crowdfunding](#) platform for that
- World's first fully [autonomous](#) farm by 2025?
- [USDA](#) relocation has delayed key studies and millions in funding, employees say
- Why [Colorado's](#) corn farmers are getting hurt by China's soybean tariff
- Dairy farmers, animal activists want to know how \$900 million for [marketing](#) was spent
- Wisconsin farmers coping as [dairy](#) herd declines
- Opinion: We must reject the “[go big or go home](#)” mentality of modern agriculture
- President Trump's vague plan to boost [ethanol](#) has the oil industry threatening to sue
- [University of Vermont](#) and USDA announce new partnership to help small farms
- Gutting of two USDA [research](#) agencies is warning to all federal agencies, ex-employees say
- California bans the popular pesticide, [chlorpyrifos](#), linked to brain damage in children
- House [Appropriations](#) Chairwoman Nita Lowey retirement opens race to senior Democrats
- US Environmental Protection Agency proposes upping testing for [lead](#) at schools in rule overhaul

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.



Upcoming Events

[Imagine a Day Without Water Trivia](#)
Des Moines, Iowa
October 23, 2019

[Virginia Chapter Annual Meeting](#)
Charlottesville, Virginia
October 28, 2019

[Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds Meeting](#)
Cedar Rapids, Iowa
November 6-7, 2019

Career Profile: Janith M. Chandrasoma

Janith M. Chandrasoma, Graduate Research Assistant, University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign



Degrees: BS in Agricultural Sciences and Management from Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, MS in Natural Resources from the University of Missouri, currently a PhD student at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, with a primary focus on environmental water quality

Briefly describe your career path from college to today.

In Sri Lanka, we have a competitive exam (GCE A/L) to get into the medical college, and I was studying to take it, but I fell short in my marks and ended up studying agriculture. Initially, I was so discouraged, but then I realized that it was something I might be really interested in because there are so many things that I can learn and contribute, and I really fell in love with soil science. In the last semester of senior year, you are required to work in industry or at a research station to gain experience and training. I selected a site where they were focusing on horticultural crops. I ended up working with a brilliant scientist, Dr. Priyantha Weerasinghe, who inspired me to learn more about soil science. One year later, during my search for higher studies opportunities abroad, I was able to connect with Dr. Ranjith Udawatta at the University of Missouri, Columbia, to pursue a master's degree. After my graduation I started my PhD program under the guidance of Dr. Laura Christianson at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

What was the best advice you received regarding your career?

This is something I really treasure still today. This was told to me by Dr. Priyantha Weerasinghe. In his words, "If you want to be a scientist/researcher, act like it." If you want to change the world, start changing yourself first. My personalized version is if you are a scientist studying natural resources, try to minimize your carbon footprint. I will give you one example. If you're a researcher studying water or pollution and have a prestigious career, but at the same time you apply more than the required nitrogen to keep your lawn green, which ultimately may leach into your stormwater, you might need to think twice about your role as scientist.

Describe the best choices that you have made along your career path. The best choice I've made was to come to the United States for my higher studies. Since I've come here I've realized how interconnected agriculture is. I see the opportunities, and I see how the different areas of sciences

interconnect with each other. Back home, it's a little more one-dimensional. If you think of agriculture you only think of farming, and farming is all about more crops and higher yields. But when I came to the United States, I saw the interconnection between the agencies, universities, and farmer groups and how they work together and the effort they make to take the science to the farmers.

What have you done to continue your education and professional development following college graduation?

I am a member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and the Soil Science Society of America. I try to attend the annual conferences organized by these societies whenever possible. The networking is the best part because you get to know the people you've cited in your own work and whose research you've followed. I'm actually a shy person, but I've made an effort to talk to people during the conferences and get to know new people. I do a lot of reading and am familiar with the researchers in my field, and when I meet them at conferences I'm able to show that I'm familiar with their work and ask questions. It's a great way to break the ice. That's how I made the connection to find my PhD position in Illinois. Outside of school, a really beneficial thing I have done for me and the scientific community is reviewing papers; I do that for the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* and a few other international and local journals. I learn a lot from those papers.

How has SWCS impacted your career or contributed to your continued education and/or professional development?

The first conference I attended, after coming to the United States, was the Soil and Water Conservation Society's annual meeting. I presented some of my master's research work, and I remember a professor came up to my poster and was asking me questions. Now, several years later, I'm taking classes that he teaches. So I now realize how small the conservation science community is, and the Soil and Water Conservation Society really triggered that connection.

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?

The thing I really want to share is, you always have to remember that you don't know everything. You need to keep your mind open. Even though I think I know science, whenever I read a paper or an article I come across new concepts and information. This is overwhelming and frustrating sometimes, because you know that you have an understanding and all of a sudden you feel like you don't know anything. I try to be openminded. When you have an open mind, it's easy to gain knowledge and absorb it. My advice to anyone doing a master's or a PhD is to keep an open mind and be open to new knowledge, don't resist it. Specifically to international students, don't be afraid to talk to people to get resources and knowledge.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in September!

International

Kang Liang

Arizona

Samantha Carrillo

Connecticut/Massachusetts/Rhode Island—Southern

New England Chapter

Mike Conklin

Iowa

Laura Merrick

Craig Woods

Iowa—Iowa State University Student Chapter

Ashley Campbell

Fran Conley

Stephanie Michael

Minnesota

Katie Connolly

Oregon

Lexi Swenson

Wisconsin

Craig Ficenec

Alexander Larson

Corporate Partners

Please contact memberservices@swcs.org or visit

swcs.org/corporatepartner for more details.

Gold



Silver



New Conservation Community Members

Welcome community members who joined in September! Learn how to become a conservation community member [here](#).

Iowa

Cherokee County Soil & Water

Guthrie SWCD

Iowa Flood Center - University of Iowa

Lyon County SWCD

