



COLORADO SWCS

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

COLORADO SWCS

SEPTEMBER 2013

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President's Message



As my final president's message, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board and committee members for their service to the chapter and, thus, to conservation. Fires, droughts, and floods have made us extremely busy in our professions as of late and in spite of this, or maybe because of this, you continued to participate, promote, organize, and volunteer in SWCS activities such as the San Luis Valley's third annual soil health tour that was held in August, a tour where local producers discussed the implementation of sustainability by way of cover crops, compost, compost tea application, diversity, and reduced tillage.

This brings me to the subject of this year's international conference in Reno, Nevada. The theme was Resilient Landscapes – Planning for Flood, Drought, and Fire. Thanks to the support of the chapter, I was able to listen to Dr. Gene Kelly discuss the vulnerability of soils in a changing climate and the challenge to protect our natural resources while feeding an ever-growing population. I listened to Jeremy Peters discuss the next Farm Bill and learned about the implications for soil and water conservation. I also got to sit in on a presentation by Jorge Delgado wherein he discussed the mitigation of drought through management to improve soil health and productivity. I had the privilege of meeting many other SWCS members from across the nation along with our society's leaders. It was energizing to see so many students in attendance, presenting, participating, and offering ideas.

I would encourage all members to attend Colorado's upcoming technical conference in November to be held in Colorado Springs. Take advantage of the opportunity to hear soil health enthusiast Ray Archuleta along with Dr. Ray Ward and Dr. Allan Andales. I look forward to seeing you there!

*Best Regards,
Cathy Dix
President*

SHERRI BRANDT—
NEWSLETTER EDITOR

SWCS SLV Summer Cover Crop Tour 2013

Submitted by: Mike Collins

The informal soil health farmer group promoted this tour. Attendance was excellent. Over 100 farmers loaded on buses to go to 4 stops and view cover crops. This year's tour also included trials that showed success and failure of Conservation Reserve Enhanced Program (CREP).

Stop 1. At our first stop on Rockey Farms, Brendon discussed his multispecies mixture being seeded as a cover crop in rotation with potatoes as well as the small amount of water used to date (Apprx. 5 inches). Examples of those species were displayed for participants to see, and take a walk through his cover crop field. Additionally Brendon discussed his work on companion planting of selected cover crop species within his potatoes. Brendon's cover crop seeder worked well this year, with peas and chicklin vetch. Buckwheat which volunteered in the potatoes fields was discussed. While apparent, no competition has been observed, and the flowers attract beneficial insect predators like lady bugs, lacewings, etc. These organisms reduce aphids in the potatoes.

At this stop, participants also were able to view the rooting structure and soil depth in an exposed soils pit on the farm. Here Alan Stuebe discussed soil formation from local alluvial parent materials. The mineral portion of the soil was discussed, and physical features of soil development were observed. At this stop, Patrick O'Neil of Agro Engineering discussed the living portion of the soil (micro biology) and organic matter improvement from cover crops. Following the presentations, participants were permitted to walk through the pit and observe the soil present on Rockey Farms.

Stop 2. On John Brownell's field near Hooper, Richard Sparks took the participants into Indian Rice Grass established on a non-irrigated seeding on a pivot corner. Approximately 6 lbs. of Indian Ricegrass seed was drilled in late February as a dormant seeding. Drilling depth was 2 inches on prepared ridges. Establishment is in rows. Annual thistle still competes in the inter row areas, but the two year old seeding is beginning to compete with those weeds. A good stand is still present, and is surprising to many participants. Considerable interest exists in being able to eventually replace kochia and thistle with this native grass. While it carries considerable risk of failure, this seeding is an apparent success. Trials are continuing in other areas with promise of eventually finding a successful procedure.



Stop 3. CREP Mini-pivot Native Grass: Successes and failures were discussed by Richard Sparks; a handout showing the seed mixture and steps for success was discussed. After reviewing the native grass seed mix, and the cover crops and weed

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SLV Tour from Page 2

control used for establishment, participants were able to walk and view the 5 year old seeding area that has received no irrigation in the last two years. Lack of rainfall has kept the vegetation in dormancy, but close inspections shows species like western wheatgrass, alkali sacaton and blue grama are still alive and well. Surprising to some was the healthy presence of 4-wing salt brush, Louisiana sagewart, and other forbs still thriving.

A one year old stand of a new seeding was available for participants to view. There was a strong presence of sweet clover although only 0.2 lbs. per acre had been seeded. Participants were able to question methods for successful seeding, including some concern over cover crops being required and the high use of glyphosate in the seedings. As objectionable as some may find the broad spectrum herbicide, the presence of thistle and kochia untreated in the dormant seedings and spring seedings has caused complete failure on the some plots, and reseeding with a summer seeding following herbicide control has been successful.

