



COLORADO SWCS

CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

COLORADO SWCS

SEPTEMBER 2015

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President's Message

Colorado Chapter Annual Meeting??

Yes, there are question marks about our annual meeting. Our plan was to partner with the Colorado Association of Conservation Districts and a planned "All District Conservationist" meeting. The meetings were to be held at Beaver Creek Resort and the room rates were very manageable. Unfortunately the travel element for the DC meeting fell through due to budget constraints and the Executive Committee made the decision to postpone the Chapter annual meeting, date and location to be determined. We will let you know by email. We plan to have the meeting sometime between Oct 1 and Dec 1 somewhere along the Front Range. If you know of partnership possibilities for our annual meeting, let me know. We will still have a presence at the CACD meeting to present SWCS awards for Outstanding Conservationist, Junior Conservationist and Media. We didn't want to cancel but felt with limited official travel dollars most members would be on annual leave traveling a long distance and attendance would be very few in number. We didn't want to invite speaker(s) and have them talk to just a handful of folks. So stay tuned.

President's Message

The year is rapidly winding down. You'll find election/nomination information in this newsletter. We are always looking for and encouraging new leadership. The Chapter benefits from "new" thinking and I believe you would benefit as well in terms of professional development. If you'd like to be on a committee or an officer let us know. Take a look at our website both Colorado and International. Due to the hard work from the membership over many years we have a solid financial footing. The Chapter offers grants and scholarships. If you see a need where SWCS funds can help or encourage to benefit conservation, contact us.

Stay involved, provide feedback and on occasion, lend a hand or idea.

Rich Rhoades
President

Summer Tour: Flood Recovery in Northern Colorado

By: Beth Fortman

Six Chapter members and three guests attended this year's SWCS summer tour in Larimer County. The purpose of the tour was to view on-going Emergency Watershed Program projects. Heavy rains in late summer of 2013 caused major flooding and heavy damage in Estes Park, through the Big Thompson River canyon and into downstream cities. Sam Adams, DC in Ft. Collins, was our tour guide. We met in Loveland and drove west on Hwy 34 into the canyon. Sam showed us areas where slope stabilization was completed to protect buildings threatened by bank erosion. We viewed where flood waters destroyed houses and other buildings that once stood along the river. Stabilization and reinforcement projects have been installed along the river to protect roads and bridges in the Big Thompson River watershed.

We drove to Estes Park and viewed on-going bank stabilization and stream bank work along Fish Creek. Fish Creek Road was destroyed in the flooding. After lunch we followed West Creek and the North Fork of the Big Thompson downstream to the community of Drake. Work is still progressing with a promise of more funds to improve fish habitat. The project was a combined effort for NRCS and other partners including the state, counties, cities and watershed coalitions.



Leadership: Five Key Elements

By: Mike Collins, SWCS SW Regional Director

There are thousands of books available on the subject of leadership, and nearly everyone has an opinion on what it is and what it means. Leadership is a very important concept that touches all aspects of business, industry, government, education and even everyday life. That is quite a statement, isn't it?

I've been in the working world for over 40 years and these are the five key elements I've learned about leadership.

Treat everyone as People!

- a. People want to be treated as unique individuals, not as a number or position.
- b. Listen, ask questions and always recognize their accomplishments. This will result in a productive employee who will more likely give you their best.

Decisions

- a. Don't make decisions in a vacuum. We talk about diversity daily, but diversity involves more than gender and ethnicity. I think diversity also includes brain power and thought processes. Don't be afraid to ask for others' opinions. You won't learn if you don't ask. Two heads really are better than one!
- b. Don't take too long to make a decision. You'll never have 100% of the information you need to make a decision, so find the right balance between information requirements and timeliness.
- c. Finally, avoid making decisions with adrenaline in your system. An adrenaline-driven decision is rarely sound.

Communication

- a. Communicate, communicate, and communicate again. Never assume you, or the other party, knows what is going on. Use oral, in-person communication as much as possible. Email is appropriate when the phone or in-person meetings are not possible, but never email someone you can see in person! Email is best for simple communication requirements, not complex issues.

