

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Mark Steffek

Thanks again to the hard working and dedicated soil and water conservation professionals who worked together to develop our outstanding annual conference in San Diego! I was pleased with the success of the conference and the partnership of the Western Chapter of the International Erosion Control Association (IECA) and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD). Thanks also to San Diego City Councilmember Donna Frye for proclaiming March 23, 2006 as "Soil and Water Conservation Society Day" in her District.



Congratulations and welcome to Kristen Hughes (San Francisco), Bruce Williams (Weaverville), and Steven Perkins (Riverside) as our newly elected Board members. Also, congratulations to David Rose (Willows) as our New President-Elect. I am looking forward to working with them and the other Board members and Committee Chairs for a successful year.

I plan to work hard myself during the next year to implement the goals of our Chapter as listed in our 2006 Plan of Work. If you don't have a copy of the plan, contact me or any of the other members of the Executive Board, and we will send one to you.

My priorities are to increase membership, increase interaction with our Student Chapters, and develop a written partnership agreement between the California and Nevada Chapters.

These priorities, and the other goals outlined in the Plan of Work, cannot be accomplished solely by the President, or the Executive Board, or the Committee



Photo by Phil Hogan

Charlene Orzag of Tierra Miguel Foundation welcomes SWCS members on a tour of the farm during the Chapter conference in San Diego, March 22-24, 2006. For more on the conference, see Pages 2-3.

Chairs. The goals in our plan need to be achieved by active participation of our members. When you read the Plan of Work and you see an item that you feel you can help with, give me a call. I'll put you in touch with the appropriate Committee Chair regarding your interest. Or, you can wait until I call you to help with making positive changes to our Chapter, which will be soon.

Please provide any input you may have to me or to members of the Executive Board that will help make your Soil and Water Conservation Society in California and Nevada a better organization. I'll be waiting for your call.

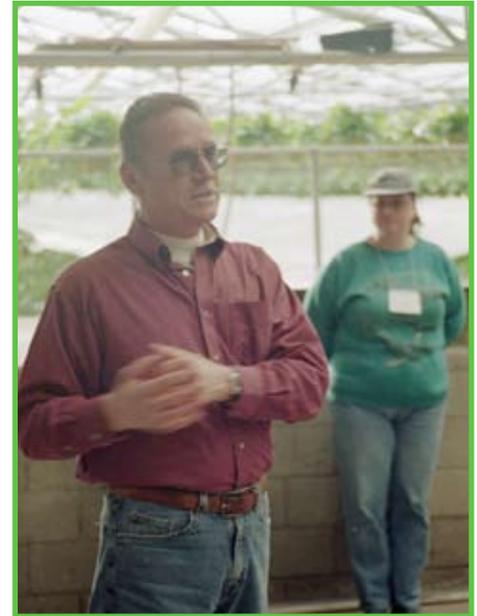
San Diego conference highlights diversity of resources

by Wendy Rash

In the field of soil and water conservation, we work with many types of resources- natural resources, financial resources, information resources, and human resources, just to name a few. The diversity of all of these resources was highlighted at the California and Nevada Chapters

duction of salt water to the marsh. The Conservancy has successfully battled an *Arundo donax* infestation in the lagoon, and has seen a marked increase in cordgrass- and luckily, it's not the invasive variety that is threatening the San Francisco Bay.

The owners and managers of **Rote Greenhouses** spoke with tour participants about the water conservation efforts of their high-volume nursery stock operation. The greenhouses have the capacity to recycle 7.5 million gallons of water at about 5 gallons per minute, and utilize about 80% recycled water in their operation. The water system cuts their water bill, helps them



Jim Page of Pure O₃ Tech, Inc. explains the water recycling system at Rote Greenhouses.

Photo by Phil Hogan

leading to a potentially serious erosion hazard when the orchard floors are not covered. At the same time, water conservation is being driven by high water costs. The study going on at Tierra Miguel looks at the interaction of mulch thickness and irrigation type and their effects on irrigation efficiency, as well as soil



Doug Gibson (l) chats with Rita Bickel (r) during the tour of the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy.

Photo by Paul Laustsen

of the Soil and Water Conservation Society conference entitled "Putting Conservation Programs to Work".

