



RUNOFF

CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CHAPTER SWCS – FALL 2013

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Rob Roy



Dear Chapter Members,

As the holiday season nears, we prepare for our time honored and much-loved traditions. In 1610, legend has it that **Martin Luther** decorated a small tree with candles at Christmas. The inspiration to do this was a walk in the woods during which he was struck by the beauty of the moonlight on the branches of some evergreen trees. He used the Christmas tree to illustrate to his children the beauty that he had seen in the forest.

Few people realize that one of our most special American traditions – the lighting of a living National Christmas Tree – began with conservation motives. American Forests, the Nation's oldest conservation group, reminds us that this tradition began out of concern for deforestation, as well as a celebration of living trees. Before Christmas tree farms were established to provide for the holiday in a sustainable way, people cut trees from the wild, often to the detriment of forests

Each year in the US, the President turns on the lights of the living National Christmas tree. The tradition of a having a living National Christmas tree in America commenced in 1924 when a 35-foot Norway spruce was donated to President **Calvin Coolidge** and planted near the White House on Sherman Plaza. Known then as the American Forestry Association, their hope was that by transplanting a large living tree for the White House to decorate and showcase, tree and forest conservation, and a sustainable celebration would become part of one of the Nation's favorite holidays. Today's centerpiece is a Colorado blue spruce that was planted on the Ellipse in 1978 and lit for the first time by President **Jimmy Carter**.

In 1882, **Edward Johnson**, vice-president of the Edison Company for Electric Lighting, put electric lights on a Christmas tree for the first time. This was just three years after the invention of the first practical light bulb. He used about 80 lights in red, white and blue. In 1890, Edison included electric lights for Christmas trees in its catalog. These early lights were cumbersome to use because each light had to be hand wired. In 2007, the conservation tradition continued with the first use of LED lights on the Nation's Christmas tree for energy conservation.

Most of all, this Christmas, let us remember that our blessings are in greater number than the lights on the Christmas tree. I wish you all a very **Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year** and leave you with this short thought...

*Christmas is forever, not for just one day,
for loving, sharing, giving, are not to put away
like bells and lights and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.
The good you do for others is good you do yourself...*

~Norman Wesley Brooks (U.S. design engineer, 1923-2002)

2014 CHAPTER SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS DUE BY JANUARY 31

Scholarship Committee Chair **Tina Vander Hoek** has set January 31, 2014 as the 2014 Scholarship Application deadline. Tina said “This should give those that are eligible and interested enough time to apply. The Chapter's goal is to encourage undergraduate students interested in soil and water conservation to obtain technical expertise and to pursue careers in soil and water resources”.

Eligibility: Applicants must (1) have successfully completed two years of study at an accredited college, (2) be enrolled in an undergraduate curriculum related to soil and water resources, and (3) have a cumulative grade point average of 2.5 or better on a 4.0 scale.

Award: A scholarship of \$1000.00 will be awarded before the Fall Semester/Quarter of the 2014-2015 school year.

How to Apply: Please send completed application with supporting materials to the address below, postmarked by January 31, 2014. Application forms are available on our website at www.caswcs.org

California-Nevada SWCS Scholarship Committee
ATTN: Tina Vander Hoek
USDA-NRCS
65 Main Street, Suite 108
Templeton, CA 93465-8703

According to Chapter Treasurer **Tom Esgate**, \$738 from the proceeds of the silent auction held at the 68th Annual International SWCS Conference held last July in Reno went into our Chapter scholarship fund. Our Chapter organized and conducted the silent auction.

NEW CHAPTER MEMBERS

We extend a **GREAT BIG WELCOME** to the following six members who recently joined the SWCS and our California-Nevada Chapter SWCS. We have **143 members** as of November 18, 2013.

Paul Amaral	-	Auburn	Robert Maurer	-	Concord
Erika Boyland	-	Bakersfield	Benjamin Rau	-	Sacramento
Sarah Martin	-	Boulder Creek	Alan Sayce	-	Whittier

CHAPTER ELECTIONS NEXT MARCH

Chapter members will be electing three Executive Council Directors and a President-Elect at the next election in March. Directors **Austin Avwunudiogba**, **Phil Hogan**, and **Zahangir Kabir** will be up for reelection. Directors serve for two years or, if appointed, for the remaining term of the previous Director.

The President-Elect position is also a two year term that has been vacant since July and could be filled by appointment by the Executive Council. If elected on the next ballot, that person would serve a one year term and become our Chapter President for two years.