Find a way to say 'yes'

- a. Often times, 'no' is the easy answer and masks underlying issues. 'No' may reflect laziness, knowledge gaps, incomplete understanding, lack of attention to detail or even envy e.g. if it's not your idea it's easy to disagree.
- b. Don't let fear keep you from taking a risk or making a mistake.

Key differences between being a boss and a leader

Boss

Drives you
Uses authority
It's about "Me or I"
Delegates
Leaves you in the dark
Goes with the crowd

Leader

Coaches you
Uses Goodwill
It's about "We"
Empowers others
Explains the "Why"
Does what's right

In closing, I want to share one of my favorite quotes

General George S. Patton Jr., "If everyone is thinking alike then somebody isn't thinking."

Two Attend International Conference

Aaron Reynolds and Beth Fortman traveled across the country to attend the International SWCS annual conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, the home state of Hugh Hammond Bennett. The conference had a focus of putting the science of conservation into practice. The conference provided detailed insight into the happenings in the conservation and agricultural community.

Greensboro did not disappoint in providing sound evidence of the environmental and economic benefits from soil health. After 3 days of presentations about conservation we were able to observe conservation in practice and hear about the benefits from the early adopters. After leaving Greensboro it is evident there is profound evidence and support for conservation that will be brought back to Colorado and implemented by Chapter members and other conservationist. For those who haven't attended a SWCS annual conference it's highly recommended for professional and personal growth.



The breakout sessions provided a broad range of variety in relation to conservation and agriculture. One of the main presentations was titled: A Look at Precision Conservation: Putting Science into Practice. This presentation entailed three speakers each from different sector: Private, Collegiate, and Governmental each providing examples of how they are using precision technology to implement conversation related practices in their respective fields. The USDA is using a set of precision conservation planning tools has been developed to facilitate watershed planning at this scale through a participatory process involving landowners. The approach emphasizes the need to improve soil health across a watershed, and provides multiple options to place a variety of structural and vegetative practices to control, trap and treat water flows within and below fields in locations suited to each type of practice. The government isn't the only area where precision technology is being used many farmers are using these tools in their operations. Through precision farming they are able to identify area where they don't have quality yields and omitting those poorly operating areas from production.

On the last day there was a soil health farm tour visiting three farms. The first operation was implementing a high density beef rotation. Where his paddock size was one acre comprised of multiple species, which was rotated on a daily basis. As a demonstration they moved cattle by rolling up the interior fencing and within moments the cattle were sprinting and disappearing into lush green forage. The management has allowed for productive grazing all throughout the summer months when others aren't seeing comparable growth. The next stop was to the North Carolina A&T Research Farm where they have been experimenting with cover crops for more than a decade. Their research is analyzing the benefits of cover crops in erosion reduction and the implementation of legumes prior to cash crops to provide nitrogen for consumption. Instead of conventionally spraying the cover crop for termination they were crimping the plant, which was just as effective and provided more benefit to soil health.

The last stop was Ray Styer's farm where he's been practicing soil health for the past 40 years. The management activities include multispecies cover crops, no-till, and strip cropping. One aspect Ray is separated from most is that he doesn't apply artificial fertilizer on his operation because of his 50 head of cattle provide enough manure for over half his operation. The soil health is in such high quality there isn't a need for additional fertilizer because the system is maintaining its self naturally.

CO SWCS 2016 Officer Elections

The end of the year is near and that means its time to consider election of new officers for the 2016 calendar year. Positions to be filled for 2016 are President Elect, Secretary/Treasurer and Director at Large.

President Elect — Serves a 1 year term as president elect and is asked to commit to 3 years to serve as 1) president elect, 2) president and 3) past president. Responsible for organizing the topic and speakers for the chapter's annual technical conference while president-elect.

