



# Nebraska Society News

OCTOBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS 2009 - 2010

President	Darwin Hinrichs	<a href="mailto:Darwin.Hinrichs@ne.usda.gov">Darwin.Hinrichs@ne.usda.gov</a>
Vice President	Vacant	
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Treasurer	Dave Langermeier	<a href="mailto:dlangeme@inetnebr.com">dlangeme@inetnebr.com</a>
Past President	Kris Ethridge	<a href="mailto:Kris.Ethridge@ne.usda.gov">Kris.Ethridge@ne.usda.gov</a>

## 2009 ANNUAL STATE MEETING

### Darwin Hinrichs – President

A great state meeting was held in Valentine on June 10-12<sup>th</sup>. Everyone involved should be commended for organizing a very informative type meeting with informative tours and excellent meals. It is always better to actually go into the field to learn along with speakers, well done.

I wish to thank everyone who brought silent auction items and a special thanks to the people who bought these items. We generated \$530 with this auction being our highest total yet. This will help with scholarships and meeting expenses.

It was announced at the meeting that Bluebirds of Nebraska would be receiving the national merit award at the summer international meeting in Dearborn, Michigan.

The next state meeting is scheduled for Northeast Nebraska. We are currently looking for someone to be the coordinator for this event. Members will be available to assist the coordinator with help and guidance on how to go about organizing the state summer meeting. Robin Foulk, who was on the 2009 committee, would be glad to offer assistance on deciding meeting location, topics for discussion, and logistics. The 2011 meeting is scheduled for Southeast Nebraska.



2009 State Meeting Group at Merritt Reservoir

**Back Row** (left to right): Wally Valasek, Val Bohaty, Gary Sharp, Noah Brubaker, Corey Brubaker, Doug Garrison, Tim Weltmer, Norm Helzer, Kris Ethridge, Claudia Stevenson

**Middle Row** (left to right): Barb Valasek, Darlene Bohaty, Darwin Hinrichs, Marie Hinrichs, Shelia Garrison, Linda Helzer, Sarah Reece, Robin Foulk

**Front Row** (left to right): Jess Yahnke, Marla Shelbourn, Virginia Nein, Alexa Nein, Anita Nein, Steve Nein, Mary Miller

## THE 64<sup>th</sup> SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### Darwin Hinrichs – President

Steve Chick and I represented Nebraska at this meeting in Dearborn, Michigan. Meeting attendance was down but the variety of current topics was very impressive. I listened to a program on connecting with absentee landowners, since we have 3.4 million land owners in the United States and 42 percent are not operated by the owners.

A new research idea related to ethanol production is the collection of corn cobs while you are harvesting. Looking to the future and the increased research on cellulosic materials, the ability to use corn cobs has several benefits. Cobs have the highest energy value compared to other portions of corn plants and can be collected while harvesting grain. This also allows for all of the stalks and leaves to remain on the soil surface to help prevent erosion and add to soil organic matter. Combines have already been developed to separate and collect cobs.

The highlight of the meeting was the special screening of "Dirt –The Movie ". This is an excellent educational film on the conservation of our soils from the earliest times to the present. The film is narrated by Jamie Lee Curtis and highlights the problems we have created and a call to action. Another highlight was hearing Tom Vilsack address the opening session.

The International meeting allows people to interact with other colleagues from all parts of the world - people with similar jobs and interests. I encourage everyone to consider attending one of these meetings. The 2010 meeting will be in St. Louis July 14-21<sup>st</sup>.

### House of Delegates Session

It was my pleasure to represent Nebraska as our voting delegate. Mary Miller, our Northern Plains Regional Director and national SWCS Vice-President, conducted the meeting. There were two proposals to be acted upon. The first was to change our by-laws to allow for a seven member executive board of which four would be elected and three appointed by the executive director. This proposal failed to pass. The second proposal, which was to have a Norman A. Berg Leadership and Policy Forum in Washington DC as a biennial event, passed.

