



COLORADO SWCS

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

COLORADO SWCS

SEPTEMBER 2014

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President's Message

By: Kyle Franz



Hi Colorado SWCS Membership. Summer is nearly over, vacations are past and school is about to begin. Before too long we will be talking about 2014 in past tense. It seems like those summer jobs that I intended to do last winter may be turn out to be winter jobs after all.

As summer winds down SWCS in Colorado will be soon electing new officers and filling vacant positions. As always, a new person will be nominated for the President elect position. If you or someone you know would like to serve please get in touch with someone on the executive board so that we can get that person on the ballot. I can tell you from personal experience that this job is very rewarding and the person that is elected will benefit personally and professionally from the involvement.

The opportunities afforded the President are easy to recognize and I would like to point out. As president of Colorado SWCS I was able to attend the International Technical Conference in Lombard, Illinois. At this conference there were numerous educational breakout sessions that were very educational and are certainly considered personal development. But bigger than that are intangible experiences that come about from networking with other attendees. I found that short discussions with national leaders like Jason Weller, Wayne Honeycut or Bruce Knight are not only invigorating but also enlightening on topics such as the new farm bill or soil health. These conversations allowed me to gain a renewed perspective and energy for the efforts that all SWCS members are putting forth in the realm of conservation and sustainability.

In summary I would like to encourage you to get involved in the Colorado Chapter SWCS. I would also like to thank the membership for affording me the recent opportunity that I had to attend the International Technical Conference. I am looking forward also to the technical conferences that will be upcoming in the next year and hope to see you many at one of those conferences.

SHERRI BRANDT—
NEWSLETTER EDITOR



CO SWCS Conducts Spring Tour

The SWCS spring tour was held near Colorado Springs on May 30 & 31, 2014. Tour stops included the Navigators/ Glen Eyrie and the Flying W Ranch to look at the damage from the Waldo Canyon fire and mitigation efforts to rehab the burned area and mitigate flooding.

The Navigators tour included a look at the Geobrugg Debris net that was installed and work being done to stabilize the stream channel of Camp Creek. The Navigators® is an international, interdenominational Christian ministry established in 1933. Glen Eyrie lies at the base of the Camp Creek Watershed. This watershed is over 5100 acres in size. 83% of the watershed was burned in the Waldo Canyon fire. Lunch was served by Glen Eyrie staff.



The Flying W stop included a tour of the sediment basins, log erosion barriers and re-seeding that has been done to stabilize the burned area. The Flying W Ranch was a working mountain cattle ranch, and since 1953 a tourism venue in the foothills of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

From May to October, the ranch featured outdoor chuck wagon suppers typical of those served on cattle drives, and western style living history areas. There are roughly 1500 acres in the ranch of which about 95% was burned to one degree or another in the Waldo Canyon fire.



Saturday featured a guided hike focusing on environmental education and forestry practices for forest health and fire control. The environmental education component featured how to work with youth and adults to promote appreciation and awareness of the importance of the natural resources. As part of the hike, forest health and fuel reduction practices was viewed and discussed. The Mountain Park is located in a ponderosa pine, white fir Gambel oak forest. The Park has an active forest health and forest fire hazard reduction program.

5TH Annual Soil Health Tour

The Fifth annual SLV Soil Health Tour was held July 22, 2014. There are many ways to measure success for such activities – the quality of the information which was presented, the number of participants attending the event, the interaction of the participants with the presenters and themselves. I would say that on all levels the 2014 SVL Soil Health Tour was a huge success!

More than 80 individuals gathered at the Miller Coors facility near Center, Colorado between 12 and 1 pm on the 22nd July to participate in the tour. The participants came to self-educate and network with some of the San Luis Valley's innovative agriculturists trying to develop new production models.