Secretary/Treasurer — Serves a 2 year term as a member of the executive council. Shall keep accurate records of the meetings of the Board of Directors, ensure that all correspondence is carried out as directed and ensure that accurate financial accounts are maintained. The Secretary-Treasurer shall also submit to the membership at the annual meeting a financial report of the Chapter

Director at Large — Serves a 2 year term as a director on the executive council. Shall represent the interests of all members of the Chapter, within each area. They represent public policy, advocacy, natural resource knowledge, and maintains contact with federal, state, and provincial agencies, other societies, environmental, agricultural, conservation and other groups.

For more information on the duties relating to each of these offices, please contact the current officer or President Rich Rhoades.

Any Colorado Chapter SWCS member is eligible for consideration on the ballot. Please contact Rich Rhoades, President, at richard.rhoades@co.usda.gov or any member of the executive council with questions you may have and/or to notify the executive council of your interest. Ballots will be sent out sometime in October 2015. Please be sure and vote!

CO SWCS Supports CIG Grant

The Colorado Chapter of SWCS is supporting a five year project in conjunction with an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) awarded to a research team from Colorado State University led by Dr. Meagan Schipanski. Below is a brief description of the project. Look for more information in our next newsletter.

Colorado State University and Kansas State University (\$995,492) – proposes to demonstrate and quantify the impacts of soil-health improving management practices including cover crops, crop rotations, and reduced tillage on a range of soil properties and processes – including nutrient cycling and soil water availability in the semi-arid environments of the western Great Plains. On- farm demonstration sites and comparison studies will be established in eastern Colorado, western Kansas and western Nebraska to show farmers how these management practices can be successfully adopted in these environments.

SWCS Seeks Award Nominations

The Colorado Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society will present its 2015 awards at the CACD Annual Meeting luncheon on Tuesday, November 17, at the Park Hyatt Beaver Creek Resort in Beaver Creek. I am looking for nominations for Conservation Reporter of the Year and Jr. Conservationist of the Year. Do any of you have media reporters you have worked closely with and who has been active in reporting the goings on of your Districts or projects and programs from your office?

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.

If you know of any youth in your area who are outstanding or exceptional and 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.

Other award nominations to think of are the significant contributions made in the recent past to the Chapter and the cause of soil and water conservation by one of our members and to nominate these contributors for a chapter award. Please submit a nomination (to the Chapter Award Committee as given below) for each Chapter member whom you feel is deserving of recognition with the **Chapter Commendation Award** (especially, but not limited to, a deserving member who has not been so recognized in the last several years). Generally, this award is presented to those members who have made significant contribution of their time and talents to Chapter activities and functioning. We will present these awards at our annual meeting.

Please send your nominations to Beth Fortman (Chapter Awards Committee Chairman), 200 S. Santa Fe, 4th Floor, Pueblo, CO 81003 by October 3, 2015. Or email to elizabeth.fortman@co.usda.gov.

For Chapter Commendations the deadline is **October 16**. National Awards nominations deadline is **December 1**.

The awards program of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is designed to recognize individuals and organizations who have made outstanding contributions in advocating the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources.

I am also accepting nominations for National Awards (see categories below).

Fellow

The designation of Fellow is conferred on Society members who have performed exceptional service in advocating the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. This award is given for professional excellence, first and foremost. Professional achievement may be in practicing, investigating, administering, or teaching soil and water conservation or closely related fields.

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Outstanding Service

The Outstanding Service Award is given to Society members in recognition of distinguished service in helping the Society to develop and carry out its program over a long and sustained period of time. Accomplishments of the nominee should not be of a scope or significance warranting the degree of Fellow, but should be greater than those required for the Commendation Award.

Commendation

The Commendation Award gives international recognition to Society members for service to their chapter or council of chapters.

Conservation Research

Recognizes SWCS society members or teams of members whose research has led to exceptional improvements in soil conservation, water conservation, and/or related natural resources research. Recipients of the Conservation Research Award will receive a plaque and will be honored by their peers at an awards luncheon at the annual conference.

