

**Trip Report:**  
**71<sup>st</sup> Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference**  
**“Managing Great River Landscapes”**  
**July 24-27, 2016, Louisville, Kentucky**

**Sunday, July 24, 2016**

Arrived too late to attend the House of Delegates and Regional Roundtable meeting due to travel delay.

Attended the Technical Workshop and Leadership Development Training.

Leadership Development Training

Julie Hamm from Iowa reported great success in their tent during RAGBRAI where they site their tent on a farm with good conservation practices and then give away bananas and bottled water to the riders. They also provide free conservation themed postcards and postage for the participants to send home. A donation container is on site and is well used as well as contributions from other sources for the event. This nets the group a good profit as well as creating visibility for conservation.

Virginia reported that they piggyback workshops on conservation district meetings and provide CEUs from the training. They have silent auctions at their annual meetings which go to endowments for membership scholarships. They believe in on-boarding new members with an experienced older member who involves the new member in activities, creating a sense of belonging.

Wyoming has workshops specific to their different regions in part due to the differences in their areas and in part due to the long travel and low population.

Indiana has workshops that speak to pollinators, permaculture, and water quality.

Iowa spoke of their website experience and said that they found 1and1.com and Evenbright which had low monthly fees and had non-profit discounts and did not require bank information. They are keeping a Facebook page and working Twitter, but keep a website for scholarship information and back issue of the newsletter and registration for workshops.

Some states work with their local conservation districts who help maintain their websites or Facebook pages.

New Members/First Timers Orientation

Jim Gulliford hosted this session with other board members. Introductions were made all around. He gave a rundown of the history of SWCS, their parallel with NRCS and what they do now. He briefly discussed the upcoming meeting and how to navigate the

agenda of concurrent oral presentation sessions and symposia sessions. He encouraged people to check out the poster presentations and to visit the exhibitor booths in the Grand Ballroom.

## **Monday, July 25, 2016**

Jim Gulliford gave the opening remarks with Karen Woodrich.

The Pritchard Lecture was given by Chad Pregrake of Living Lands and Water. Chad was extremely entertaining as well as a great inspiration. He told his story of developing a river cleanup organization that has grown into a very large enterprise. From an initial donation of a few thousand dollars he generated national press sensation that snowballed into more donations which translated into more equipment and thousands of volunteers. From a flat bottom boat in the beginning, he now has several barges on which he sorts for recycling the trash they pick up. They now have a crane to help load and unload and have developed a relationship with local conservation groups and governmental bodies including the EPA who assist them with properly getting the hazardous waste secured. His book "From the Bottom Up" tell the story of how he got it all started. I purchased one of these as a silent auction item for our next Nebraska Chapter SWCS meeting.

### Symposia and Concurrent Oral Presentations, morning portion

Attended oral presentations "Assessing the Economic and Environmental Benefits and Costs of Cover Crops in Cotton Production System in Red River Basin, Northwest Louisiana" by Naveen Adusumilli, and then "Barriers and Opportunities to Diversified Agriculture in the Mississippi River Basin" by Lara Bryant, followed by " Cost of reducing Nitrogen Loading through Wetland Restoration" by LeRoy Hansen.

### Symposia and Concurrent Oral Presentations, afternoon portion

Attended oral presentations "Improving Soil Health with Cover Crops and Cropping Diversity" by Allen Sundermeier, "Incorporation of a New "A" Horizon Soil Fingerprinting Framework into Soil Health Assessments" by Natalie Feisthauer (this presentation was very interesting and promises to be a valuable tool in the future for evaluation of soil health by soil scientists, but is too advanced for lay people) , "Measuring the Effect Soil Conservation Treatments Have on Soil Health Indicators" by Alan Sundermeier, and "In-field Variability of Terrain and Soils in Southeastern Kansas: Challengers for Effective Conservation" by Gretchen Sassenrath.