The first stop was at a circle of barley at the Miller Coors Farm, where Judy Jolly, the Southern Colorado Agronomist with Miller Coors, premiered their test plots. The objectives of these trials are exploring ways to decrease the consumptive water use of barley production and improve their soil health while maintaining the specifications of the end product within the parameters required by Miller Coors. The trials are looking at the incorporation of companion crops and rotating green manure following a barley crop. The tests are being conducted using two standard barley varieties M69 and a shorter maturation variety "Pop" both at 100 lbs. per acre. The companion crops selected were spring lentils, red clover, yellow sweet clover, and hairy vetch. This selection was based on these species' abilities to conserve soil moisture, improve soil health and fertility, and their pest suppression. Each species were individually drilled into the barley a week after the barley was planted on a cross hatch pattern at a rate of 5 lbs. per acre, additionally the spring lentils had another plot at 20 lbs. per acre. Furthermore a mixture of all the species combined along with Winfred Turnip was put into a sixth plot. The barley is within a few weeks of harvest and the results will be made available at that time.

The second stop featured work by Brendon Rockey a specialty potato producer. Brendon

has presented his unique production model around the country to producers interested in soil health building activities. Brendon is well known for using companion crops of vetch and peas grown in unison with his potatoes and then using green manure multi-species crops on the off years. His efforts have increased his quality and quantity of his potatoes while at the same time decreasing his inputs including the amount of water required to grow potatoes. The tour group first saw his potato and companion crop being produced under a pivot irrigation system



which was encircled with a planting explicitly for predator insect attractor and then encircling that was his "aphid cleaner crop." Brendon explained how this crop was specifically chosen to tempt the air borne aphid to land prior to the potato planting, allowing them to clean themselves of any unwanted disease threats.

Brendon Rockey continues with his out of the box approach to potato production and is striving to move to the next level. This is the first year he integrated livestock into his rotation. Josh Watters and Mystie Hoyt from the Natural Progression Farms are providing the cattle.

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Both parties are gaining from this activity. Brendon is receiving the natural byproducts from the cattle, manure, urine and the nature action of cattle being intensively grazed, and Natural Progression Farms are receiving a temporary high-quality forage home for their animals. Everyone is a winner. George Whitten, a holistic forage-finished cattle producer from the San Luis Valley, talked about cattle being the perfect addition to the land around the valley. He explained the fact that in the past every farm had livestock and utilized them on the land, but with “modern farming” this important aspect has been all but removed from cropping fields.

Stop Three introduced the Father Daughter team, Lyle and Erin, of Nissen Farms. This team grows potatoes, barley, cattle, and forage crops. Recent drought conditions have caused the Nissens to recognize the need for their enterprises to be resilient in order to survive. This resiliency begins with the health of their soil, which prevents water from being wasted and soil erosion. Actively pursuing and successfully integrating the principles of soil health into their operation along with their willingness to try new things, rethink old ideas, and their inclination to share what they learn with others have earned Nissen Farms the distinguished award of the 2014 Conservationist of the Year from the Mosca-Hooper Conservation District.

Nissen Farms teamed up with Patrick O'Neill of Agro Engineering to feature potatoes planted into a wide variety of management techniques.



The trial was to evaluate the effects of different seedbed preparations on potato production ranging from chisel plow to no-till, from residue to clean till, from cultivated to no cultivation. The group also was able to experience a soil pit which was excavated on the Nissen Farm. The soil history and the properties of the pit were explained to the group by Sam Streeter, Soil Scientist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The day wound up back at the grow facilities of Miller-Coors where the tour group enjoyed conversation, networking and light snacks. This event was set up by the San Luis Valley Soil Health Group which meets at the Monte Vista COOP on the second Wednesday of each month. If anyone would like to be added to their mailing list contact the group at slvsoil-health@gmail.com. The event was sponsored by Miller-Coors, MVC, The Soil and Water Conservation Society, Colorado State University Extension, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



69th International Annual Meeting

By: Kyle Franz

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the International Conference in Lombard, Ill. This International conference was attended by over 400 SWCS members. It was a four day event that was packed with presentations, posters, and discussions on several topics. Colorado SWCS was represented by a poster titled “What Soil Health Is Not”. This poster was put together by Mike Collins, Joel Moffet, and Michael (Storm) Casper and I would like to thank them for taking the time to be sure that Colorado Chapter SWCS was presented.



