

believes that decision makers in the natural resources field need valuable first-hand experience to generate today's conservation solutions.

2016--Nebraska SWCS Commendation Award--Jim Culver

Jim became a member of the Stillwater Chapter of SWCS (Soil and Water Conservation Society) in Oklahoma in 1957 during his first years as a Soil Scientist with Soil Conservation Service – USDA. Back in those days one was expected to voluntarily sign on for two activities 1- the Soil and Water Conservation Society and 2- Sign up for U.S Saving Bonds.

Jim was active in the Stillwater SWCS Chapter, the Iowa SWCS Chapter and past president of the Lincoln, Nebraska SWCS Chapter. He has made numerous personal and poster presentations on soil resources at state, national and international meetings. Presentations include SWCS state meeting at Grand Island, National SWCS meetings at Ft. Worth, Texas; St Louis, Mo; Baltimore, Maryland and International SWCS meeting at Tornado, Canada.

Jim was the lead person in a series of Symposiums recognizing the 100 years of the National Cooperative Soil Survey Centennial High-lights at the National San Diego, California SWCS meeting is 1998. He also was a lead Nebraska person in getting state donations for promotion of the State Soil, "Holdrege" as a part of the National Smithsonian Soils Exhibit sponsored by the Soil Science Society of America.

Jim has been active in promoting joint state meetings between the Nebraska Society of Professional Soil Scientists and the SWCS.

As a member of the Lincoln Center Kiwanis in retirement he has been active in promoting and preparing soil resource displays for use by the Girl Scouts at the Hill Top Camp in NW Lincoln, the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center south of Denton and the Eastern 4-H Camp near Gretna.

2016--Nebraska SWCS Commendation Award--Michael Kucera

Mike is currently the Agronomist on National Soil Quality/Ecology Branch at National Soil Survey Center. Mike's primary national responsibility is to provide science based assistance and support nationally for soil survey interpretations, ecological sites, agronomy, soil quality/health and related sciences to NRCS, partners and farmers. Mike is a member of National Soil Health Training Cadre; he developed the soil quality bucket through a NETF grant that is used across the US; led "Soil Health Literature Review Project" to support the science behind the use of Soil Health practices. Mike has provided in person soil health bucket/soil health management training in nearly 20 states. He also has assisted with many soil health farmers and partner meetings across the US and Nebraska.

In the past, Mike has been State Resource Conservationist in Nebraska NRCS, held various positions on the Nebraska SRC Staff i.e. Resource Conservationist, State Water Quality Specialist, State Agronomist, and others.

He was an Area Resource Conservationist in SW Iowa and District Conservationist in both Iowa and Nebraska, Soil Conservationist & Range Conservationist in Spalding, Tecumseh, and Syracuse, Nebraska and Lab Technician at the UNL Soils Lab.

Mike's education was with University of Nebraska, BS, Major in Natural Resources; with Soil Conservation, Soil Science, Agronomy, and Range Conservation Options and MS, Major in Water Resources Planning and Management. His recent awards are Nebraska FFA Association Honorary State FFA Degree, 2014, Nebraska Agribusiness Association Researcher/Educator of the Year, 2008.

2016—Nebraska SWCS Honor Award – Scott & Pam Heinemann

Scott & Pam Heinemann of Winside, NE, are Wayne County Producers. Scott has been practicing Continuous no-till for many years with a corn-soybean rotation. Scott plants his crops in 20 inch rows which can present a challenge for some but not for Scott. He effectively handles the residue of the narrow rows. Scott has recently added cover crops to his rotation and expanded his rotation to include perennial forages and small grains such as cereal rye and oats. The two participate in the Conservation Reserve Program by seeding filter strips, riparian forest buffers, quail buffers, and grassed waterways. They have planted numerous trees, shrubs, and wildlife habitat around their farm. Scott & Pam have hosted the "No-Till on the Plains Whirlwind Expo" for Eastern Nebraska in June of 2016 their farm. In addition to all these activities, Scott & Pam continually educate themselves and keep up to date with new and innovative practices in conservation farming. Pam is a big part of the operation keeping the books, hauling seed, operating the grain cart during harvest, and cooking for the crew. They make important financial management decisions together and are a great conservation team.