**NEBRASKA CHAPTER SWCS 2009 GOLF  
TOURNEY/FUND RAISER**  
**David Langemeier – Treasurer & Golf Event  
Coordinator**

The Thirteenth Annual Nebraska Chapter SWCS Golf Tourney was held on August 28, 2009 at Highlands Golf Club of Lincoln. Thirty-six golfers (18 SWCS members and 18 non-members) played. A modified best ball team format was used. Winning teams were: 1<sup>st</sup> - Dennis Schroeder, Chuck Leinen, Robert Hall, Dave Kohaker; 2<sup>nd</sup> - Kevin Ertz, Joe Calder, Norm Kempf, Scott Argabright; 3<sup>rd</sup> - Jim Culver, Byron Fischer, Ron Christensen, Gus Dornbusch; 4<sup>th</sup> - Richard Langemeier, Glen Langemeier, Tom Langemeier, Myron Gruppe; 5<sup>th</sup> - Dave Langemeier, Gary Wells, Tom Keep, Marc Crouch; 6<sup>th</sup> - Roland Langemeier, Bill Ruzicka, Ed Svendsen, Jim Carr; 7<sup>th</sup> - Bob Rathjen, Marv Thompson, Wayne Manthei, Steve Nelson; 8<sup>th</sup> - Craig Romary, Dick Ehrman, Dewayne Johnson, Mike Dosskey; and 9<sup>th</sup> - Arlis Plummer, Ian Plummer, Cam Loerch, Gary Muckel.

Gary Wells, Robert Hall and Kevin Ertz tied for the individual low score and Craig Romary had the individual high score. The individual low number of putts went to Gus Dornbusch and the individual highest number of putts to Wayne Manthei. The team low putt winners were Jim Culver, Byron Fischer, Ron Christensen and Gus Dornbusch. Flag events were held on all 18 holes.

Dewayne Johnson, SWCS Professional Development Director, Ankeny, Iowa was a special guest.

Everyone went home full of cookies and with more than one prize thanks to the following sponsors: Nebraska Corn Growers, NARD, Lower Platte South NRD, Lower Platte North NRD, Papio-Missouri NRD, Nebraska Soybean Association, State Farm Insurance (Dean Hoy), Stock Seed Farms, SWCS National Office, Diers Ford Fremont (Chuck Strand), Union Bank & Trust Company, Lincoln Walmart South, Austads, Pinnacle Bank, Lincoln USDA Federal Credit Union, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Poultry Department, Security First Bank, Licorice International, The Mill Coffee Shop, Bob Rathjen, Glen Langemeier, Richard Langemeier, Tom Langemeier. Please thank them when you see them.

This year's golf event will be able to make a donation of about \$900 to the Nebraska Chapters SWCS University of Nebraska Foundation Scholarship Fund.



Marc Crouch, Gary Wells, and Dave Langemeier at the SWCS Golf Tourney held in Lincoln August 28, 2009

**FOUR SCHOLARSHIPS TO BE AWARDED TO  
NATURAL RESOURCES COLLEGE STUDENTS**  
**Paul D. Smith – SWCF Treasurer  
& Scholarship Committee**

The Nebraska Chapter and the Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Foundation have sent applications for scholarships to college campuses. There will be four scholarships awarded to natural resources college students again this year, totaling over \$3000.00.

The largest scholarship is for the Tina Carlson Memorial Scholarship made possible by the Carlson family. Tina Carlson was an employee of the Natural Resources Conservation Service who passed away a few years ago. Her widower, Doug Carlson, lives near Chappell, Nebraska.

"We have been pleased with the quality and dedication of our scholarship winners selected in previous years," said Foundation President Kris Reed recently. "We are happy to assist students who are studying natural resources, as did many of our SWCS members," she said. "We are counting on the continued support of this program by our membership," she added.

Applications are available from the Foundation officers as well as on college campuses. They can also be obtained from the Scholarship Committee by contacting Paul Smith, 1024 Dale Dr., Lincoln, Ne 68510, or email [PDsmith55@aol.com](mailto:PDsmith55@aol.com). Applications can also be found on the Nebraska SWCS website <http://incolor.inetnebr.com/dougg/swcs/> Completed applications are due by December 4, 2009.