The field tour that began the conference included visits to wildlife and habitat conservation efforts as well as agricultural enterprises striving to make the most of their resources. At the **San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy**, Executive Director Doug Gibson spoke about their ongoing efforts to restore the tidal salt marsh ecosystem by maintaining the opening of the lagoon to the ocean to allow salt water to enter the lagoon, creating an estuarine environment. They have worked with many partners, including state and federal agencies and the public, to accomplish restoration that is scientifically sound and acceptable to the public. They have observed an increase in species richness with the reintro-

duce with effluent regulations, and instantaneously measures flow rate and chemical parameters of the water to be sure the quality is adequate for the plants.

The **Tierra Miguel Foundation**, a charity focused on education in organic farming and gardening, hosted our tour to showcase a research project on woodchip mulch use in avocado orchards. In Southern California, avocado orchards are typically situated on steep slopes to provide drainage for the trees,



Dave Loring (l) of Tierra Miguel Farms points out details of the mulch research to SWCS members (from l) Jason Jackson, Daniel Mountjoy, Alyson Acquino, Ken Trott, Paul Nguyen, and Ed Burton.

Photo by Paul Laustsen

biological effects of leachate from the mulch. An added bonus is that

Photo by Phil Hogan



Typical avocado orchard site on steep hillslope in San Diego County.

the mulch is made from various waste materials, such as lumber mill scraps, dead tree removals, horse stable bedding, chipped avocado prunings and trees, and leaf litter.

The final stop of the tour day was at the **Wild Animal Park** of the San Diego Zoo. There, participants were treated to a “twilight tour” on the tram to view the resident populations of rhinoceros, elephants, antelopes, and giraffes—but our tour guide seemed most interested in the bats! After the awe-inspiring tour of these exotic animals, participants were treated to a delicious dinner and a presentation regarding the park’s efforts to improve rangeland health, riparian areas, and water supply and distribu-

tion on the wild animal park’s expansive grounds.

The following two days were spent discussing tools and partnerships for implementing resource conservation.

San Diego City Council member **Donna Frye** opened the conference with a declaration of Soil and Water Conservation Society Day in her district of San Diego. She also spoke of her involvement in water pollution cleanup efforts inspired by her experiences as a surfer.

Glenda Humiston, former USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, spoke to a packed room about the political complexities of conservation legislation and program development on the federal scale.

Members of the NRCS leadership, resource technology, and engineering staffs gave numerous presentations on the tools of our trade, including the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation, development of Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans, wetland restoration, and internet soil surveys.



San Diego City Council member Donna Frye presents Past President Hank Wyman with a resolution declaring March 23 Soil and Water Conservation Society Day in her district.

Photo by Paul Laustsen

Professional development



Photo by Paul Laustsen

Glenda Humiston, former USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, speaks about the political realities of cooperative conservation.

opportunities for members were offered. Professional development units were credited for presentations in storm water runoff and revegetation on drastically disturbed soils, cooperatively with the **International Erosion Control Association Western Chapter**. In addition, the qualification exams were held for the **Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control**, and the **Certified Professional in Storm Water Quality** programs.

The sessions ended with discussion on successful partnerships that have furthered resource conservation in California, including the efforts of **Sustainable Conservation**, a non-profit group, to promote permit coordination with RCD’s and watershed groups across California, and the **US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Conservation Partnership Project**. These serve as models for the future of cooperative conservation on private lands in our state and elsewhere, and SWCS members are poised to be part of the conservation solution.

OPEN LETTER ON THE BENEFITS OF SWCS MEMBERSHIP

by Daniel Meyer

I have been a member of the Soil & Water Conservation Society (SWCS) for 6 years. I support the SWCS for a variety of reasons.

SWCS held a conference in San Diego last month on the 22nd through 24th. On Wednesday March 22nd a tour bus drove us around stopping at various locations. These tour stops were highly educational, giving information on lagoon restoration, efficient water use on growing plants in a greenhouse and a demonstration of the effects of wood-chip mulching at varying degrees of weather patterns, mulch thickness, water application and wood-chip distribution. At the end of the tour there was ice cream on the cake as all of us had an evening railway tour observing exotic threatened & endangered animals at the San Diego Zoo Wild Animal Park near Escondido.