We need candidates from **Nevada** to meet the requirements of our Bylaws that “At least one officer shall reside in Nevada”. All the members of the Executive Council are officers.

Past-President **Tibor Horvath** will Chair the Nominations Committee. Let Tibor know that you want your name on the ballot or wish to be appointed President-Elect. Tibor.Horvath@ky.usda.gov

HELP WITH PLANNING FOR OUR CHAPTER ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

Contact President **Rob Roy** at robert.roy@ca.usda.gov and join the annual conference planning committee. Express your preference for where to hold it next Spring. We try to rotate the location. The 2013 conference was in Reno and the 2012 conference was at Asilomar in Pacific Grove.

Help select the dates for the two day conference. Work with the committee to select a theme and organize the agenda that includes technology training, installation of officers and awards presentations. Help find speakers and sponsors. Practice your publicity skills.

CHAPTER AWARDS PRESENTED IN RENO Correction



With apologies from the Editor, I am repeating this photo from the last issue to show that **Ladi Asgill** is on the left and **Tom Esgate** in on the right.

Chapter Awards Committee Chair **Ladi Asgill**, left, presented a Chapter Merit Award to **Tom Esgate** Chapter Treasurer for his outstanding efforts finding sponsors to help with the SWCS International Conference in Reno.

NOTES FROM THE NOV 8 CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

President **Rob Roy** reported on the San Joaquin Area 9 RCD meeting in North Fork which he and Secretary **Joe Williams** attended. Rob entered a raffle prize consisting of a Chapter hat and a one year membership to SWCS. The prize went to an NRCS employee.

Rob Roy will be presenting on behalf of the Chapter at the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) annual meeting in Napa. His topic will explore the commonalities between the Chapter, RCD's and CARCD to advance topics in common in hopes to strengthen the relationship with CARCD such as provide technical training at CARCD meetings as an example.

Rob Roy and Policy Committee Chair **Ladi Asgill** will draft a Farm Bill position paper with CARCD and RCD's.

SWCS CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS

The Soil and Water Conservation Society is currently seeking oral presentations, posters, symposia, and workshops for the 69th International Annual Conference! This year's conference includes three tracks for submission. Special consideration will be given to proposals addressing new insights, techniques, and/or advancements in the ten traditional areas of focus outlined under general conference submissions.

Lake Erie Case Studies: The Challenge of Maintaining Improvements

Cover Crop Practices: Application, Innovation, and Management

2014 General Conference Submissions – Making Waves in Conservation: Our Life on Land and its Impact on Water

- Adaptive Management of Conservation Efforts
- Agricultural and Conservation Economics
- Biodiversity Conservation and Management
- *NEW* Conservation in Nontraditional Agriculture
- Conservation in Urban Settings
- Conservation Models, Tools, and Technologies
- Conservation Policy and Program Design
- Outreach, Education, and Community Engagement
- Soil Health Resources, Indicators, Assessment, and Management
- Water Resource Assessment and Management



In addition to the three conference tracks, presenters may choose from two specialized symposia topics.

Submitting to one of these symposia will require Q&A or panel discussion as part of the presentation.

- Increasing Intensity: Rethinking Precipitation Averages and Outliers in Conservation Design and Planning
- Informing Conservation through Social Sciences: Understanding the Human Component of Land Management Stewardship

Visit www.swcs.org/14ac for instructions on how to submit your proposal.

Submission Deadline: January 8, 2014

CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION INVESTMENT BY NRCS, FARMERS AND RANCHERS SURPASSES \$200 MILLION IN FISCAL YEAR 2013

DAVIS, Calif., Nov. 20, 2013 - California's air, water, soil, wildlife and landscapes all received a healthy boost in federal fiscal year 2013. Over 2,400 farmers and ranchers joined with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and partners to voluntarily invest time and money in protecting and restoring natural resources under their care. Each participant worked with NRCS to create a conservation plan to identify and schedule the conservation practices needed to conserve and protect water, soil, air and habitat on the land.

NRCS California invested \$102.8 million in working lands conservation programs, and when contributions by farmers and ranchers are included this figure rises to at least \$180 million. Additionally NRCS invested over \$21.1 million in easement projects that preserve and restore California farmlands, wetlands, grasslands and forests.

