

CONSERVOGRAM > The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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The Soil and Water Conservation Society and COVID-19

As COVID-19 has impacted all of our lives, at work and at home, we want to let you know your professional society is thinking of you and your families. Click [here](#) for COVID-19 Organizational Updates.

September/October Issue of the Journal



The latest issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* is here! Features in this issue include an article from [Hougham et al.](#) detailing the North Central Region Water Network's efforts to identify successes and challenges regarding youth water education programs in the Midwest as well as articles by [Morton](#) and [La](#) describing the growing importance of adopting

sustainable and regenerative agricultural systems in Vietnam and worldwide, respectively. Research papers cover a range of topics, including mobile technology to assist nonexperts in land use planning ([Quandt et al.](#)), the impact conservation measures have had on runoff and sediment loads during the Yellow River flood season ([Xie et al.](#)), and the potential for soils contaminated with heavy metals to be restored to agricultural use through corn cultivation ([Rutkowska et al.](#)). Find these articles and many more in the [online journal](#).

(Psst... Did you know that you can customize your content notifications for the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation? By [setting up email alerts](#), you can choose to be notified when a new issue or early online content is available or when topic-specific articles are published. Both online and print subscribers may opt into this service.)

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Join Give Journal



From the Leadership: Membership Message from the Chair

Courtesy of SWCS Chair Dale Threatt-Taylor



“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...”

Charles Dickens’ famous book *A Tale of Two Cities* was published in 1859. We can repeat these famous words over and over in 2020. I challenge the membership of SWCS to focus on “the **best** of times.”

Yes, it’s human nature to gripe about all the problems facing us this year, but I challenge you to think good thoughts, to make the best of the changes, to find solutions to problems, and to be innovative! Let’s not only endure and survive during these times; instead, let’s make sure this time is not wasted. After all, we come from a legacy of conservationists who took on the Dust Bowl! Think of all the natural resource conservation work that was born out of economic depression, drought, and erosion.

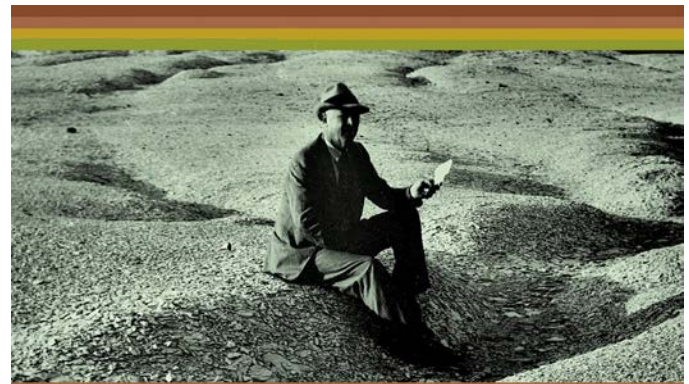
If we try, we can find something about this year to list as the “best of times.” Cleaner air, more time with family, office work without constant interruptions. (No one wants to admit it, but we know that’s one of the good things!) We also should share good times with fellow SWCS members.

First, start by contacting existing members in your local chapter. Yes, one more Zoom call! Use this time to reconnect your chapter members. Second, discuss growing membership in your chapter. Stop—did you just say, “our membership is declining”? Reboot. The year 2020 is the time to be innovative. Reach out to inactive members, former members, young professionals, other natural resource partners, and... this is key... ASK them to join you. **A personal invitation is key.** Plan one topic of discussion (local chapter fun event, professional development, science project, civic project, or even a back-to-school environmental education project). Doesn’t matter the topic, what’s important is that the chapter reconnects and makes the best of times.

Third, enjoy the thrill of the challenge. This year has led to more outings, more people in contact with nature, a heightened respect for the environment, and more opportunities to collaborate on projects with new partners. Yes, virtual calls, virtual conferences, and reduced commutes to the office have given us a chance to find new ways to work. Accept this challenge and decide how your chapter can teach each other a new skill or partner with a new group on a conservation project. Finally, expect a future. Tomorrow will be better. I promise. So smile and share some good news. Conservation work brought us through the worst of times. Let it drive us during the best of times.