Hugh Hammond Bennett

The Hugh Hammond Bennett Award is the highest honor bestowed on an individual by the Society. It is given for distinguished service in recognition of national and international accomplishments in the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Merit

The Merit Award is given in recognition of an outstanding activity, product, or service by a group, business firm, corporation, or organization that promotes the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources.

Harold-Kay Scholl Excellence in Conservation Award

The Harold and Kay Scholl Excellence in Conservation Award recognizes and provides a yearly cash award to individuals who creatively and effectively provide technical assistance in conservation planning and plan application. Recipients of the award will be recognized at the Society's annual conference with a plaque and a one-time cash award.

2015 CO SWCS College Scholarship

This year's college scholarship \$500 recipient is John Luke McCarty. Luke attends CSU in Ft. Collins, is a senior and a Rangeland Ecology major. He is active in the Rangeland Ecology Club and has served as Treasurer and Vice President. Luke has represented CSU in state and international student competitions through the Society for Range Management (SRM). He works effectively with rangeland management professionals in Colorado and beyond, and substituted as a member of the Board of Directors for the Colorado Section SRM and was actively involved in the 2014 winter meeting. Luke worked a summer for the Utah Department of Natural Resources experiencing work in the preservation of water resources after a fire through vegetation management.

Visit the CO Chapter website at http://www.swcs.org/en/colorado_chapter/colorado_chapter_awards/ and click on Scholarship Application if you know of any college junior or seniors in natural resource related fields attending a 4 year Colorado College that may be interested in applying for our scholarship.

SLV Soil Health Fall Bus Tour

By: Richard Sparks, NRCS ACES Agronomist

On Thursday, September 10, twenty local farmers and soil-health enthusiasts loaded up on a Sargent School Bus to visit three farms in Conejos and Alamosa Counties. First stop: Adam Skadberg's farm west of Antonito. Second stop: Josh and Misty Watters farm east of Sanford. Third and final stop: Jim Rutgers' pivot on the 102 and 9M south road north of Waverly. All three farms share the common goal of improving soil health, but each is implementing unique practices to achieve this. Farmers discussed their challenges and successes.

Adam and Kaia Skadberg rely on minimal tillage, cover crop diversity and livestock grazing to improve soil health. Because of concerns that tillage destroys soil organic matter, tillage was minimized as much as possible. Adam showed one portion of a pivot was no-till planted into a diverse, early-spring cover crop and then grazed by cattle. On another portion of the pivot, a fall-planted winter triticale mix performed well, and part of this was windrowed and grazed in early summer. However, on another part, grazing of the standing triticale resulted in problems with pink eye in calves. After windrowing, cows were much more content—but when windrows started developing too much mold for livestock health, the balance was baled and regrowth grazed. Now, one part of the field has been rototilled and will be planted to another winter triticale/wheat cover crop mixture this fall.

The Skadberg's overall goal is to work towards organic alfalfa and small grains—essential cash crops for economic viability. Quack grass infestations are their biggest challenge. Intensely grazing cover crops is Adam's tool of choice to avoid the need to use excessive tillage or glyphosate. Grazing minimizes the export of organic matter off the field, and manure and urine help build phosphorous and other nutrients his soils need. Improved soil health will hopefully aid in the eventual cash grain crops' ability to outcompete the quack grass. Video link - <https://youtu.be/hPhGBtOsC6s>

Josh and Mystie Watters are also working on organic methods of planting cover crops to use for grazing their livestock. While Josh prefers no-till planting, limited tillage is occasionally used to reduce competition from existing perennials. Their pivot is on heavy textured and salt-affected soils, so livestock grazing and minimal tillage has shown significant improvement in soil intake rates and reduced salinity. Nutrients and soil quality are also improved with organic fertilizers and livestock manure. Elemental sulfur is also added to reduce the pH and sodium in the soil. And, urine and manure from livestock grazing are adding nutrients as well.

"Expenses have declined with less tillage, and grazing cover crops. Still, the bottom line is you have to eventually have productive cash crops to pay the bills" Josh stated.