Other than the events that took place on March 22nd through March 24th of 2006, being a member has the benefits of networking with like-minded people who have a passion for conservation.

Through the SWCS

Chapter Newsletter and E-News Letter Conservogram, you get the most updated conservation news in your area as well as addressing other important natural resource issues.

Being a SWCS member has meant more to me than any organization I have ever joined. Knowing I'm a member gives me the capability to influence others to become members. With the \$1000 scholarship to be awarded to the chosen undergraduate college student, my donations have helped entice students to consider conservation as a future career.

People who join the SWCS have the security in knowing they are contributing towards a worthy cause. It's never too late to take an active step toward conservation. Joining the SWCS is one of the best steps you can take to enhance your career. Hope to see you as a member!



Soil Conservationists Carol Rush (l), Daniel Meyer (c), and Raul Ramirez (r) share their enthusiasm for conservation with students at Farm Day in the City in Bakersfield.

CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA SWCS CHAPTERS EXPLORING A PARTNERSHIP

by Walt Bunter

The Nevada/California Partnership Committee chaired by Cub Wolfe from Minden, NV has submitted an Issue Paper to our parent SWCS requesting comments from the SWCS House of Delegates. Chapter President Mark Steffek from Alturas and SWCS West Regional Representative Don Wysocki from Pendleton, OR also worked on this effort.

The issue is the partnering of two SWCS Chapters to conduct joint activities including an annual conference, special workshops and meetings.

The Nevada Chapter informed the California Chapter that its membership has dropped to eleven and they have become inactive. They are not having meetings or conducting activities that SWCS Chapters typically do. In particular, the members do not hold an annual conference that would provide them with the opportunity for training in their profession as soil and water conservationists and to network with each other to exchange ideas, project successes, research and friendship.

Nevada Chapter member Cub Wolfe attended and helped develop the California Chapter Conference in South Lake Tahoe in 2004. It was requested at that time if the Nevada Chapter might somehow become more closely aligned with the California Chapter in order to provide those SWCS membership benefits to the Nevada members. It was agreed by all to continue looking into this matter.

Since that time, the California and Nevada Chapters have been working together as an informal partnership. Cub continues to represent the Nevada Chapter in formulating joint activities like the annual conference, membership retention, and recruitment. The Nevada Chapter members, on their own, have also agreed to contribute their annual dues to the California Chapter to financially assist joint activities.

A committee of members from both Chapters has been set up to work on a formal agreement between the two Chapters that will specify duties and responsibilities of each and list common goals. It is uncertain at this time about how far a partnership might extend, including a total merging of the two chapters into one. However, there is agreement that the goal of the partnership is to attain conditions that will best serve the members in the Nevada and California Chapters.

CHAPTER AWARDS PRESENTED AT SAN DIEGO

by *Wendy Rash*

The California and Nevada Chapters of the Soil and Water Conservation Society presented the annual Chapter Awards during a luncheon at the Annual Conference in San Diego, March 23, 2006. The awards recognize exceptional leadership and service to the Society and outstanding work in the field of conservation.

Distinguished Service Awards were given to:

Pat Grover, for helping the California Chapter achieve recognition as an Outstanding Chapter by the National SWCS;

Jason Jackson, for several years of leadership and service to the California Chapter and the National SWCS, including organizing the 1995 International SWCS Conference in San Diego;

Walt Bunter, for his service as an Earth Team Volunteer, making his knowledge and experience available to NRCS employees and customers.

Honor Awards were earned by:

Bob Hewitt, for his work in protecting agricultural lands with the Riverside Land Conservancy;

Lin Brooks, for his efforts resulting in the establishment of Resource Conservation Districts in Butte and Del Norte Counties;

The Sacramento River Watershed Program, for building partnerships to promote watershed health alongside social and economic sustainability.

Chapter Recognition Awards were presented to:

Hank Wyman, for his leadership as President of the California Chapter over the past year;

Ed Burton, for making it possible for NRCS employees to present at and to attend the Annual Conference,

Mark Steffek, for his leadership and service to the California chapter as President-Elect;

Hue Dang, for her work initiating watershed projects with the new Butte County RCD as the first District Conservationist in Butte County.