Attended the Symposium "From Farm to Table: A Continuum of Agricultural Evolution and Community Supported Agriculture" by Dana York. This presentation was excellent and showed successful ways to promote locally grown produce as well as train producers to be better land stewards, better marketers, and better business people. From a small farmers market they were able to grow to a large farmers market with entertainment to farmer direct sales, to a store which is open full time which sells

produce as well as local meats and baked goods. The store has a kitchen which they use for cooking classes in order to promote the use of the produce. They set up a mentoring program for new producers and have training sessions for new and old.

## **Tuesday, July 26, 2016**

A Soil Health Partnership Farmer Panel started the day with 2 producers and 2 consultants. The consultant from Indiana was far sighted and advocated that inputs did not make sense for all acres and that some of those acres needed to be set aside so management could be allocated to the acres which would produce a better return.

The Plenary Session was “Creating Watershed Programs that Actually Work – For Farmers and the Environment” by Shannon Phillips and Vicky Drew. This session described the process from initially discovering a problem in a watershed to monitoring and determining the critical sub watersheds, to education to voluntary implementation of conservation practices.

Symposia and Concurrent Oral Presentations, morning portion

Attended oral presentations “Effects of Cover Crops, Residue Removal and Tillage on Soil Organic Carbon” by Jennifer Turner, “Introducing the Soil Health Institute” by Wayne Honeycutt, “Effects of Conservation Tillage on Soil Strength in Arkansas Cotton Production Systems” by Danial Pote, and “Consistency and Replicability of Active Carbon Easements: A Preliminary Analysis” by Skye Wills. The last presentation looked at the use of EDTA to measure the amount of active soil carbon and how as a field test this was only useful as a comparison within a field or fields and is not useful for use as a comparison between different areas and could not be compared lab to lab due to the extreme differences in how the color titration resulted from differing amounts of sample and how the organic matter in each sample could make the test unmeasurable.

Luncheon and Awards.

NRCS Chief Jason Weller talked of the future of voluntary conservation through NRCS and how we will be making changes to our programs to make it easier for producers to sign up as well as easier for our staff to implement.

Awards Presentation

Outstanding Service Award: Craig Romary. A member since 1993 he works with farmers to implement conservation. He administers the Buffer Strip Program through the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Commendation Award: Sara Gray. Sarah served as President of the Nebraska Chapter of SWCS in 2013-14 and has been the newsletter editor for the last eight years.

### Symposia and Concurrent Oral Presentations, afternoon portion

Attended oral presentations “Improving the Spatial Representation of Hydrological Soil Properties Using Topography in Watershed Models” by Zack Easton, “Long-Term Effect of Grain Cropping Systems on Crop Yield, Runoff, and Water Quality on Claypan soils” by Fessehaie Ghidye, “Modeling of the Dynamics of Conservation Tillage Adoption: Effects of Crop Rotation and Erodibility on the Soil on Continuous Conservation Tillage Adoption in Iowa” by Dat Tran, and “Multispectral Imagery in LiDAR Service from the KYAPED: Surveying Erosion Patterns to Help Save Soil and Dollars” by Demetrio Zourarkis, “New Life for Conservation Planning” by Bill Berry, “Nitrogen Fertilizer and Rotation Effects of Sorghum-Sudan grass on No-Till and Strip Till Corn Yields” by Jorge Delgado, “Carp Wall: Defending the Continental Divide” by Gerald Roach (this was quite interesting since this was done on a WRP site after wetland restoration. It was discovered that this site was on the continental divide and since it can have standing water on it during floods, it had the potential to allow Asian Carp to move from the central part of the country to the Great Lakes.), and “National Commodity Crop Productivity Index” by Michal Robotham .

### **Wednesday, July 27, 2016**

### Symposia and Concurrent Oral Presentations, morning portion

Attended oral presentations “An Overview of Brazilian Experience on Measuring Runoff and Soil Loss Rates” by Jamil Alexandre, “Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi in Soil Health Paradigm” by Zahangir Kibir, “Effects of Flue Gas Desulfurization Gypsum on Crop Yields and Soil Health in Kansas” by DeAnn Presley, “Evaluating Ephemeral Gully Erosion and Conservation Practices on Cultivated Fields: A Paired Watershed Study in Central Kansas” by Aleksey Shenshulkov.

Best quote of the week “The most widely spoken language in the world is broken English”.