

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. As staff are working remotely, [please use email](#) to connect with SWCS at this time.

September/October Issue of the Journal



The latest issue of the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* is available online and on its way to mailboxes now! Features in this issue include an exploration of opportunities and limitations of the [cover crop seed market](#) in the United States by Martins et al. and observations of initiation of [gully formation](#) from freeze-thaw processes in northeastern China by Hu et al. Research articles address a range of conservation management topics, including farmer perceptions of [nutrient loss](#) (Hoselton and Boerngen), [no-till, and cover crops](#) (Lo et al.); [wetland efficacy for nitrate removal](#) (Gordon et al.); and [estimates of row-crop residue cover](#) using image-based methods (Lory et al.). Also in this issue, recent work by Morris and Arbuckle examines the relationship between USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service [conservation plans and farmers’ implementation](#) of conservation practices. Find these and many more articles in the [online journal](#).

Like this issue’s cover photo? The photo by Chanda Cooper was selected as the People’s Choice Winner in the 2021 SWCS Photo Contest. The cosmos bloom featured was part of a wild-flower border planted along a South Carolina farmer’s corn and soybean field to support pollinator conservation.

Would you like to be notified when a new issue is published? You can customize content notifications for the *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation* by setting up [email alerts](#). Using these 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 only and print subscribers may opt into this service.

Results of Inaugural Conservation Practitioner Poll

Earlier this month the Soil and Water Conservation Society released results from the first ever Conservation Practitioner Poll (CPP). The poll surveyed conservation practitioners in the Upper Mississippi River Basin who provide technical assistance, implement programs, and work directly with farmers to realize natural resource conservation goals on the landscape.

Key findings from the report include:

- Nearly all conservation practitioners rated in-person work with farmers and landowners, whether in the office or in the field, as the most effective strategy for getting conservation on the ground, and 92% rated cost share programs as effective or highly effective tools to support conservation implementation.
- Conservation practitioners are limited in their ability to build relationships with farmers by the burden of paperwork and program administration, employee turnover, inconsistent program rules and policies, and lack of communication and training on new rules.
- State-level conservation programs were ranked highest for ease of administration, while the Conservation Stewardship Program, the nation's largest conservation program, was rated most difficult to administer.
- Just 18% of conservation practitioners indicated discussion of climate change helps get conservation on the ground in the region, but 69% are interested in training and information about climate-smart agriculture.

View the [full press release](#). View the [Conservation Practitioner Poll 2021 Summary Report](#).

GOALS OF THE CONSERVATION PRACTITIONER POLL

- #1 Learn from "boots on the ground" practitioners how to improve the conservation delivery system
- #2 Understand what conservation practitioners need to be satisfied and successful in their jobs
- #3 Elevate their voice in national conversations

Upcoming Events

[SNEC Chapter: Fall Erosion & Sediment Control Field Days](#)

Location TBD
October 6-7, 2021

[Oklahoma Chapter Annual Meeting](#)

Hochatown, Oklahoma
October 21-22, 2021

[Virginia Chapter Fall Meeting](#)

Petersburg, Virginia
November 16, 2021

Conservation at the Co-Op

Can co-op staff sell conservation practices to farmers just as they sell seed, fertilizer, and other products? Answering that question is at the heart of a current SWCS special project called Conservation at the Co-op. This project is funded by two USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grants via its Conservation Innovation Grant program and runs through December of 2023.

Since our last update, the retailers are showcasing their conservation efforts at field days and in partnership with other conservation professionals! Our partners in Nebraska have learned the nuances of setting up and demonstrating a rainfall simulator, which they did at the Cass County Fair in late August. They even reached out to Dr. Paul Jasa of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln for assistance with the demonstrations, as well as NRCS personnel Jeremiah Schutz. Our Kansas partners demonstrated their rainfall simulator at a field day that included special outreach to crop consultants, who work with the company's larger growers and farm managers. Our Iowa partners have a mobile conservation demonstration unit fashioned from a covered trailer that has been moving from site to site for much of the summer, including a stop at one of the On-Farm Trials. Learn more about SWCS Special Projects [here](#).