Merit Awards went to:

Dawn Afman, for her efforts developing a Spanish-language outreach and technical assistance program for small-scale Hispanic farmers in the Santa Maria Valley;

Wendy Rash, for her work on the California Chapter newsletter RunOff during the past year;



Past-President Hank Wyman (r) presents a Merit Award to Gail Egenes, of the Riverside Land Conservancy.

Walt Bunter, for coordinating the collaboration between SWCS and IECA for the Annual Conference;

Shea Valero O'Keefe, for her contribution to organizing the Annual Conference Tour;

Richelle Leggett, for her service to the California Chapter SWCS as Student Representative on the Board of Directors and on the Scholarship Committee;

Paul Laustsen, for his efforts in publicizing the Annual Conference through various media;

Pat Grover, for arranging many speakers for the Annual Conference, as well as organizing the Wild Animal Park tour;

Nancy Stein, for her leadership on the Awards Committee for the California Chapter SWCS;

Tom Muller, for his service and leadership as President of the Yolo County RCD and as a pioneering conservation-minded farmer;

Ken Trott, for spearheading the poster session for the California Chapter Annual Conference;

Kay Joy-Barge, for her contributions to developing and organizing the Annual Conference;

Jason Jackson, for organizing the Conservation Field Tour for the Annual Conference;

Hank Wyman, for organizing the keynote and panel speakers for the Annual Conference;

Diane Holcomb, for her contributions to organizing the Annual Conference;

Diane Abbott-Blohm, for her behind-the-scenes work to make the Annual Conference a success;

Cub Wolfe, for his leadership in the Nevada Chapter SWCS and contributions to the Annual Conference;

Andrea Casey, for her efforts in promoting the Annual Conference to the media;

The Riverside Land Conservancy, for its efforts to preserve farmlands, open space, and native landscapes in Southern California.

A ***Conservation Education Award*** was given to:

The Feather River Coordinated Resource Management Education Program, for its innovative work bringing watershed education to classrooms and the public.

MEMBERSHIP MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT-ELECT

by *David Rose*

The Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) is a nonprofit scientific and educational organization founded in 1943 that serves as an advocate for conservation professionals and for science-based conservation practice, programs, and policy. SWCS has over 7,000 members around the world.



They include researchers, administrators, planners, policymakers, technical advisors, teachers, students, farmers, and ranchers. Our members come from nearly every academic discipline and many different public, private, and nonprofit institutions.

Our mission is to foster the science and art of natural resource conservation. Our work targets conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources on working land—the land used to produce food, fiber, and other services that improve the quality of life people experience in rural and urban communities. We work to discover, develop, implement, and constantly improve ways to use land that sustains its productive capacity and enhances the environment at the same time.

As you can see by the descriptions above, those of us who are members are engaged in work that is vital to the health of our state, country, and in a larger sense, the planet as a whole. We are the leaders for natural resource conservation. That being said, our membership difficulties over the past few years are puzzling. We have declined in our membership at the same time that natural resource issues have become even more visible to the public, and during a time of unprecedented funding for conservation programs. Our fraternity can clearly be larger than it is. We will be stronger as a society if we can increase our membership. Not just by sheer numbers, but also by the wealth of knowledge and experience that new members bring to us.

I ask all of you to think about colleagues you work with regularly. Are they members? Perhaps they would be more than happy to join us if we just asked them. Try it; I think you will find yourself glad you did. We all benefit as a result of your efforts.

CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS SEEKS PRESENTERS

by *Wendy Rash*

The Soil and Water Conservation Society is organizing a conference in support of the USDA's Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) initiative. The conference, entitled "Managing Agricultural Landscapes for Environmental Quality: Strengthening the Science Base" will be held in Kansas City, MO October 11-13, 2006.

