

CONSERVOGRAM

The newsletter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society

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Remembering Mike Collins

By Jim Gulliford, SWCS Executive Director



Mike Collins – photo courtesy of the USDA NRCS

One of the true blessings of working in the soil and water conservation field is knowing that every time you help a landowner with a conservation decision you can see the results of your work on the landscape. That was the case for Mike Collins as he worked with farmers and ranchers across the Great Plains as an advocate for healthy soils and soil conservation. Mike died in a snowmobile accident February 27, 2016.

Mike Collins was an area conservationist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Colorado, and a longtime member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. At the time of his passing, he was completing his third year of service on the Board of Directors of the Society. His enthusiasm for his work and the Society were evident in his service to SWCS, and he will be missed by all of us who worked with him.

A memorial service is planned for April 2 in Alamosa, Colorado, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. The rosary will start at 10:00 am followed by the funeral mass at 10:30 am. A reception will immediately follow the funeral and will be held at the Cattails Golf Course. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Soil and Water Conservation Society in honor of Mike Collins by clicking [here](#).



Mike Collins (left) and Jim Gulliford (right) together at the SWCS 70th International Annual Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Board of Directors Regional Elections

SWCS would like to congratulate the incoming board directors. Susan Meadows has been re-elected for another term as the SWCS North Central Region Director and Dale Threatt-Taylor has been elected as the incoming Southeast Region Director. More details on these candidates can be found [here](#).

Letter to the Senate and House Agriculture Committees

SWCS recently signed a letter urging the opposition of additional cuts for the Agriculture Committees in the Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations process, as well as opposition on proposals to re-open any title of the Farm Bill during the consideration of the 2017 Budget Resolutions. [Click here](#) to view the letter.

Annual Conference News

71st SWCS International Annual Conference
Galt House Hotel • Louisville, Kentucky
July 24-27, 2016
www.swcs.org/16ac

Preliminary Program and Conference Registration

Be sure to watch your email in the upcoming weeks for the announcement that conference registration is open and the Preliminary Program is available to download.

SWCS Awards Luncheon

Each year at the Annual Conference, SWCS hosts an Awards Luncheon for those being honored by the Society. In the past, this luncheon has been a ticketed event requiring an additional fee to attend. We are excited to share that this year's Awards Luncheon will be included with your full conference registration or your Tuesday only registration. Receiving a Society award is a great honor, and we feel there is no better way to acknowledge the accomplishments of recipients than by asking all conference participants to join in the celebration.

Conference Accommodations

The room block for the SWCS International Annual Conference is open. A discounted block of rooms has been reserved at the Galt House Hotel. The hotel offers rooms in two towers, one of which contains all suites. Prices in the Rivue Tower are \$111/night plus tax (government per diem rate), and prices in the Suite Tower are \$136/night plus tax. Rooms are available on a first come, first served basis, and the number of rooms in the block is limited. Rooms must be booked on or before June 30, 2016, to be eligible for the discounted group rate.

To make your online reservation at the discounted rate, [click here](#).

Exhibitor and Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Do you have an organization or a business or know of one that could benefit from increased exposure to over 400 conservation professionals? If so, please visit www.swcs.org/16ac for details on becoming an exhibitor or sponsor of the 71st SWCS International Annual Conference.

You may also contact Chrissy Rhodes at christine.rhodes@swcs.org or call 515-289-2331 ext. 114 to receive further details or to discuss a customized sponsorship package. Exhibitor and sponsor referrals are also greatly appreciated!

Corporate Spotlights: Agri Drain Corporation and La Crosse Seed

Innovations in Water Management to Improve Crop Productivity and Water Quality

Agri Drain Corporation, SWCS Gold Corporate Member

Tile drainage is not a new concept to farmers and the agriculture industry. Farmers have been using drainage tiles to remove excess water from their fields for years. What is new are two innovations in the management of the water in those drainage tiles. Drainage water management (DWM) and sub-irrigation are allowing producers to increase productivity, increase yields, and improve water quality.

DWM allows the producer to control the flow of drainage water to create the ideal field and soil conditions from season to season. DWM gives the ability to manage water in the field to allow field access for spring planting, holds water in the field during dry periods of the growing season and during fallow periods to improve productivity, and improves water quality by keeping nutrients in the field longer, just below the root zone.

The same tile lines utilized for drainage water management can also be used to sub-irrigate the field. With sub-irrigation, water is introduced into the field at the highest point, and gravity distributes water through the field. Structures and float-operated valves provide even water distribution. Nutrient rich drainage waters can be treated in wetlands or ponds and can be reused to sub-irrigate.

These practices provide significant economic and on-farm benefits for producers. DWM can reduce typical nutrient loss to surface waters by about half, reduce risk, requires less nutrient application, and increases production, particularly during dry years. Sub-irrigation uses about half the water and energy as conventional irrigation, and reduces the need for two water management systems by utilizing the setup that drainage water management provides.