This year's international conference had several speakers that addressed and discussed soil health and water quality. The two topics go hand in hand, as we all know, but these presentations made me realize how devastating the problem of water erosion and water quality is and can be in areas that have high precipitation. SWCS members and other professionals throughout the United States are doing research on and gave presentations on the algal blooms and hypoxia in Lake Erie, the Gulf of Mexico and elsewhere. An interesting conclusion that is drawn from these works is that to solve these issues, estimates are that it will take at least a 40% reduction in nutrient export from cropland. This reduction cannot happen without awareness and continued education.

In the realm of Soil Health there were several speakers and breakout sessions that I had the opportunity to attend. My personal interest is certainly in the soil health area. These sessions were all enlightening and educational. The enthusiasm that was present was evident and I was amazed at the interest that is evident throughout the United States and the world for sustainable ways to produce food and fiber in the agriculture arena. A take home message from these sessions and the conference in general is that without healthy soils the demands of an increasing world population will not be met.

For me the conference was a very rewarding experience and I left with a renewed energy. Interacting with like-minded people from all over the world is an experience that I will never forget and I am very appreciative that the Colorado Chapter of SWCS afforded me the opportunity to attend.

CO Chapter Annual Elections

The Colorado Chapter annual meeting is just around the corner and that means it's time to consider election of new officers for the 2015 calendar year. Positions to be filled for 2015 are President – Elect, West Slope Director and East Slope director.

President-elect – serves a one year term as president –elect and is asked to commit to three years to serve as 1) president elect, 2) president, and 3) past-president.

Duties include:

- Serves as a voting member of the executive council prior to being president
- Attends regular and special executive council teleconferences, typically held monthly
- Presides at meetings in the absence of the Chapter president
- Assists in developing the annual plan of work and budget for the chapter
- Assists the president with all business and annual meeting preparations
- May serve as chapter delegate to international meetings
- Responsible for organizing the topic and speakers for the chapter's annual technical conference while president-elect

Director: West Slope and East Slope Directors – serve a two year term as director of the executive council

Duties include:

- Serves a two year term as a voting member of the executive council.
- Attends regular and special executive council teleconferences, typically held monthly
- Represents the needs and interests of the membership in their respective area
- Assists in developing an annual plan of work and budget for the chapter
- Assists the president in identifying and selecting chapter members to serve on committees.
- Helps to carry out Chapter operations
- East and West Slope directors are elected in even numbered years.
- Director at large will be elected or appointed in odd numbered years.

Any Colorado Chapter SWCS member is eligible for consideration on the ballot. Please contact Kyle Franz, President, at kyle.franz@ks.usda.gov or any member of the executive council with questions you may have and/or to notify the executive council of your interest. Candidates will need to provide a brief bio to Barb Gohlke by September 30, 2014. Ballots will be sent out via email sometime in October 2014. Please be sure and vote!

Awards and Scholarship

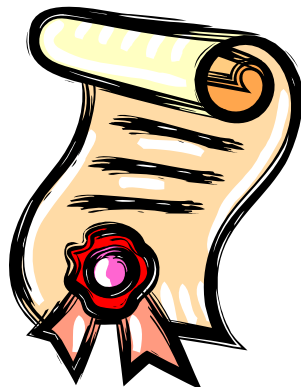
By: Beth Fortman, Awards Committee Chair

The Colorado Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society will present its annual awards during the Awards Luncheon at the CACD Annual Meeting at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Conference Center in Loveland.