2016—Nebraska SWCS Honor Award--Gary & Carmen Godbersen

Gary & Carmen have been leaders in conservation within the Lower Elkhorn Natural Resources District. They are continuous no-tillers and have used cover crops extensively over most of their farms. When other farmers might say that they don't have time to get cover crops planted in the fall or look for other reasons why cover crops won't work on their operation, the Godbersens have made it work. According to Marty Marx, Soil Conservation Technician in the Wayne NRCS field office, "One thing that stands out with them is that they have always moved forward with their no-till and cover crops and have never given up. If something doesn't go quite right, they don't blame the system, they look for a solution to make it right the next time and capitalize on the learning experience. They participate in our educational seminars to further their education. They have hosted a no-till twilight tour at their farm in Wayne County".

Godbersens have practiced no-till and cover crops in Northeast Nebraska where continuous no-till may not be a popular conservation practice, where disking cornstalks is still common. They do no-till in 20 inch rows. Their conservation doesn't stop with just no-till and cover crops. They have participated in other conservation programs which have helped them improve the efficiency of their fertilization and irrigation water management practices and are currently working on a windbreak renovation with the West Point NRCS office. The Godbersens are very deserving of their conservation recognition.

Additionally, two persons were recognized and introduced to the chapter membership because they will be receiving awards at the SWCS International Conference in July for their leadership and exceptional service contributing to conservation. They are **Sarah Gray, International Commendation Award; & Craig Romary, International Outstanding Service Award.**

2016—International SWCS Commendation Award—Sarah Gray

Sarah Gray is from Harrison, Nebraska and was raised on a family cattle and horse ranch. From a young age she gained an appreciation for agriculture, livestock and natural resources.

Sarah started her career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2004 and is a past Resource Conservationist in Seward County Nebraska, now working in the NRCS State Office. Sarah

served as Vice President in in 2012, and President, in 2013--2014. With the NRCS Sarah assists agriculture producers in protecting and conserving natural resources with a variety of projects on cropland, pastureland and wildlife lands. Sarah has assisted with conservation practices for erosion control.

Serving as the newsletter editor, collecting, organizing, producing, and editing the news she gets from members, has been a great way to keep informed of the chapter activities as well as build additional skills. She encourages all members to volunteer and be active with the chapter. Even the smallest volunteer efforts and activities make a difference.

2016-- International SWCS Outstanding Service Award--Craig Romary

Craig began work as an environmental specialist for the Nebraska Department of Agriculture's pesticide program in late 1998. Although this is a regulatory program for pesticide use and distribution, the emphasis in Craig's area is on maintaining and improving water quality and protecting endangered species from pesticides in coordination with many state agencies, University Extension, commodity groups, pesticide industry, and others.

Craig administers the Nebraska Buffer Strip Program, intended for filter strips and riparian forest buffer strips adjacent to stream, rivers, wetlands, and other waterbodies.

In conjunction with the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture has funded the [Quality-Assessed Agrichemical Database for Nebraska Ground Water](#). With Craig's assistance and determination, the department has continued this project despite cutbacks in program funds changes in priorities.

Shortly after coming to Nebraska, Craig became the editor of the Department of Agriculture's [Pesticide & Noxious Weed Newsletter](#). Topics on protecting water quality and the environment in general, have been frequently included.

Craig assisted the Blue River water quality subcommittee made of state and Federal agencies, in applying and receiving grant funds for a national EPA Water Quality Initiative Project to address water quality issues in the basin.

Since 2004, Craig has been actively involved in a project that has given local Natural Resources Districts the capability to analyze groundwater and surface water for specific pesticide active ingredients. This data will assist the Department of Agriculture, Department of Environmental Quality, and NRDs in better assessing pesticide impacts in groundwater.

Craig served from 2002-2006 and 2011-2012 on the State FIFRA Issues Research and Evaluation Group that advises the US EPA at a national level on water quality, endangered species, and other environmental issues in relation to pesticide use, label directions, and regulations.

Craig has been the SWCS Nebraska Chapter President, the Foundation Treasurer, the University of Nebraska Chapter/ Nebraska Chapter Liaison, among many other contributions to SWCS.

Article by Anita Nein