Sand County Foundation's Land Ethic Mentorship

Courtesy of Heidi Peterson, Sand County Foundation

Approximately 40% of all US farmers are considered historically underserved. According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, there is an increase in the number of farmers under 35 years old, and they are more likely to be Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), compared to the national farm average. Due to limited resources, historically underserved farmers and ranchers often operate on more environmentally sensitive land, and closer to impaired water bodies. When they are not using federal conservation programs, it is typically because of a lack of awareness.

[Sand County Foundation's Land Ethic Mentorship](#) for historically underserved farmers and ranchers is seeking to change that. The mentorship program, supported by a two-year USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Collaboration Grant, features 20 Leopold Conservation Award-winning farmers and ranchers who are eager to mentor and share their experiences with USDA NRCS cost-share programs and other conservation initiatives. Sand County Foundation needs your help to spread the word to those who may benefit from a conservation mentor.

Participation in the mentorship is free and open to anyone fitting the NRCS definition of [historically underserved](#). Technical support that meets the farmer or rancher on the land that they manage is critical to advance conservation adoption. Networking and knowledge sharing about conservation practices is a significant predictor of conservation practice adoption.

Do you work in a district where there is not enough staff time for one-on-one technical assistance? Mentorships can help break down some of the initial barriers to implementation and maintenance, providing aid in regions where technicians are spread thin.

For more information, or to have someone share more with your group, please contact Heidi Peterson at hpeterson@sandcountyfoundation.org. To sign up, select "enroll-now" at www.sandcountyfoundation.org/mentorship.

The Sand County Foundation is an SWCS Conservation Community Member. Find out more about organizational memberships [here](#).

SWCS also collaborates with the Sand County Foundation on their Leadership for Midwestern Watersheds forum for professionals who lead projects that reduce agricultural runoff in watersheds of the Upper Mississippi River Basin.



Will Lee of Sang Lee Farms.

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.

- Results from [new poll](#) offer boots-on-the-ground insight on improving the nation's conservation delivery system
- The nation's first [regenerative dairy](#) works with nature to heal the soil — at scale
- Farmers weigh options in light of US Environmental Protection Agency ban on [chlorpyrifos](#)
- Farmers restore [native grasslands](#) as groundwater disappears
- NASA [drought research](#) shows value of both climate mitigation and adaptation
- Indigo pays 267 farmers for progress in first-ever [carbon farming](#) program
- With \$8.75 billion, USDA nears bottom of [pandemic aid](#) list
- Could '[non-use](#)' rights boost conservation lands?
- USDA to offer new insurance option for conservation-minded corn farmers who '[split-apply](#)' nitrogen
- [Climate center director](#) selected as Biden Administration advisor
- Court tosses Trump [water pollution](#) rule but still weighing restoration of Obama rule
- Can USDA [reverse the trend](#) on the Conservation Reserve Program?
- For farmers in [dry regions](#), cover crops may not be worth the water
- USDA to invest \$50 million in [new cooperative agreements](#) for racial justice and equity
- A [program](#) that pays farmers not to farm isn't saving the planet
- Soil [carbon credits](#): The realities on the ground

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.

New Members

Welcome members who joined in August!

International

Arcangelo Loss
Desi Purwantini

Alabama

Angie Eckman
Kathy Gotcher
Shannon Weaver

Arkansas—Razorback

Katie Mann

Delaware/Maryland—Pokomoke

Paul Ferraro

Iowa

Laura Meyer

Illinois

Ann Sorensen

Michigan

Skye Palmer

Minnesota

Matt Drewitz

Missouri—Show Me

Drew Holt
Siobhan Perry

Montana

Allison Milodragovich

North Carolina—Hugh Hammond Bennett Chapter

Jason Byrd
Kaitlyn Markey

North Carolina—North Carolina State University

Student Chapter
Loutrina Staley

Nebraska

Ekundayo Adeleke
Zamir Libohova

New York—Empire State

Liz Camps
Charles Kesterson

Oklahoma

Diana Nighswonger

Oregon

Loren Unruh

Pennsylvania—Keystone

Morgan Bear

South Dakota

Samantha Ziph

Virginia

Brian Donato
Pam Mason

Corporate Partners

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

Platinum



Gold



Silver



Bronze