SWCS Founder’s Message Continues to Reach Audiences in 2020

Earlier this month, Denver-based *5280 Magazine* explored the enduring legacy of Hugh Hammond Bennett’s role to help the nation recover from the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Bennett was the founder of SWCS and also the first chief of the Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service), and his leadership during that crisis came from years of on-the-ground experience as a soil scientist and surveyor. Quoted in the article is SWCS Historian Joe Otto, who recalls Bennett’s “Eureka!” moment of discovering that overworked, bare soil will quickly lose its fertility and ultimately erode away. This simple, yet scientifically complex conclusion led Bennett to teach others about erosion and build a movement to protect the nation’s soil and water resources from misuse. Today, that movement continues to grow. You can read the full article [here](#) to refresh your memory on Bennett and the origins of SWCS and the NRCS.



IT IS A WASTE OF TIME AND EFFORT
TO PRODUCE
A HIGH-YIELDING CROP
ON LOW-CLASS LAND.



Hugh Hammond Bennett

Upcoming Events

[California Watersheds: Water Conservation, Restoration, and Sustainability](#)

Lodi, California
October 22–23, 2020

[All Ohio Chapter: Working Wetlands - The Role of Wetlands in Nutrient Reduction Part 2](#)

Virtual Event
November 4, 2020

Career Profile: Sindhu Jagadamma

You can find more career profiles and read Sindhu Jagadamma's profile in its entirety [online](#).



Sindhu Jagadamma, Assistant Professor of Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science, University of Tennessee

Career Sector: Academia

Degrees: BS in Agriculture from Kerala Agricultural University, India; MS and PhD in Soil Science from Ohio State University

Briefly describe your career path from college until today. I attended Kerala Agricultural University in India for my BSc in agricultural sciences and MSc in soil science and agricultural chemistry. I then worked in India as an extension and soil survey officer for six years. In 2003, I received the prestigious Ford Foundation's International Fellowship, which allowed me to further pursue my studies anywhere in the world. I chose Ohio State University (OSU) to study under the mentorship of Dr. Rattan Lal for both my MS and PhD. My research was focused on soil carbon sequestration and its global significance for agroecosystem sustainability. After my PhD, I worked as a postdoctoral researcher at OSU for less than a year under Dr. Warren Dick on greenhouse emissions from agroecosystems. Then I moved to Oak Ridge National Laboratory (ORNL) to conduct research on fundamental biotic and abiotic processes that are underpinning soil carbon stabilization and destabilization. In 2016, I started a tenure-track assistant professor position in the Department of Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science at the University of Tennessee. My research focuses on understanding ways to improve soil health to build and maintain sustainable crop production systems.

Describe the best choices that you've made along your career path. One of the best choices I made was to quit my job and continue my graduate studies. Born and brought up in a rural village in India, I was doubtful if I would succeed, but my husband strongly believed that I was able to take up that challenge. Another important choice I made was accepting the postdoc offer at ORNL, which exposed me to the state-of-the-art research capabilities and world-renowned scientists. This institution was also sensitive to our "two-body problem" and provided support, when needed, so my family could be together. I am also proud of my chosen research focus area, which is soil health. This area of research has emerged as a "hot topic" in recent years, and it has given me the opportunity to work at the intersection of fundamental and applied research, generating useful information for diverse groups such as academic professionals, government and non-government agencies, and producers.

What is the job outlook in your current position? I am currently a tenure-track assistant professor in soil science. Improving soil health by adopting soil conservation management practices has been a major focus area in the field of soil science. The future of this field is looking bright as our need for improving crop production without compromising water and environmental quality has been recognized by governmental agencies and political groups. Research in soil health is very interdisciplinary, involving soil scientists, ecologists, microbiologists, data scientists, social scientists, and policy makers. Future researchers in this field need to appreciate the interdisciplinary aspect and gain the skills to interact with scientists of diverse backgrounds.

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? Students: I suggest that you ask yourselves the timeless question before you jump into graduate school, "What do I want to be when I grow up [as a soil scientist]?" There are numerous job opportunities available for soil scientists in government, industries, universities, national laboratories, and other research organizations. Identify your strengths and passion, and take your time to choose a career path. Your graduate research has to be tailored to include the skills necessary to succeed in each of these career paths. If you do your homework, you will be very self-motivated to complete your graduate research and land your dream job.