I am looking for nominations for our 2014 Conservation Reporter of the Year Award. Do any of you have reporters (TV or newspaper) that you have worked closely with or who has been active in reporting the goings on of your Districts or projects and programs from your office? They could be a newspaper reporter, TV or radio media person. The nomination consists of a letter giving the conservation reporting accomplishments of the nominee. Include the newspaper(s)/periodicals the reporter writes for or submits articles to, how much conservation publicity the reporter has provided and of his/her effectiveness. It is recommended that you provide a sample or two of the nominee's conservation reporting, also. The personal background of the nominee that is provided can be limited at this point because the awards committee can obtain additional information after selection of the award recipient.

I am also looking for nominations for an outstanding or exceptional Jr. Conservationist. If you know of any youth in your area who are active in their 4-H or FFA clubs and are an asset to their club and contribute much, please send a nomination or a contact name and number of the person I can get information from. Nomination should include involvement in activities, projects relating to natural resources, honors won and other related soil and water conservation experiences.

To date we have not had any scholarship applicants. If anyone knows of a Junior or Senior in a Colorado university or college who is studying some kind of natural resource subject please let them know we have a scholarship available. Applications and more information can be found on our website at http://www.swcs.org/en/colorado_chapter/colorado_chapter_awards/



Backyard Conservation Kids Camp

Submitted by : Burlington Conservation District

July 14-17th from 8:00am- 11:30am was four great half days filled with many kids and all different kinds of fun activities. Every day had its own theme with snacks, and a variety of things to keep the kids busy and learning. This year we had 12 kids: Austin and Lindsey Hart, Sahrya Miller, Krupa Thomas, Tavien and Sophia Delgado, Weston and Thomas Schaal, Christopher Barcelata, Anna Marie Schaal, Dusti Weisshaar and Natalie Trobee.



The First day, Monday was soil day. The kids got to enjoy coloring their name tags, planting a sunflower seed, playing games and having a great snack break eating dirt pudding. Also the kids got to enjoy Clark Harshbarger the soil scientist that showed the kids the different horizons of the soil and experimented with soil texture.

Tuesday was weather day. The kids had a great time with a scavenger hunt first thing in the morning finding all different kinds of goodies. They also got to enjoy making indoor clouds with dry ice, creating wind chimes, pinwheels and tornadoes in a bottle.

Wednesday was wildlife day. Since the weather was rainy and chilly outside the camp moved to the community center. Even though the camp was inside the kids had a blast making wildlife tracks in play dough, making bird feeders, coloring some animal pictures, learning about camouflage and playing games outside once the weather cleared up.

On Thursday, the last day, was bug and insect day. Once again the weather was chilly and the camp was at the community center, but that didn't stop the fun. Different types of live bugs were brought in and showed to the kids along with a special guest Brandi Einspahr to talk about her entomology project through 4-H. They drew awesome pictures of their favorite bugs, learned the different parts of the insect, made bee masks and enjoyed finding grasshoppers outside.



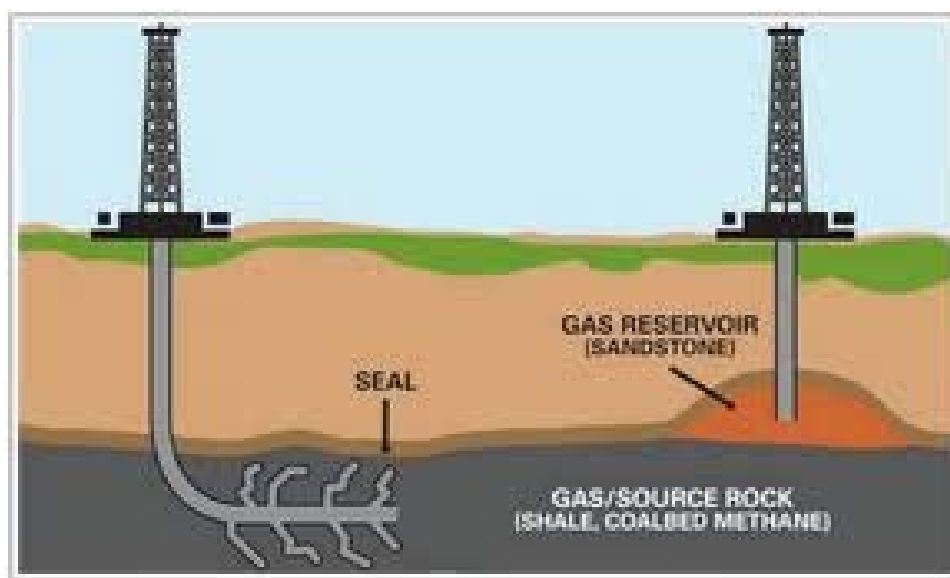
The kids enjoyed all the different activities that were planned and had fun while learning. All in all the 2014 Backyard Conservation camp was a success.