"Californians value both their access to diverse, high quality fresh food as well as environmental quality," says **Carlos Suarez**, State Conservationist for NRCS in California. "Our role is to help farmers and ranchers achieve and balance both production and conservation goals. By combining Farm Bill funding opportunities with sound conservation planning and technical expertise, we can help producers voluntarily undertake measures that protect the watersheds and natural resources that are shared by everyone," he said.

NRCS works with farmers and ranchers throughout the state to address resource concerns on individual farms and ranches, but the Agency also targets funds towards focused initiatives. In one such initiative NRCS invested approximately \$15 million in partnered projects conserving and protecting water and wildlife in the Bay-Delta Watershed, a vast ecosystem encompassing nearly 60 percent of the state. The diverse Bay-Delta projects are helping farmers comply with irrigated lands regulations, reduce or eliminate water quality exceedances, improve habitat for waterfowl and migratory species, and much more. NRCS is now engaged in a two-year Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) survey with USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Survey (NASS) to assess the overall effects of these and other conservation practices on the Bay-Delta watershed.

In 2013 NRCS continued its commitment to helping California's dairy industry remain healthy and sustainable. NRCS worked with producers to invest \$7.2 million in manure management plans and structural practices designed to help dairymen continue their efforts to comply with increasingly stringent California state water quality regulations.

California is home to some of the worst air quality in the Nation. To help achieve California's clean air goals, NRCS invested over \$19 million in fiscal year 2013—a level nearly matched by participating farmers. Together the farmers and the Agency are recycling old, high-polluting diesel engines and replacing them with systems that run up to 90 percent cleaner. Since 2009, these efforts have reduced oxides of nitrogen emissions, an ozone precursor, by an average of 2,523 tons per year. This is an emissions reduction equivalent to removing 766,000 cars from California highways.

Additionally, NRCS and partners renewed their commitment to protecting imperiled wildlife species throughout the state in 2013. NRCS worked with eastern California ranchers to protect sage grouse; silage farmers in the Central Valley to protect Tricolored Blackbirds; wine grape growers along California's northern coast to protect steelhead trout; and a wide array of other producers assisting common and impacted species. In addition, NRCS biologists and ranchers in Alameda County worked to protect rangeland ponds lending critical habitat to endangered California Red-legged frogs and California Tiger Salamanders.

Farm Bill programs that invest in working lands on farms and ranches include the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP), the Conservation Stewardship Program and its predecessor (CStP and CSP), and the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

Through Farm Bill easement programs such as the Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), the Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP), and the Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP), NRCS invested \$4.2 million to protect 8 key farmland parcels from development; \$1.4 million to protect grassland that provides sage grouse habitat; and \$107,100 on two contracts protecting forestland. Using the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) NRCS spent \$15.3 million to purchase four new easements and to implement restoration activities on 28 new and existing WRP sites. These wetlands provide waterfowl and wildlife habitat, improve water quality by filtering sediments and chemicals, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, and provide educational and recreational opportunities.

NRCS has provided leadership in a partnership effort to help America's private landowners and managers conserve their soil, water and other natural resources since 1935.

NRCS ASSISTANCE FOR CATASTROPHIC FIRE RECOVERY

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offered financial assistance for private landowners in California to implement conservation practices on lands affected by wildfires in the last 18 months.

California State Conservationist **Carlos Suarez** encouraged landowners who had private forestlands and rangelands that were damaged by the recent catastrophic fires to visit with their local NRCS field office about how this initiative can provide assistance to protect their natural resources.

Funding was being made available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Applications for this initiative were accepted for primary consideration and ranking through Nov. 15, 2013.

The purpose of the Catastrophic Fire Recovery EQIP Initiative is to provide immediate resource protection in areas burned by catastrophic fires in the past 18 months. Priority concerns include immediate soil erosion protection, minimizing noxious and invasive plant proliferation, protecting water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and bringing back forests and restoring livestock infrastructure necessary for grazing management.

Priority was given to applications featuring practices that would be implemented within one year and provide immediate erosion protection, adequate livestock water, and habitat protection.

WORLD SOIL DAY

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations recently declared Dec. 5 as World Soil Day and 2015 as International Year of the Soils.

World Soil Day provided an opportunity for all of us to recognize that we owe our very existence to those top few inches of living and life-giving soil. What we do to improve the health and function of that soil could well determine whether we will meet the world's growing production needs.

World Soil Day underscores the importance of USDA **NRCS' soil health effort** and why this is such an exciting and important endeavor—locally, nationally and globally.