**2010 NORTHERN PLAINS REGIONAL MEETING  
HOSTED BY NEBRASKA**  
**Robin Foulk**

The 2010 Northern Plains Regional Meeting will be held at Chadron State College in Chadron, Nebraska March 18-20<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Conference will begin at 2 pm Thursday March 18th and continue through Saturday March 20<sup>th</sup>.

The meeting will include a banquet Thursday evening and a society business meeting which is scheduled for 7:30am to noon on Saturday.

Potential topics for the meeting include a tour of the college wood-fired boiler system, post fire rehabilitation in the Pine Ridge, turf grass (buffalo grass) research project, and alternative energy sources for small businesses and homeowners. If there are more topic ideas for this meeting please contact Robin Foulk by email [Robin.Foulk@ne.usda.gov](mailto:Robin.Foulk@ne.usda.gov). More details to come on.

## “DIG IT! THE SECRETS OF SOIL” IS COMING TO DURHAM MUSEUM

**Kris Ethridge – Past President**

The Durham Museum in Omaha has booked the travelling version of the Smithsonian exhibit titled *Dig It! The Secrets of Soil*, from October through December 2010. The original 5,000 sq ft Smithsonian exhibit has been rescaled to 3,000 sq ft and will hit the road in the spring of 2010 to various locations throughout the US for three month periods. The exhibit is an outstanding educational tool for people of all ages and has been a huge success since it was developed by the National Museum of Natural History. The traveling display will include 54 soil monoliths (profile samples) from each state, territory, and the District of Columbia, 5 video components including a 10-minute feature video, 8 interactives (12 stations), 3 scale models, plus free-standing and wall-hung panels and graphics. The Nebraska and Iowa Chapters of SWCS will most likely have ample opportunity to advertise the exhibit and provide volunteers to help with the showing during the three months it resides in Omaha. To find out more about the Dig It! exhibit please visit the following websites:

<http://forces.si.edu/soils/>

<https://www.soils.org/smithsonian/>

<http://www.sites.si.edu/soils/>

## A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

**Stephanie King**

Niobrara – Ponca for “*water spread out horizontal*”. Before the Niobrara River dumps into the Great Missouri it stretches approximately 430 miles from eastern Wyoming to northeastern Nebraska. The Niobrara drops 8’-10’ per mile while draining 13,000 acres of one of the most arid sections of the Great Plains. A prime example of a Great Plains river, the Niobrara is home to over 500 plant species – but for how long?

There is a plant that is growing in numbers and threatening other strong native species, such as cottonwood and willows from their historical habitat along the Niobrara. What is this you may ask? Why it is *Elaeagnus angustifolia*, commonly called “Russian-olive.” A small deciduous thorny tree that can grow 15-30 feet in height, usually found along stream banks, lakeshores, roadsides, open fields and dry draws. It is easily identifiable due to its dull green to gray colored leaves and short crooked trunks.



Russian-olive Tree



Russian-olive Foliage

Russian -olive was introduced into the U.S. from Western Asia and South East Europe as an ornamental in the mid 1800’s. It has been extremely successful mainly due to it’s ability to adapt to varying water levels, elevations (800-7000 ft), soils (clay to sand), temperature conditions (-50-115 degrees Fahrenheit), tolerance of alkaline and saline sites (high p.H.) and will grow in either full sun or full shade. Birds disperse seed through their droppings as it endures digestive juices and will survive up to 3 years. It is also a nitrogen fixer (absorbs N through its roots), thereby dominating other vegetation. The tree was brought to the Great Plains and Great Basin Deserts because it grew so well in droughty conditions and helped prevent soil erosion, but fell out of favor when it became invasive. It now occurs throughout most of the United States.