Colorado SWCS helped sponsor the Backyard Conservation Kids Camp through our grant program. To learn more about the grant program, visit http://www.swcs.org/en/colorado_chapter/colorado_chapter_awards/

CO SWCS 2014 Technical Conference

The chapter technical session and annual meeting is scheduled in conjunction with the CACD annual meeting in Loveland, CO at the Embassy Suites. The date will be Monday November 10, 2014. The technical session program will begin at 1:00 pm and end at 5:00 pm. After the program there will be a brief chapter meeting.

The topic of this year's meeting will be "Fracking". Topics to be addressed will include geology of northeastern Colorado, fracking and local / state government issues, an energy industry perspective, landowner perspective and legislative issues. The purpose of the meeting will be to provide information; the chapter is neither pro nor con. The technical session is open to all. Registration information will be coming out shortly.



EVENTS TO WATCH FOR



☺ CO SWCS TECHNIAL CONFERENCE/ANNUAL MEETING
NOVEMBER 10, 2014 LOVELAND, CO

☺ FARMING EVOLUTION: SOIL HEALTH AND NO-TILL WORKSHOP
FEBRUARY 12—13, 2015 HOLYOKE, CO

2014 COLORADO CHAPTER LEADERS



OFFICERS

Kyle Franz, President

58002 Co. Rd. DD
Burlington, CO 80807
719-349-8067

Kyle.franz@ks.usda.gov

Catherine Dix, Past President

101 South Craft Dr., Suite B
Alamosa, CO 81101
719-589-3486 ext 136

Catherine.dix@co.usda.gov

Sherri Brandt, Director-at-Large

210 Elm Street
Julesburg, CO 80737
970-474-2518 ext 112

Sherri.brandt@co.usda.gov

Barbara Gohlke, Secretary-Treasurer

5610 Industrial Pl., Suite 100
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
719-632-9598 ext 107

Barbara.gohlke@co.usda.gov

Rich Rhoades, President-Elect

200 South Sante Fe Ave
Pueblo, CO 81003
719-543-8386 ext 110

Richard.rhoades@co.usda.gov

Greg Langer, East Slope Director

5610 Industrial Pl., Suite 100
Colorado Springs, CO 80916
719-632-9598 ext 106

Greg.langer@co.usda.gov

Donald Valdez, West Slope Director

101 South Craft Dr.
Alamosa, CO 81101
719-589-6435 ext 152

Donald.valdez@co.usda.gov

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Beth Fortman, Awards

719-543-8386 ext 3

Elizabeth.fortman@co.usda.gov

Kristi Gay, Web/Membership, Science Fair

719-767-5648 ext 101

Kristi.gay@co.usda.gov

Sherri Brandt, Newsletter Editor

970-474-2518 ext 112

Sherri.brandt@co.usda.gov

Barbara Gohlke, Financial, Science Fair

719-632-9598 ext 107

Barbara.gohlke@co.usda.gov

Donald Valdez, Science Fair

719-589-6435 ext 152

Donald.valdez@co.usda.gov

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.