Stop 4. Cover Crop Growth, Biomass, Water Use and Weed Competition Trials

Patrick O'Neil discussed the small plot trials of various cover crops on Martinez Farms. These small plots allowed participants the chance to view the 38 cover crop varieties, and blends of cover crop species and cultivars. Annual weeds have provided strong competition, and it was interesting to view competitive abilities of cover crops in the presence of these weeds. The focus of these trials is to determine which cover crops will work best for our farming systems in the San Luis Valley, given limited irrigation 310 plot-trial. CPAC has funded 19 entries to evaluate specifically for benefits to potato rotations, focusing on biomass production, water use efficiency, and soil health effects from use of these crops. Sorghum Partners, Monte Vista COOP, Rio Grande Commodities, Grasslands Oregon, Pillar Butte Seeds, PGG Seeds, and Agro Engineering have sponsored additional entries, to allow for a broader understanding of the utility of these crops and mixes in our systems.



Soil Health Effects and Total Vegetative Mass will be evaluated at the trial's end. In-season measurements at present are focusing on water use, crop growth, weed growth and competition.

General: During the bus rides from stop to stop, cover crops and irrigation, were discussed. Various questions were posed by participants and discussed. Following the tour, participants were able to enjoy an excellent sit down meal hosted by Compost Technologies, Soil Guys, and Keith Berns Green Cover Seed.

During the meal, Brendon and Ty Ryland presented a slide show on their work to inter-seed cover crop species into a field of oil seed sunflowers in the Blanca area. The sunflower crop eventually will be used for Bio-diesel production at the Costilla County Bio-diesel facility.



CO Chapter Elections 2013

The Colorado Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society will be holding its annual fall election October 10—25, 2013. Chapter members will receive their ballots either by postal mail or electronically at the email address registered with the chapter shortly after October 10. In the 2013 election, we will be voting for the offices of **President Elect, Director-at-Large and Secretary/Treasurer**. The deadline to submit nominations for these offices is October 9, 2013. Nominations should be submitted to a member of the election committee: Sherri Brandt at sherri.brandt@co.usda.gov

Please be sure and vote! So far, we have a great group of members running for each office. Please be sure and say thank you to these members next time you see them for their professionalism and willingness to work for soil and water conservation. Our chapter works on local, state, regional and national level in activities related to soil and water conservation. With support from you (CO Chapter Members) and these individuals who volunteer to work for our chapter, we can continue to contribute to the community through professional activities geared toward conservation of soil and water resources.

Watch for instructions on the election in your inbox or mailbox. Please be sure and vote one time for each office and send your electronic ballot to COSWCS@gmail.com with the subject line **Election 2013**, or send your paper ballot to Barbara Gohlke 5212 Stetson Meadows Drive, Colorado Springs, CO 80922. New officers will be announced at our annual meeting November 11, 2013.

Proposed Board Reorganization

SWCS President Dan Towery and Executive Director Jim Gulliford held webinars on September 11 and 12 regarding the board of directors reorganization proposal. In order to improve the functional and representative governance of the board of directors and to capture the emerging diversity of the conservation community, it is proposed to transition the board from thirteen to nine members. A PDF of the proposal as well as the webinar recordings are available on the SWCS website at <http://www.swcs.org/>. Please take the time as an SWCS member to familiarize yourself with this issue. Any feedback, comments or concerns can be directed to any CO SWCS board member or our Northern Plains Regional Director, Mike Collins at mike.collins@co.usda.gov.

CO Chapter Technical Meeting 2013

The 2013 Colorado Chapter of SWCS Technical Conference and Annual Meeting will be held on November 11 from 1pm—5pm and November 12 from 8am-noon at The Double Tree by Hilton in Colorado Springs. The theme for this year's Technical Conference is "Moisture Management in Healthy Soils" and the line up of speakers includes: Ray Archuleta, Dr. Ray Ward, Terry Saffer, Dr. Allan Andales and Scott Ravencamp.

This meeting will once again be held in conjunction with the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts (CACD) Annual Meeting. To simplify the book-keeping we are partnering with CACD to take registration for this event. Go to: <http://coloradoacd.org/AnnualMeeting> and use the annual meeting registration form. It is not necessary to register for the CACD conference to attend the SWCS Technical conference. CACD conference rates at the Double Tree are extremely competitive and offer the chance to be on-site. If you would like to stay on site, please use the link at <http://coloradoacd.org/AnnualMeeting>

There may be CEU's available for CCA's who attend this workshop. Look for a final agenda in your inbox in the near future. For questions contact, Kyle Franz at kyle.franz@co.usda.gov.

2013 CO SWCS College Scholarship Winner

This year's college scholarship \$500 Recipient is Jordan Lestina. Jordan is from Dove Creek, Colorado and is a junior at CSU with a major in Soil/Crop Sciences. He has worked as an undergraduate research assistant with the CSU wheat breeding program. Jordan is very active in many aspects of his college experience, such as CSU Presidential Ambassador, College of Agriculture Ambassador and CSU President's leadership program for scholars to name a few.

Scholarships are available to Colorado residents enrolled in a Colorado college or university, entering their junior or senior year with a major in the natural resources area. Scholarship applications and further information is available in the CO SWCS website at www.swcs.org/en/colorado_chapter under awards.

68th International SWCS Conference

Submitted by: Cathy Dix

I feel very fortunate to have attended the 68th Annual SWCS conference this year which was held in Reno and hosted by the California/Nevada Chapter. The theme focused on the need for resilient landscapes in a dynamic world. Speakers discussed everything from drought management to creating climate-smart ag landscapes through agroforestry.