Mystie also shared their experiences grazing cover crops on their farm. A winter-annual mix of triticale, rye and sweet clover was planted on their farm this past fall. The cover crop was spring grazed, the regrowth baled, and a late summer mix has been planted this year for improved soil health and to provide winter forage for livestock. Mystie also explained their successes grazing summer-planted cover crops for potato growers. As Mystie explained, *"It's a learning curve—for us and for our cows. Now our cows are roly-poly fat and know how to graze. So, we can put in a cow that knows with cows that don't...and it gets easier, the more you do."*

Jim Rutgers has grown no-till barley following alfalfa, using glyphosate applied in the fall to kill the alfalfa. *"Plant no-till grain a little deeper and you will get a good stand. Planting winter annual cover crops such as*

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rye into the barley stubble, however, has had marginal success due to fall competition of volunteer barley,” Jim pointed out. Still, he has had success with fall-planted hairy vetch into barley stubble, and with spraying and no-till drilling barley.

This year, because of rough fields, wheel track problems, and grain cart tracks, Jim used tillage to smooth the field prior to planting alfalfa. However, this amount of tillage didn’t undo the progress Jim had already made in improving soil structure: earlier this summer, when high winds were moving soil across neighboring fields, Jim’s newly germinating alfalfa held in place—and soil erosion wasn’t an issue. Still, it may be possible to make additional progress toward no-till alfalfa, and participants discussed alternatives of no-till planting alfalfa into winter rye or barley stubble. If the field is not too rough, fall planting rye and baling in May could be a good way to no till alfalfa into the rye stubble. Once rye has flowered, allelopathy should not be a problem.

Jim’s hopes are to improve soil health and productivity by reducing tillage going into the grain years to maintain the improved soil condition achieved by the multiple years of alfalfa. Maintaining soil condition and organic matter and mycorrhiza fungi spores and propagules with no-till practices during the grain years prior to rotating back to alfalfa will improve soil health.

Thank you to Adam and Kaia Skadberg, Josh and Mystie Watters, and Jim Rutgers for sharing a wealth of experience and knowledge on improving soil health in the San Luis Valley. Charlotte Bobicki, San Luis Valley Regional Representative for U.S. Senator Michael Bennet commented *“It’s nice to see such young farmers, and to have the opportunity to see firsthand their challenges as well as their successes. Our office is committed to working with the agriculture community to help resolve the issues they are facing and to help them continue to be a driving force in Colorado’s economy.”*

Thanks also to the Soil Health Tour sponsors, including the Monte Vista COOP (who arranged the school bus), CSU Extension Service, the SLV Soil Health Group, and USDA NRCS.

Special Note: The SLV Soil Health Group who hosted this bus tour meets regularly on the second Thursday of each month, and welcomes any who are interested. Meetings are held primarily at the Monte Vista COOP community room in Monte Vista.



Skadberg Farm Norwest of Antonito



John & Mystie Watters’ pivot east of Sanford



Jim Rutgers Farm near Waverly



Healthy Land
Clean Water
For Life

WY Chapter SWCS

2015 Technical Workshop

October 1, 2015

Holiday Inn, Cheyenne, WY

Know Your Rights:

Current Water Rights and Issues in the Region

Join WY Chapter SWCS, with presenters from NRCS, WY DEQ-WQD, Platte River Power Authority, WY Game and Fish, professional experts in hydrology, water law, agriculture and irrigation, engineering and energy development, for a

daylong technical workshop focused on current regional topics related to WATER:

- Opening remarks by WY State Engineer Pat Tyrell
- Lunch keynote address on cloud seeding by Barry Lawrence,
Project Manager, WY Water Development Commission

Topics will include:

- Aquifer Geology and Groundwater
- Water Rights and current regulatory issues, state and federal
- Perspectives from: Agriculture and Irrigation, Energy Development and Hydropower,
Recreation and Culture

Coffee and afternoon break and lunch included with registration.

CEUs available.