WEATHER WHIPLASH

Minneapolis weatherman **Paul Douglas** has coined the phrase "weather whiplash" describing the extreme temporal volatility and variability of our weather. The quick changes in timing and intensity are providing more challenges to agricultural production.

Don Reicosky wrote in the Morris Sun Tribune on Nov 15, 2013 that 'weather whiplash' requires new soil conservation because extreme weather events such as drought and powerful storms increasingly threaten our food security. Climate change may be the first "domino" to fall, setting off a series of crises related to soil degradation and loss of food security.

FARMERS REAP BENEFITS AS NO-TILL ADOPTION RISES

Claire O'Connor posted the following Natural Resources Defense Council Staff Blog in the November 14, 2013 issue of Curbing Pollution, Green Enterprise, Living Sustainably.

“A recent Washington Post article hailed the increased adoption of no-till farming in the United States. No-till farmers plant directly into the stubble of the previous year's crop. The stubble acts like a garden mulch, protecting soil, preserving moisture, and preventing weeds. As a recent United Nations Environment Program report pointed out, no-till potentially could also be a key method to reduce agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. No-till farming can be a real economic boon to farmers, too, saving them time and money and increasing their yields.”

FINAL FARM BILL MUST INCLUDE CONSERVATION COMPLIANCE, AN OLD IDEA THAT'S NEW AGAIN

By **Andrew McElwaine** © Copyright Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc.

In 1943, **Hugh Hammond Bennett**, the father of the modern soil conservation movement, wrote, “Conservation farming put first things first by attending to the needs of the soil-by seeing to it that the starting-off place, the base, is put into sound health and kept that way. Any other approach, no matter what it may be, always has and always must lead eventually to agricultural disaster.”

What emerged from Bennett's writings were federal programs designed to protect the health of America's farmland. Their goal was to keep soil healthy and ensure that agriculture was economically sound and environmentally beneficial.

Since Bennett's time, a variety of approaches to soil and water conservation have resulted in better stewardship of both land and water resources associated with farming. One of the most successful is conservation compliance.

With conservation compliance, farmers apply basic conservation practices to attend to the needs of the soil and wetlands in exchange for federal assistance. As a result, soil is protected from erosion, important wetlands are preserved and taxpayers' investments are protected through the combination of sound agricultural and conservation policy. It is an approach that has produced results.

Throughout its 25-year history, conservation compliance has annually reduced soil erosion by 295 million tons. To put it another way, that is enough soil to cover the entire area of the National Mall from the Lincoln Memorial to the Capitol Building with 1,100 feet of soil every year.

It is imperative that the House and Senate Farm Bill conferees continue that tradition of stewardship well into the future by seeing to it the starting-off place is at the base, our nation's soil and wetlands, and by re-linking conservation compliance to federal crop insurance assistance.

APPLY NOW FOR SWCS NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIPS

Are you a student member of SWCS? Don't miss your chance to apply for one of the three scholarships offered to SWCS members for the 2014 to 2015 school year. Each scholarship has a different target audience. Review the descriptions below to find the one that meets your needs. The deadline for applications is February 12, 2014.

The Donald A. Williams Soil Conservation Scholarship is for SWCS members who are currently employed in the natural resource conservation field, but wish to improve their technical or administrative skills. Improving technical or administrative skills could be done through formal classwork through an accredited college or through a program of special study. One scholarship of \$1,000 is anticipated to be awarded this year.

The Melville H. Cohee Student Leader Conservation Scholarship is for SWCS student members who are full-time junior or senior undergraduates or graduate students pursuing a degree in the natural resource conservation field from an accredited college or university. Student members who are demonstrated leaders in their academics, volunteerism, and work are the focus of this scholarship. One scholarship of \$500 is anticipated to be awarded this year.

The Kenneth E. Grant Research Scholarship is for SWCS members engaged in interdisciplinary graduate-level research on a conservation topic that will extend the SWCS mission of fostering the science and art of soil, water, and related natural resource management to achieve sustainability. One scholarship of \$300 is anticipated to be awarded this year.

How to Submit a Scholarship Application

Information and scholarship applications are available from the Society's headquarters office (515) 289-2331 ext. 114 or scholarships@swcs.org **All applications must be received by February 12, 2014.** Scholarship applications are encouraged to be submitted electronically and all forms of submission will receive a confirmation of receipt. Scholarship recipients will be announced during the July 27-30, 2014 69th International SWCS Annual Conference in Lombard, IL.

