

Spring Edition

Newsletter Date:
May 31, 2007



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Bioenergy, an Exploding Topic of Interest...

Recent increases in oil prices and concern for energy security have led to an explosion in interest for development of bioenergy. West Central Minnesota has a long history of ethanol production, and it is a hotbed of new bioenergy development. The MN SWCS summer tour will provide an opportunity for a first-hand look at these developments and the associated conservation challenges and opportunities. The tour will include a stop at the University of Minnesota West Central Research and Outreach Center's Renewable Energy and Demonstration Center, where you can view the University-owned wind turbine, and other renewable energy developments will be discussed, such as the wind to hydrogen project, the planned University of Minne-

sota-Morris biomass gasification facility, community anaerobic digester system, and the green building extension. (We will also get a glimpse of the WCROC horticultural gardens, which you can tour on your own following the bus-tour!)

Another tour stop will be at the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company in Benson, MN which is a cooperative-owned 45 million gallon-per-year ethanol producer, and is building a biomass gasification pilot plant as a potential substitute for their natural gas energy supply. A farm site stop will show some field-scale research to measure agricultural production effects on soil carbon and water quality. The tour will conclude at the Barnes-Aastad Association's Swan Lake Re-



Can the land produce our food and energy and still protect soil and water resources?

search farm. The research farm is the site of several research studies by the USDA Agricultural Research Service, North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory, including research on effects of biomass harvest on soil quality, biomass crop production alternatives, and potential new biofuel crops. It should be an interesting and fun-filled day. We look forward to seeing you there!

Funds Available to Attend SWCS Meeting in Tampa, Florida!

Three Stipends are available for members to attend the 2007 National SWCS Annual Conference. Early registration deadline is June 15th!

There are 3 Stipends for \$500 available; two are for any member and one is available specifically for a Student member interested in attending the conference.

All Stipends will be awarded after the conference is over. Anyone interested in receiving a Stipend to attend the 2007 National SWCS Annual Conference should contact Sid Cornelius, Chapter Treasurer, (sid.cornelius@mn.usda.gov) or Mike Appel, Chapter Secretary (mike.appel@mn.usda.gov).

There is also a Grant available through the West North Central Region (WNC) for students wishing to attend the conference. The grants are \$250 per student. For more information about the grant opportunity please contact, Peggy James, the WNC Regional Director. (peggy.james@wi.usda.gov)



MN Chapter SWCS 2007 Award Winners!



Tom Steger presenting the Education award to Greg Munson.

"Congratulations to the 2007 Award Winner's! MN Chapter of SWCS is proud to recognize all the work that you have done and will continue to do to protect Minnesota's soil and water resources!"



The **Outstanding Service Award** recognizes distinguished service to the Society over a long and sustained period of time and is available annually to a Minnesota Chapter SWCS member who has ten years or more of service to the Chapter.

For 2007 the MN Chapter SWCS would like to recognize Sidney Cornelius as winner of the Outstanding Service Award. Sid is a Resource Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Saint Paul office. He has been chapter treasurer for many years. In that time Sid has helped keep us solvent and he has carefully handled funds for conferences, events and the International meeting hosted here a few years ago. One nominator noted that "he has served the chapter well" and that "he has done this (all) without complaining."

The **Commendation Award** recognizes members for service to their chapter and is available annually to Minnesota Chapter SWCS members for their commendable service to the Minnesota Chapter.

For 2007 the Chapter would like to recognize John Beckwith as the winner of the Chapter Commendation Award. John is the Water Resources Staff Leader with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Saint Paul Office. A 30 year member of SWCS; he has displayed his leadership in a positive yet practical fashion both on the job and with various SWCS state chapters. The nominator notes that John "has been a huge asset to Minnesota."

The **Honor Award** recognizes people for outstanding accom-

plishments compatible with Society objectives and is available annually to members or non-members for accomplishments in the natural resource field.

For 2007 the Chapter would like to recognize Julie MacSwain as the winner of the Chapter Honor Award. Julie is the Public Affairs Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Saint Paul Office. Over the three years she has held this position she has had a positive impact on communicating our conservation story. From the monthly photo contest to informative press releases to representing her agency at exhibits and with the media she has helped publicize our efforts well.