The primary objective of this workshop is to bring together individuals in the technical and scientific communities who are working to quantify the environmental benefits of conservation practices on agricultural land at landscape and/or watershed scales. SWCS is seeking oral and poster presentations on a variety of topics, including:

- What should we measure, and how, to account for environmental effects?
- Methods for environmental management research at landscape and/or watershed scales
- Targeting within landscapes and/or watersheds to improve conservation effectiveness
- Realistic expectations for measurable change in environmental quality

You may submit your abstract for consideration on the SWCS website: www.swcs.org/en/swcs_international_conferences/managing_agricultural_landscapes. You may also fax your abstract to (515) 289-1227; mail to 945 S.W. Ankeny Road, Ankeny, IA 50023-9723; or email to craig.cox@swcs.org. Submissions should include:

- Title of presentation
- Contact person with affiliation, mailing address, telephone, fax, and email
- Presenter and affiliation
- Other author(s) and affiliation(s)
- Abstract of 500 words or less
- Topic area

The deadline to submit abstracts is June 1, 2006.



Society Shorts

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE IS JUNE 15

by Walt Bunter

Scholarship Committee Chair Tina Vander Hoek of Templeton asks all members to remind your eligible relatives and friends to send their completed scholarship applications with supporting materials postmarked by June 15. The scholarship announcement was sent to all colleges and universities in California. The application form can also be accessed on the web at www.CASWCS.org.

The California Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society awards a \$1,000 scholarship each September to encourage undergraduate students interested in soil and water conservation to obtain technical expertise and to pursue careers in soil and water resources.

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.

Applicants will be ranked with 50% of the evaluation based on scholarship, 25% based on activities related to the area of soil and water conservation, and 25% on demonstrated need.



\$446 RAISED FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

by Walt Bunter

Scholarship Committee Chair Tina Vander Hoek of Templeton and Past-President Kay Joy Barge of Auburn organized and conducted a successful silent auction and opportunity drawings at the Annual Chapter Conference held in San Diego last March 22-24 that netted \$446 for our scholarship fund.

Many thanks go to the generous Chapter members who donated items for the silent auction and opportunity drawings.

The California Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society awards a \$1,000 scholarship each September to encourage undergraduate students interested in soil and water conservation to obtain technical expertise and to pursue careers in soil and water resources.

CHAPTER ELECTION WINNERS

by Walt Bunter

David Rose of Willows is our new President Elect as a result of the February-March mail balloting for new Chapter officers. David moves up from being an Executive Council Director. The President-Elect position is a two-year term with the person advancing to Chapter President in their second year.

Steve Perkins of Victorville, Kristen Hughes of San Francisco, and Bruce Williams of Weaverville will join the Executive Council for two-year terms as Directors. Steve and Bruce are District Conservationists with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Kristin works for Sustainable Conservation. The newly elected Directors will fill the positions formerly held by Jason Jackson from Grass Valley, Phil Hogan from Sacramento, and Tina Vander Hoek from Templeton. Tina was appointed last May to fill the remaining term when Mike McElhiney resigned.

These officers were installed during our Annual Business Meeting on Thursday morning - March 23 in San Diego as part of our Annual Conference. Tina Vander Hoek from Templeton was appointed and also installed as a Director to fill the remaining term of David Rose who moved up to be President Elect.

A total of 73 mail ballots were received including one without a name on the envelope but that vote did not change the winners. This represents a 42 percent return rate. We had 188 members and the goal was for at least a 60 percent return rate. There were 79 ballots returned for last year's election.



CHAPTER RECEIVES \$400 DONATED FOR USE BY THE AWARDS COMMITTEE

by Walt Bunter

Chapter Awards Committee Chair Phil Hogan of Sacramento received an envelope in the mail last February containing \$400 cash from an anonymous person. The enclosed note stipulated that the money was to be used for the awards program. This money was used toward payment for the awards given out last March 23 during our Annual Conference in San Diego. We extend our sincere thanks to this generous Chapter member or person for their donation.

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FIRST CLASS

**SCHOLARSHIP
AVAILABLE!
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CALIFORNIA CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

FALL 2005

RunOff is the official California Chapter SWCS newsletter.

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

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David Rose, President-Elect
Walt Bunter, Treasurer
Pat Grover, Secretary
Kristen Hughes, Director
Steven Perkins, Director
Tina Vander Hoek, Director
Bruce Williams, Director

**Submit an article on your
fuel reduction or fire
recovery projects for the
Summer issue of RunOff!**

Send your article and a photograph or two to the editor at wendy.rash@ca.usda.gov. Articles should be 500-750 words (1-2 pages).

Deadline: July 3, 2006