As far as the ecological role of the tree, is a great source of food and nutrients for birds. This may suggest to some that the plant plays a significant role in bird habitat. However, scientists have concluded that the bird species richness is actually greater in areas of high concentrations

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of native vegetation. Although animals will eat the leaves, generally palatability is poor for livestock and only fair to poor for elk, pronghorn, white tail and mule deer. Dense stands will limit livestock and wildlife movement and use.

Pollinators do like it and will come from far and wide to sip the nectar of the aromatic yellow to cream colored blossoms. The heartwood is dark and very hard. It can be made into beautiful, long lasting furniture or construction material. However, the wood is so hard that a hammer and nail are useless. The wood first must be predrilled. Firewood or wood chips to be burned for heating are a possible use. Russian-olive has a high BTU rating (available heat), but must be burned green or within the first year of cutting.

Control is difficult at best. The main reason for this is the tree's ability to produce root crown shoots and "suckers". Simply cutting down these trees will not affect them as it is a vigorous resprouter. Russian-olive is also resistant to fire and usually is quick to colonize a burned area. Cutting Russian-olive, removing the cut material and spraying the stump immediately (within 15 minutes) has proved to be the most effective way to attempt eradication to date. Currently there is no biological control available.

One area of increasing concentrations of Russian-olive trees is located along the Upper Niobrara River south of Hay Springs. Landowners along this stretch of the Niobrara have witnessed dramatic changes in the hydrology of the river and the corresponding ground water table. Expansive flats adjacent to the river were once productive sub-irrigated meadows, producing reliable annual hay crops. In the past several decades the Upper Niobrara River has incised to an extent where sub irrigated meadows have become drier sites, losing plant diversity and susceptible to drought and erosion. Another result from the shift in hydrology is the current infestation of Russian-olive trees, ranging from dense stands to several trees per acre. Upon further investigation it was determined that 802 acres along 10 miles of the Niobrara River were either covered or otherwise effected by the invasive trees. In January, a group of concerned landowners and conservationists met to discuss sustainable solutions that would restore the native vegetation and renew the natural hydrology to the entire 10 miles. As a result of the leadership effort of six landowners and long term view of the river resource a partnership developed between several conservation organizations including Nebraska Game and Parks Commission (NGPC), Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory (RMBO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Panhandle

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Research Integration for Discovery Education (PRIDE), Sandhills Task Force (STF), and the Upper Niobrara White NRD (UNWNRD). Throughout this spring and early summer the landowners and conservation groups worked together to develop a plan that included using Global Information Systems (GIS) to develop a map, obtain bids from several contractors, and developing an individual agreement with each landowner. In addition, the partnership raised funds from several sources including successful grant application written by PRIDE.

The project work will take place in September and is expected to last for approximately 20 days. Each tree will be mechanically cut at ground level, followed up immediately by a chemical treatment of the stump. Removed trees will be taken to central locations and piled to be burned when conditions permit. Research and previous projects have proven that some regrowth of trees the following years should be expected. To ensure that this effort is not undermined, participating landowners will have access to chemical treatment of regrowth for the two years following the initial mechanical removal. In addition, monitoring plans have been established by the NRCS and Sheridan County Extension consisting of photo points, and individual site evaluations. Several of the landowners will adopt a grazing system, which will allow the limited grazing along the river and promoting the return of native shrubs and willows.

The Russian-olive was put on the Nebraska Watch List in 2006. The Upper Niobrara White NRD will no longer be selling it for use in windbreaks. Everywhere you go in the west, Russian-olive is there and little if anything can compete with it. It will displace the under story, and become the over story – and that's our story.

## COME JOIN THE SWCS NETWORK Craig Romary

There are now over 1,000 people participating in the SWCS Network through over 40 discussion groups. This is a good way to reacquaint with old friends and meet new ones - from across the country.

We're looking for more Nebraska participation. There is a Nebraska Chapter group which can be used in a number of ways. Have a question about your chapter? An event to promote? A technical question? An idea for a chapter activity? Come check out the Network!

You can access the Network from the main SWCS homepage ([www.swcs.org](http://www.swcs.org)) or by going directly to <http://swcsnetwork.ning.com/>.