The **Merit Award** recognizes noteworthy conservation activity or products of organizations, agencies or firms and is available annually to a SWCS member or non-member group, agency, business, product, etc. for accomplishments or contributions to the natural resource field.

For 2007 the Chapter would like to recognize Jay Rendall as the winner of the Merit Award. Since 1991 Jay has been the coordinator of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Exotic Species Program and is co-chair of the Minnesota Invasive Species Advisory Committee.

For the last several years Jay has been overseen the planning, design and rollout of the annual MN Invasive Species calendar. In the words of the nominator "this calendar has been distributed to thousands of people and has made a huge impact on the people of Minnesota."

The **News/Media award** rec-

ognizes activities promoting conservation issues and activities through various media outlets and is available annually for the dedicated promotion of natural resource issues in Minnesota.

For 2007 the Chapter would like to recognize Paula Mohr as the winner of the News/Media winner. Paula is editor of The Farmer magazine. She has done an excellent job in communicating the conservation story to readers of the magazine. From her nominator "Paula has a passion for conservation that is genuine and is certainly a positive example for all media personnel in Minnesota."

The **Education Award** recognizes activities promoting conservation issues and activities with adults and/or youth. It is available annually to an individual, group or agency to acknowledge their efforts.

For 2007 the Minnesota Chapter of SWCS would like to recognize the Quarry Hill Nature Center in Rochester and their director Greg Munson. The Nature Center was built with funds and donated labor and opened in 1973 as a cooperative effort of the Rochester Parks Department and School District. In 1990 and 1999 additions were completed which greatly expanded the space available for an ever increasing demand for public and school programs. Greg has been a tireless advocate and promoter of environmental education and under his leadership, the Nature Center has developed into an integral part of the education of thousands of Southeast MN children each year.

By Tom Steger, 2007 Award Committee Chair

MN Chapter Sponsors “Emerging Issues in Soil and Water Lecture” at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus.

The Emerging Issues in Soil and Water Lecture, hosted by the U of M started in 2003, the purpose of the lecture was to educate the public about soil and water issues. This years lecture was in honor of the late Dr. Raymond Allmaras. Dr. Almars passed away October 12, 2006 and will truly be missed by those who new of his work, he is a man that has made great contributions to the world of soil science by the great research that he completed and the impression and advise he gave to many young leaders and researches within the soil and water conservation world.

Mr. Larson and Miss Bengtson were able to attend the Lecture on April 12, 2007. They had two PhD's come in and speak with a few intros from Professors and a Regent.

1. Dr. Gary Petersen (Penn St.) stood first to deliver a lecture on "Geospatial Technologies in Land Use Decision Making." "I found out that there is a thing called GIS, that it can tell you where things are, it can't tell you where things will be, and it sure can't tell you why things happened the way they did." said Dr.

Petersen. Here are snippets of his remarks:

- With the use of GIS and aerial photography you can visualize the changes that have happened in the landscape over the past thirty years.
- "I believe the change in land use all across this county and the world can be the cause of global warming" for example, Las Vegas used to be a desert and now it is irrigated, the same goes for Arizona.

2. Dr. Ronald Amundson (University of California at Berkeley) was considerably more forward looking and, true to his campus' reputation for mind-bending things, enthralled us for the next forty minutes with the question, "Are Soils Endangered?". Some interesting paradigms eventually morphed into some unfortunate hallucinations. Here are snippets of his remarks:
- we've had 250 years of industrialized activity yet have changed enough of the landscape so that the Cenozoic should more accurately be referred to as the "anthropocene" (an-throp-a-zine) to reflect man's huge influence. Scale of human influence has been comparable to glaciation.

- he's produced a map of where "native" soils have been lost. Used to be that steep mountainous regions out West had the largest soil losses but now those losses are dwarfed by the yields from ag lands in the Mississippi basin. Indiana and Illinois are among the most human impacted (non-urban) areas on the planet. Oddly enough, many of the few remaining stands of unplowed prairie soils lie inside of fenced cemetery islands in seas of ag land.