DWM and sub-irrigation are two exciting innovations that provide tremendous promise for the future of farm operations and the environment. Early voluntary action can reduce the pressure for regulation and reflect positively on agricultural producers.

Agri Drain Corporation manufactures several products, including water level control structures and Water Gates, that enable the producer to utilize both DWM and sub-irrigation, as well as many other practices that improve water quality and aid in conservation.

La Crosse Seed Recognized for Cover Crop Leadership by Receiving an Iowa Water Quality Initiative Award

La Crosse Seed, SWCS Bronze Corporate Member

Congratulations to SWCS corporate member La Crosse Seed for being recognized as a cover crop leader! On February 10, 2016, La Crosse Seed was nominated and selected by the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to receive a Water Quality Initiative award.

This award was presented to La Crosse Seed to recognize their leadership in the cover crop industry not only in Iowa but across the other states it serves as well. Specifically noted was La Crosse Seed's efforts to advance the sustainability movement in Iowa through cover crop education and support through its Soil First brand. Cover crops are a crucial component of improving water quality throughout Iowa, and La Crosse Seed has been a leader in the effort to promote the benefits cover crops and participates as an active partner in various opportunities.

"La Crosse Seed is honored to be recognized as an agricultural leader in Iowa. It is such a privilege to be acknowledged while surrounded by so many of our ag retail customers that have helped to make this possible by advancing sustainability practices and exploring the benefits of cover crops," notes Scott Wohlman, Cover Crop Lead for La Crosse Seed.



Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey presents La Crosse Seed team members with a Water Quality Initiative Award (left to right: Bill Eatock, Tim Gioffredi, Bert Strayer, Scott Wohlman, and Bill Northey).

Why Partner?

SWCS is proud to partner with companies and organizations like Agri Drain Corporation and La Crosse Seed whose priorities include the protection of natural resources and sustaining their viability for future generations. We believe that by partnering with other organizations who share our passion, we can work together to practice and promote an ethic that recognizes the interdependence of people and their environment.

Interested in increasing your organization's positive exposure, being recognized as a partner in sustainability, and increasing your national and international exposure? Contact corporate.info@swcs.org or call 515-289-2331 ext. 114 to learn more about the SWCS Corporate Member Program!

Chapter Spotlight: Oregon Chapter

Chapter location: Oregon

Current chapter president: Brenda Sanchez

History of the chapter: The history of the Oregon Chapter (OSWCS) is somewhat unclear. We do know that in 1966 there were Chapter By-Laws. The best history we can derive comes from our long-standing President Russ Hatz who joined the OSWCS in 1984 at a time when the Chapter was quite active. Russ was elected president in 2007, and he remained Chapter president until 2014 when he retired. During Russ's time the Chapter sponsored a number of workshops and events.

- In 2010 at the St. Louis National SWCS meeting we showcased "Comparing Three Case Studies in Nutrient Trading."
- In 2011 we sponsored an SWCS regional workshop: Protecting Natural Resources with Conservation Buffers.
- In 2012 and 2013 we co-sponsored (with the Benton SWCD) two SWCS regional workshops on soil quality.
- In 2014 we sponsored a SWCS regional workshop on agroforestry.

Please describe your most successful chapter event in the last year. What did members gain from this experience?

Natural resource professionals from across Oregon as well as Washington joined us for an Introduction to Streambank Classification, Channel Evolution, Floodplain Connectivity and Field Measures at the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Service Center in Salem, Oregon. The class was highly informational and condensed several lecture hours into a short course for an introduction to stream classification techniques, stream geomorphology, and delineating criteria to identify stream types. The morning was scheduled with classroom presentations and then followed by an afternoon on Abiqua Creek applying some basic stream measurements to determine stream types. The class was provided with some technical literature and a clipboard reference Key to Rosgen Classification of Natural Rivers. It was a record breaking hot day in Marion County. Abiqua Creek provided some relief from the heat, but all in all it was a very rewarding educational day!

What other activities has your chapter been involved in this year?

In an effort to put the Society back into our Chapter events, we put together a weekend camping trip on the Rogue River back on Memorial Weekend of 2015 and volunteered as a Chapter with SOLVE to participate in the annual Rogue River Clean-Up. A few members attended and we spent the weekend camping, hanging out riverside, and cleaning up garbage along the Rogue River in southern Oregon.