<http://incolor.inetnebr.com/dougg/swcs>

## MEMBER PROFILE – CLAUDIA STEVENSON

I graduated from The Ohio State University with a BS in Agricultural Education and Animal Science. I was going to teach high school students. I chickened out and worked on a hog farm instead!

My favorite things are: my husband, Brian; my two daughters (Janelle 20, and Elizabeth 17); my dogs, music mostly rock but I do enjoy Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, some country; and being outside.

Being outside has led me to a career in soil conservation and many days INSIDE at a computer - go figure. But the hours that I do get to go outside and actually work on a grassed waterway design or CRP 5 row windbreak are wonderful. As a Resource Conservationist I enjoy the opportunity to teach, to present topics to landowners/producers on a variety of subjects.

I have been a member of SWCS for 22 years; been in Nebraska for 17 years. I have my dues taken directly from my paycheck. Sure makes the payment of dues easy and I never think about it. This year I am on the Board of Directors. Over the years the SWCS has hosted great meetings. I always learn a lot at the meetings and enjoyed the Valentine meeting and tour. Marla, Callie and Jenny (Valentine, Nebraska NRCS staff) have a great place to work and live.

I have been a Girl Scout leader since Janelle was 8. I currently serve as Elizabeth's GS leader. I was a Girl Scout from 1st grade through 7th grade. As a Girl Scout leader I moved into outdoor training of other Girl Scout leaders. This training provides the leaders the experience to be able to take their troops camping. We focus on food! How to cook it outside and what style of cooking for each level. Everything tastes better cooked outside.



**Claudia Stevenson**

## September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2009 SWCS Teleconference Highlights Darwin Hinrichs – President

Scott Bohaty has agreed to switch from being the Blue-Nemaha director to the Northeast director.

There is still a need for a coordinator to help plan next years Nebraska annual state meeting which will be held in the Northeast Area. Anyone who might be interested please contact Darwin Hinrichs.

We are currently looking for someone to fill the Blue-Nemaha director's position. Also, the state vice presidents position is still vacant. Please let Wally Valasek know of anyone who might be interested in this positions.

The updating of the Soil and Water Conservation Society Nebraska Chapter by-laws passed by a vote of 22 yes, 0 no. The by-laws can be found on the Nebraska SWCS Website <http://incolor.inetnebr.com/dougg/swcs>.

## 2010 Legislative Breakfast

Plans are being made for the upcoming annual legislative breakfast, held in Lincoln, in conjunction with the start of the legislative session. However, your help is needed. Is there a topic we should explore and present to our state senators? In the recent past, presentations have been made on LiDAR remote sensing, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, fire management coordination, integrated management of surface water and ground water, and USDA NRCS conservation programs.

Please be thinking of statewide or regional natural resources topics that would be informative to both senators and chapter members, and contact Kris Reed at [kris.reed@nebraska.gov](mailto:kris.reed@nebraska.gov) or (402) 471-3946.

## Nebraska SWCS Chapter Board of Directors

At Large – Claudia Stevenson  
Sandhills – Jim Mathine  
Panhandle – Robin Foulk  
Northeast – Scott Bohaty  
Blue-Nemaha - (vacant)  
South Central – Randy Gunn  
Lincoln – Corey Brubaker

## Nebraska SWCS Committees

Nominations – Wally Valasek  
Membership – Robin Foulk  
Awards – Val Bohaty  
Newsletter – Sarah Reece  
Web Site – Doug Garrison



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Nebraska SWCS Chapter  
830 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Seward, NE 68434



## SWCS PHOTO ALBUM



Landowner tour at the Nebraska SWCS Annual Meeting held in Valentine, NE June 2009.



Meeting attendees enjoyed a picnic and tour at Snake Falls as part of the Nebraska SWCS Annual Meeting held in Valentine, NE June 2009.



SWCS members under the Snake Falls waterfall during the SWCS Annual Meeting in Valentine, NE June 2009.



SWCS member Tim Weltmer proudly displays the Pheasants Forever ball cap and mug he purchased at the silent auction.