- he likened soil taxonomy to that of the animal world. Animals world is kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species; soils go from just 11 orders, to sub-orders, to over 19,000 identified "species".

- he smashed digital files of soils and land use to make a composite ranking of soils as: rare, impacted, endangered, extinct, or domesticated. Charles Darwin: "Rarity, as geology tells us, is the precursor to extinction."

These two lectures brought forth a wealth of information and ideas to ponder. The Lectures were video taped, to view the tapping go to: <https://breeze5.umn.edu/p700>

"I Believe Changing Land use is the main cause for Global Warming. —Dr. Gary Petersen, Pennsylvania State University"

"Are Soils Endangered? Do we need to protect soils like we do Animals and Plants? —Dr. Ronald Amundson, University of California at Berkeley."

Minnesota Chapter of SWCS moves towards electronic communication...

It is official, the MN Chapter executive board members have decided that the best way to keep membership up to speed on current events, board happenings, and any other items. The news letters will also go

back to being developed quarterly rather than twice a year. The board is looking for feed back from those who do not have email addresses or internet access. Our intent is not to eliminate communication to

you. Please fill out the enclosed survey and return it to the designated person.

Those members that do have email please keep your email address current with Ankeny, they are our source of information.



MN Chapter SWCS 2007 Scholarship Winners!



We are proud to announce the winners of the 2007 Scholarship Winners! Thank you to everyone who applied, it was a stiff competition.

Here are the winners in no particular order: Dan Pazdernik, U of M Crookston, Majoring in Water Resources Management and Plant In-

dustries Management/Agronomy. GPA of 3.9 and is very active in clubs and organizations and does much volunteer work.

Katherine Schake U of M Twin Cities, Majoring in Environmental Science, with an emphasis on International Soil Science. GPA of 3.5 and

is active in Student organizations.

Greg Larson and Tom Steger where this years Scholarship committee members. Anyone interested in being on the scholarship committee please contact Greg Larson at: greg.larson@bwsr.state.mn.us

Conservation & Bioenergy Summer Tour!

"This is a MN Chapter of SWCS Summer Tour that you will not want to miss! Mark your calendars for Wednesday, June 27, 2007."

The Minnesota Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) will hold their Summer Tour and Annual Business Meeting on **Wednesday, June 27, 2007**:

The tour will begin at the USDA-ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory, in Morris, MN. The topic is "Conservation and Bioenergy". The tour will cover topics such as:

- Renewable energy technologies at the U of MN Renewable Energy Center

- An ethanol industry perspective
- On farm research on effects of residue removal
- Management alternative for protecting soil resources
- Potential effects on water quality
- Carbon Crops Study
- Cuphea: Potential Bio-fuel Crop

Registration information and the agenda are attached. The information is also available on the Minnesota Chapter of Soil and Water Conser-

vation Society Website at www.minnesotaswcs.org. Early Registration Deadline is Tuesday, June 19, 2007, and registration will be accepted at the door. Registration is from 8:00 am to 8:30 am at the USDA-ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory, Morris, MN. The tour will conclude around 3:30 pm.

The tour agenda and registration information is enclosed. Please contact Shannon Bengtson if you have any questions about the

Looking for News Letter Editor...



The MN Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is looking for a News Letter Editor.

Times are changing and the chapter executive board would like to pay a member to do a quarterly news letter. The board has also decided that it is time for the MN Chapter to move towards a

web-based communication network.

The board has also decided to pay the web-master to keep the website up-to-date and also to pay a member to put together and keep the email list serve. Keeping members informed of opportunities to assist with events and events that are happening in

the Soil and Water Conservation arena is very important.

Anyone interested in being the MN Chapter of SWCS News Letter Editor should contact, Shannon Bengtson, Chapter President, at: shannon.bengtson@mn.usda.gov or 320-266-5372.

2007 SWCS International Conference—Tampa, Florida

The 2007 Soil Land Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Annual Conference and Training will be held in Tampa, Florida, **July 21-25, 2007**.