There were so many interesting topics being discussed that it was hard to decide which sessions to attend. I learned that food production needs to double to match population growth towards 9 billion by 2050. And four percent of the Farm Bill spending generally goes toward conservation. It was reiterated over and over the importance and benefits of cover crops. Also discussed were the opportunities with bringing livestock back into cropping systems. There was discussion on water quality in the context of organic farming with conventional and conservation tillage, protecting native grass communities in rangeland, the Conservation Reserve Program Readiness Initiative, and bioenergy production utilizing switchgrass.

The Pritchard Lecturer this year was Dr. Gene Kelly, professor of pedology at Colorado State University. He addressed ecosystem changes and integration – what he knows as a pedologist. He also reviewed terrestrial climate change and soils, specifically dealing with forest fires in Colorado and drought in the central Great Plains. His presentation can be viewed at: http://www.swcs.org/en/conferences/2013_annual_conference/.

I'd like to thank the Colorado Chapter for sponsoring my attendance. Aside from the wonderful presentations I was able to listen in on, I also had the opportunity to meet other members of the Northern Plains Region and members of SWCS nationwide and even internationally.



RESILIENT LANDSCAPES

Planning for Flood, Drought & Fire

68th International Annual Conference

Reno, NV July 21-24, 2013

www.swcs.org/13AC



Backyard Conservation Kids Camp

Submitted By Jennie McCasland, Burlington CD

On July 15-18th Burlington Conservation District had the 1st annual Backyard Conservation Kids Camp. We had 12 kids' ages 5 to 10 years old. We did half day camps with different themes each day. Day 1 we had all activities around trees. We made tree cookies, bird feeders, bug collection boxes, activity pages and several games throughout the morning. Day 2 was the wildlife adventure. They made their own play-doh animal tracks, and had pelt ID & activity pages and several games and had live baby peasannts and quail chicks. Day 3 we learned about bugs and where they lived and learned about honey bees from a local beekeeper. We had games and did activity pages. Day 4 we had farm animal day. We had two sheep and a baby calf that they got to feed. The kids got to sheer one of the sheep. Several games and activity pages & crafts were done. Each day we also had some kind of snack related to the theme of the day. It was great fun and we plan to do it again next summer!

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/



Above Left: Kids at Burlington Conservation District Backyard Conservation Kids Camp learn about honey bees from a local beekeeper during "Bug Day". **Above Right:** The kids learn about sheep and other farm animals during "Farm Animal Day".



Soil Health Happenings

- ☺ The September edition of Potato Grower magazine included an article on Rockey Farms out of the San Luis Valley . <http://read.uberflip.com/i/155574/19>
- ☺ The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition (NGLC) and UNL Extension are hosting Gabe Brown, noted soil health advocate, on a four day (Nov 18 –24), eight stop traveling road show across Nebraska. Gabe is one of the pioneers of the current soil health movement which focuses on regenerating our resources. For more information, contact Ron Bolze, Coordinator, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition, 402-321-0067 (cell) or ron@nebraskagrazinglands.org
- ☺ No-till Farmer magazine recently interviewed Scott Ravenkamp, past-president of the Colorado Conservation Tillage Association (CCTA), and member of CO SWCS, and put together a short video, which you will find at the link <http://www.no-tillfarmer.com/pages/Spre/From-the-Desk-of-John-Dobberstein-Residue-Is-Still-King-9-4-13.php>



EVENTS TO WATCH FOR



- ☺ **Colorado Chapter SWCS Technical Meeting & Annual Meeting**
November 11—12, 2013 Colorado Springs, CO
- ☺ **SWCS Northern Plains Regional Meeting**
Spring 2014
- ☺ **69th Annual SWCS International Meeting**
July 27—30, 2014 Chicago, IL

2013 COLORADO CHAPTER LEADERS



OFFICERS

Catherine Dix, President

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

Catherine.dix@co.usda.gov

Kyle Franz, President-Elect

138 South 14th Street
Burlington, CO 80807
719-346-7699 ext 106

Kyle.franz@co.usda.gov

Michael "Storm" Casper, Past President

PO BOX 398, 27200 HWY 287
Springfield, CO 81073
719-523-6251 ext 118

Michael.casper@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

Daniel Palic, Director-at-Large

210 Elm Street
Julesburg, CO 80737
970-474-2518 ext 101

Daniel.palic@co.usda.gov

Vacant, West Slope Director**Barbara Gohlke, Secretary-Treasurer**

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

Barbara.gohlke@co.usda.gov

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Beth Fortman, Awards

719-543-8386 ext 3

Elizabeth.fortman@co.usda.gov

Kristi Gay, Webmaster/Membership

719-767-5648 ext 101

Kristi.gay@co.usda.gov

Vacant, Science Fair**Sherri Brandt, Newsletter Editor**

970-474-2518 ext 112

Sherri.brandt@co.usda.gov

Barbara Gohlke, Financial

719-632-9598 ext 107

Barbara.gohlke@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.