After hours reception, awards presentations and silent auction.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Holiday Inn for the event.

Registration opens Monday, August 24!

For more information and registration materials, contact

Lisa Cox, President and Area 2 Director: bebetterwriter@gmail.com, 385.228.4135 or

Roni Schadeegg, Treasurer: schadeegg2@bresnan.net, 307.267.9188.

Backyard Conservation Camp



There were 22 future biologists, botanists, entomologists, zoologists and environmentalists at the Backyard Conservation Camp sponsored by Burlington Conservation District on July 13-16 at Palmer Park and Burlington Community and Education Center. They spent four days learning about soil, bugs, bees and worms, weather and wild animals.

On Monday the kids learned all about soil from Jennifer Griffin, soil conservationist with NRCS and Amanda Diaz, district technician and Jennie McCasland.

Tuesday was a little buggy while the kids found out exciting things about bees, built bugs and learned about worms and what bugs eat. Steve Poet talked about bee keeping, Dori Seaman explained insect life cycles and water bugs, Kristi Gay held a session on worm squirm and Brandi Einspahr shared her experience with bug collecting. Amanda Diaz help the kids build a bug and Jennifer Griffin shared a bug story and help them make bug masks.

Wednesday's theme was "Weather or Not - Here We Come." Amanda Diaz and Jennie McCasland talked about different kinds of clouds, made indoor clouds using dry ice and helped the kids make sun catchers.

Thursday wrapped up the Backyard Conservation Camp with a "Walk on the Wild Side." Wildlife biologist Shannon Bowling helped the kids explore and learn about wild animals, what they eat, animal senses, and predators versus prey and the food chain. They made animal tracks and bird feeders.



Photos by Burlington Conservation District



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/

Communication Training from SRM

Everyone is invited to attend “Communicating with the Land User” a training hosted by the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (CSSRM). The training will be held from 1 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3 to noon on Thursday, November 5 at the Hotel Colorado in Glenwood Springs. This training is applicable to anyone who wants to do a better job of communicating, not just to those in the range profession. Feel free to share this training news to others in your agency or organization.

Jeff Goebel <http://www.aboutlistening.com/about/team-profiles/jeff-goebel> will be the keystone speaker. Jeff Goebel is a leading expert in helping individuals and communities attain their goals and remove the obstacles that lie in the way. He has over thirty years of national and international successes in consensus building, conflict resolution, and visioning for sustainable solutions. As an award-winning consultant in private practice, he has worked on catalyzing positive change with everyone from non-profits to government agencies, multinational corporations to small family ranchers. He has developed a highly effective program of respectful listening, visioning, and planning that attains long-range and long-lasting change through 100% consensus while achieving the “triple-bottom line” (social, economic, and ecologic).

Jeff will open the program on Tuesday afternoon, November 3, with a 2 ½ hour presentation and small group exercise to teach us how to listen and engage in conversations. Jeff will give a 2 hour ‘mini-workshop’ on Wednesday where he will teach us how to work through difficult situations. He’ll close the session on Thursday from 11 to noon, where he’ll help us internalize what we have learned, reinforce the listening and communication skills, and give some feedback.

In addition to Jeff, there is a diverse line-up of speakers from federal agencies, local governments, and land users to share their experiences and knowledge in successful communications. We’ll hear from Robbie LeValley, Floyd Reed, Jim Cagney, Meaghan Huffman, Duke Phillips, Cory Off, Bob Mountain, Taylor Payne and Shane Green. To see a full agenda and to register go to www.cssrmwintertraining.eventbrite.com.

Hotel Colorado will hold a block of rooms until October 5. The rate is \$83 per night. Contact the Hotel Colorado at 970-945-6511 to make your reservation.



EVENTS TO WATCH FOR



☺ **CO SWCS TECHNICAL CONFERENCE/ANNUAL MEETING**
TBA

☺ **FARMING EVOLUTION: SOIL HEALTH AND NO-TILL WORKSHOP**
FEBRUARY 2016, Holyoke, CO

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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.