The conference theme is "Conservation Challenges in a Changing Landscape." The conference includes workshops, concurrent sessions, symposia, posters, plenary sessions, and technical tours designed to expose participants to recent developments in the science and art of natural resource conservation and environmental management on working land—the largely privately-owned land comprising working farms, ranches, forests, and rural and urban communities. The areas of special emphasis for the 2007 conference include:

- Soil Resources and Management
- Conservation and Environmental Policy and Program Design
- Water Resources and

Management

- Adaptive Management of Conservation Efforts
- Conservation Education
- Biodiversity Conservation and Management
- Conservation in Urban Settings
- Conservation Tools and Technologies.
- Conservation Implications of a Bio-based Economy
- Integrated Watershed Management
- Adaptive Management: Theory into Practice

This year's outdoor classroom/educational tours will include stops at the following sites:

- Barthle Brother Ranch
- NRCS Brooksville Plant Materials Center and ARS Subtropical Agricultural research Station
- Unique Agricultural Production Systems Tour
- Green Swamp
- Lake Apopka Wetland Restoration

- Florida Aquarium
- Florida Aquarium and Tampa Bay Eco Tour

The Annual Networking Social Night will be held at Busch Gardens.

For more information on the workshops, technical training sessions, educational tours, and the social event, you may call the national office at: (515) 289-2331 or email event@swcs.org or www.swcs.org to request or view a copy of the full Preliminary Program.

Early registration for the Annual Conference and Training is **June 14, 2007**. Hotel and registration information can be found on the SWCS website: www.swcs.org.

NEW: Conference Message Board....away for members to connect with one another before and during the conference.



"Two \$500 scholarships available for anyone interested in returning or currently in college peruse a career in soil and water resources."

MN Chapter Sponsor's the Bus so that Silo High School Students Could attend the Earth Day event in Altura, MN

On April 23, 2007, in Altura, MN, Christina Muedieking, Regional Assistant Chief From the Central Region of the USDA-NRCS announced that an additional 1.4 million dollars of Environmental Quality Incentive Program dollars will be allocated to the Driftless area. The Driftless area encompasses a 4-state region of MN, IA, IL and WI. The land, soils and ecosystems in the Driftless Area is diverse and is home to hundreds of state and federally threatened and endangered animals and plant

species.

The Students from Silo High School participated in this Earth Day Event in many ways. The students participated in events throughout the day. They assisted in the planting of native grass plugs, native tree plugs and installed many duck nesting boxes. There were 25 to 30 Students who participated in the event. Local NRCS staff and other agency staff members set up an outdoor environmental learning stations; the five stations were: soils station, wa-

ter invertebrates station, fish hatcheries station, forestry station and a wildlife station. At the wildlife station the students took mist nets, caught birds and banded them and released them.

The Super Attendant of the Silo school system received a Special recognition plaque from Mr. Hunt, MN NRCS State Conservationist, for their participation in the Earth Day event. The MN Chapter of SWCS was recognized as a sponsor for the students..



Chapter Officers

Shannon Bengtson Shannon.bengtson@mn.usda.gov	President
Linda Meschke meschkel@berbi.org	Past President
Mike Appel Mike.appel@mn.usda.gov	Secretary
Sid Cornelius Sid.cornelius@mn.usda.gov	Treasurer
Cheryl Isdler	Southern MN Agriculture Rep.
David Copeland	Karst and Driftles Area Rep.
Greg Larson	Northern Surface Waters Rep.
Vacant	Red River of the North Rep.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 27, 2007

Conservation Bioenergy, 07 MN SWCS Chapter Summer Tour and Annual Meeting

Location: USDA-ARS North Central Soil Conservation Laboratory, Morris, MN

July 21-25, 2007

2007 SWCS International Conference

Location: Tampa, FL

August 17, 2007

MAPSS Summer Tour and Annual Meeting

Location: Cloquet, MN

October 16-18, 2007

West North Central Regional SWCS Meeting & Spring Leadership Training

Location: Dubuque, IA

www.minnesotaswcs.org

Our mission is to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation



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