AWARDS AVAILABLE TO SOCIETY MEMBERS

Fellow Award recognizes exceptional professional achievement coupled with service to the Society. Number awarded: up to 0.1% of members.

Outstanding Service Award recognizes distinguished service to the Society over a long and sustained period (10 years minimum). Number awarded: up to 0.1% of members.

Commendation Award recognizes members for service to their chapters (members having received other Society awards are also eligible). Number awarded: each chapter, council of chapters, Society board member, or Society officer may nominate no more than one member annually.

Conservation Research Award recognizes SWCS members or teams of members whose research has led to exceptional improvements in soil conservation, water conservation, and/or related natural resources research. Number awarded: no more than four per year.

AWARDS AVAILABLE TO SOCIETY MEMBERS AND NONMEMBERS

Hugh Hammond Bennett Award recognizes extraordinary national and international accomplishments in the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. Number awarded: one; and only if a suitable candidate is nominated.

Harold-Kay Scholl Excellence in Conservation Award recognizes individuals who creatively and effectively provide technical assistance in conservation planning and plan application. Number awarded: up to three annually.

Honor Award recognizes people for outstanding accomplishments compatible with Society objectives. Number awarded: up to ten annually.

Merit Award recognizes noteworthy conservation activity or products of organizations, agencies, or firms. Number awarded: as many as meet the criteria.

How to Submit an Award Information and award applications are available online. Award nominations are encouraged to be submitted by electronically. All applications must be received by February 12, 2014. All forms of submission will receive a confirmation of receipt.

Additional information may be obtained from the Society's headquarters office (515) 289-2331 ext. 114 or awards@swcs.org. Recipients will be announced during the July 27-30, 2014 69th International SWCS Annual Conference in Lombard, IL.

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY AVAILABLE TO ALL

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service's National Technical Centers provide a host of resources to NRCS employees, including more than 120 "conservation webinars" on everything from cover crops to establishing wildlife habitat. They are now available in their Science and Technology Training Library that is available on-line and can be used to earn professional CEUs and/or receive a participation certificate for employee development.

The library is open to all, including partners and the public. Contact Holli Kuykendall at Holli.Kuykendall@gnb.usda.gov for more information or the [Science and Technology Training Library](#)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Chapter is a multidisciplinary scientific and educational organization dedicated to natural resource enhancement through an ethic which recognizes the interdependence of human communities and natural systems. The Chapter achieves its mission through its members using mutual cooperation and understanding to create opportunities for improving soil and water conservation in California and Nevada.

CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CHAPTER SWCS
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DAVIS CA 95616-4172

FIRST CLASS
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

President's Message

Chapter Scholarship Application Deadline

New Members

Chapter Elections Next March

SWCS Call for Presentations

CA Conservation Investments in 2013

Farm Bill and Conservation Compliance

SWCS Scholarships and Awards

Science & Technology Library



CHAPTER CAP FOR \$10 DONATION

The caps are stored in Davis at the USDA building and you can pick it up there or have it delivered by contacting Walt Bunter at wbunter@pacbell.net

Send your \$10 donation check made payable to CALIFORNIA-NEVADA CHAPTER SWCS to Treasurer **Tom Esgate**, 18888 Meadowlark Court, Penn Valley, CA 95946- 9681

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Rob Roy, President
Vacant, President-Elect
Tibor Horvath, Past President
Joe Williams, Secretary
Tom Esgate, Treasurer
Ladi Asgill, Director
Austin Avwunudiogba, Director
Tina Vander Hoek, Director
Phil Hogan, Director
Zahangir Kabir, Director
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RUNOFF is the official California-Nevada Chapter SWCS newsletter.

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Walt Bunter – wbunter@pacbell.net

Please submit articles via email to the Editor.
RUNOFF reserves the right to edit all submissions.

YOUR PHOTOS ARE WANTED
FOR THE CA-NV CHAPTER SWCS
WEBSITE

www.caswcs.org

PLEASE SUBMIT PHOTOS, NEWS
ITEMS, AND FEATURE ARTICLES TO
THE EDITOR FOR THE WINTER
ISSUE OF RUNOFF

BY FEBRUARY 3

“One of the best, and certainly the most promising, of the devices yet invented by man for dealing democratically and effectively with maladjustment in land use, as well as for carrying forward positive programs of desirable conservation, and for maintaining the work, is the soil conservation district.”

Hugh Hammond Bennett

September 18, 1943, Washington, DC