(SOLVE is a nonprofit organization that brings together individuals, business groups, and service and conservation groups through volunteering and education to restore our natural spaces and take good care of this great state of which we are all so proud. SOLVE facilitates Oregonians of all kinds coming together to volunteer, focusing on

beach and illegal dump cleanup, planting native trees, removing invasive plants, and other environmental maintenance projects. SOLVE annually creates an average of 40,000 volunteer opportunities in 170 communities all across this diverse state. More information can be found at www.solveoregon.org)

What is your membership's preferred method of communication? At this time we mainly communicate via e-mail and teleconference meetings. We are working on other ways to communicate and engage the membership and recently started a [Facebook page](#) and revamped our [website](#).

What would you say are the most important current conservation concerns for your region? The most important resource concerns in our region are water quantity and water quality. Drought has plagued the state of Oregon for the last four years, and Oregonians are looking for ways to conserve water resources and protect water quality.

What is your favorite part of membership in SWCS? The Chapter members appreciate the OSWCS as a vehicle for professional development as well as a way to meet others in our field throughout the state. Networking provides many benefits, and we have been working to improve the member benefits of social interactions and professional development.

What advice would you give to a new chapter? Reach out and strive for a diverse membership base composed of individuals from the many walks of life who make up the professional conservation front. Provide consistent membership opportunities for networking, professional development, and the distribution of current information on conservation issues and policy. Maintain steady communication and leave room for the ideas and suggestions of your membership to be realized. In a world where the internet has pulled us together nationally but has separated us as individuals, it has become harder to engage the membership, so think of unique ways to connect with your membership and keep them interested in participating.

For questions about the chapter/membership, please contact: Brenda Sanchez, soilpedon@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

[New Jersey Firman E. Bear Chapter Spring Meeting](#)
Camden, New Jersey
April 8, 2016

[71st SWCS International Annual Conference](#)
Louisville, Kentucky
July 24-27, 2016

News from DC

Courtesy of SWCS DC Representative John Peterson

- The president's 2017 budget was released and includes important funding for conservation, including \$860.374 million for Conservation Operations, an increase of \$29 million over last year's request and \$11 million more than was enacted.
- The USDA recently announced the availability of \$150 million through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The funding will allow the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to add an estimated 10 million acres to CSP during Fiscal Year 2016.
- The USDA has announced a request for proposals to establish wetland mitigation banks. The USDA NRCS is making available up to \$9 million to develop wetland mitigation banks and market mitigation credits.
- The USDA and its partners will direct up to \$720 million towards 84 conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). [Click here](#) for a full list of 2016 projects.
- The US Fish and Wildlife Services (FWS) announced that more than \$20 million will be provided to 28 projects in order to protect, restore, or enhance coastal wetlands and adjacent upland habitats under the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program. [Click here](#) for the complete list of projects funded by the 2016 grant program.
- The US Environmental Protection Agency's (USEPA's) Green Infrastructure program has released a new report, "Tools, Strategies and Lessons Learned from EPA Green Infrastructure Technical Assistance Projects." Read the report [here](#).
- The House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry: A hearing was held on March 1, titled "Voluntary Conservationists: Utilizing Innovation and Technology." Witnesses included USDA NRCS Chief Jason Weller and other agriculture and conservation experts. [Click here](#) for more information.
- US Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced this week the investment of \$25 million to help agriculture producers improve water quality in high-priority streams and rivers across the nation. Read the full press release [here](#).
- The USEPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water recently released a new online mapping tool called the Drinking Water Mapping Application to Protect Source Waters (DWMAPS).

New Members

Welcome members who joined in February!

Colorado

Matthew Stermer

Connecticut/Massachusetts/ Rhode Island—Southern New England Chapter

Matt Kelly
Corey Kookan
Jeff Surette

Delaware/Maryland—

Pokomoke

Peter Hatchett

Hawaii and Pacific Basin

Susan Crow

Illinois

Paul Walker
Anthony Yannarell

Indiana—Hoosier

Amy Berg
Kristiana Cox
Jorgen Rose
Tim Schwipps

Indiana—Purdue University Student Chapter

Joe Rorick

Kansas

Kristen Chaffin

Louisiana—University of

Louisiana Lafayette

Student Chapter

Tyler Soileau

Maryland—Maryland Old

Line

Barry Burch
Roberta Levine

Michigan

Rebecca Bender
Benjamin Wickerham

Missouri—Show Me

Dalton Jones
Lucas Nitcher
Clayton Robinson
Ben Travlos
Ron Willis
Taylor Young

North Dakota

Garret Groves
Rob Hess
Spence Koenig

New Jersey—Firman E. Bear

Tom Knezick

Ohio—All Ohio

Caitlin Botschner

Oregon

Jiajia Lin

South Carolina

Lauren Chance

Tennessee

Jeffrey Fore

Texas—Texas A&M University

Student Chapter

Gregory Rouze

Wisconsin

Dan Eichsteadt
David LeZaks

Corporate Members

Please contact corporate.info@swcs.org for more details.

Gold



Silver



Bronze