How has SWCS impacted your career, or contributed to your continued education and/or professional development? I have been utilizing the resources available on SWCS's website for educational and professional development. I avidly read the articles published in the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* and integrate the information in my research. I have already published one article in this journal and I am currently working on another manuscript for submission.

What do you like most about your job? The thing I like the most about my faculty position is mentoring. Oftentimes, students are unaware of different career paths in their field of study and how to tune their education and training to pursue those options. I was in a similar situation as well. Over the years, I learned that it is very important to set a career goal in advance and work toward achieving it. So, I ask about students' career goals during the interview process. For example, if their goal is to join academia, I provide them the opportunity to publish, attend professional societies, and compete for awards and scholarships. If their goal is to become an extension professional, I help them pick an appropriate project, include extension faculty members on their graduate committees, provide them the opportunity to interact with producers, and guide them to develop extension publications. I am thankful for the opportunities my current job provides to mentor students and postdoctoral researchers.

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.

- Some [policy from the past](#) featuring SWCS's own Joe Otto: The man who saved the nation from one of the worst environmental disasters in history
- USDA updates [conservation provisions](#) for highly erodible land and wetlands
- Ag and rural issues raised: [Presidential candidates](#) respond to questions from Farm Bureau
- Ag Policy Blog: Senate, House committees return amid questions about [farm COVID-19 funding](#)
- Opinion: Sixty days until the [farm and food](#) world shakes
- Climate risk ignored in [agricultural finance](#) poses hazards to farmers and rural communities
- At the nation's largest [student farm organization](#), a reckoning on race
- Changing [what we eat](#) could offset years of climate-warming emissions, new analysis finds
- Soil Health Institute to develop [soil carbon measurement](#) and monitoring system
- Scrub Hub: What are [drainage tiles](#) and why are they an environmental issue?
- [US Environmental Protection Agency](#) (USEPA) chief criticizes Democratic governors, vows to concentrate on cleaning up vulnerable communities in a second Trump term
- Trump administration proposes timber sale in [Tongass National Forest](#)
- [Farm workers](#) face double threat of wildfires and smoke during COVID-19
- House will vote on federal [marijuana legalization](#) for the first time, bill's future in Senate uncertain
- New [USDA survey](#) to measure areas for improvement
- The true colors of [America's political spectrum](#) are gray and green

- New report from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs: New solutions for a [changing climate](#)
- Commission launches public consultation on European Union [organic plan](#), backs regulation postponement
- Hundreds of people planted "[Chinese mystery seeds](#)"

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.

Conservation NewsBriefs: Popular Articles from August



Are you up-to-date with news about soil and water conservation research and policy? *Conservation NewsBriefs* is a highly informative e-news brief that delivers the most relevant content to your inbox each and every Thursday. Below are links to some of the most read articles from the past month:

- [New ag tech programs stress reducing environmental footprint while boosting profitability](#) (Progressive Farmer)
- [Ranchers combine cattle, conservation and logging to save birds](#) (The Fence Post)
- [Farming releases carbon from the Earth's soil into the air. Can we put it back?](#) (NPR)
- [Study seeks to increase adoption of soil conservation practices](#) (Phys.org)

[Click here](#) to sign up and start receiving your weekly *Conservation NewsBriefs* today!



Find us on
Facebook

facebook.com/soilandwaterconservation

New Members

Welcome members who joined in August!

International

Rallapalli Srinivas

Arizona

Dan Mahan

DC—National Capital Chapter

Chris Davison

Jan Surface

Mary Kay Thatcher

Georgia

Gary Hankins

Iowa

Mary Beth Stevenson

Adriana Valcu Lisman

Maryland—Maryland Old Line

Loretta Collins

Maine—Pine Tree

Haley Jean

Montana

Jean Blackman

Larissa Larissa

North Carolina—Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter

Tony Burd

Bart Clewis

Max Feken

Dave Flakne

Jay Overmyer

Caydee Savinelli

Chris Tutino

Mark White

Pennsylvania—Keystone

Nicole Guise

Emily Leshar

Texas—Heart of Texas

Dan Keese

Texas—North Texas

Wesley Joost

Jeffrey Leindecker

New Conservation Community Members

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

Georgia

Georgia Association of Conservation Districts

Corporate Partners

Please contact memberservices@swcs.org or visit swcs.org/corporatepartner for more details.

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze

