

Soil and Water Conservation Society Honors Award Winners

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018 – UN-L CROP WATCH

Soil and water conservation efforts in Nebraska were recognized nationally at this year's national Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference in Albuquerque.

Receiving the Harold and Kay Scholl Excellence in Conservation Award was Paul Jasa, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension engineer. The award recognizes individuals who provide technical assistance and demonstrate effectiveness and creativity in conservation planning and plan application. Jasa conducts cropping system educational programs and field research and has been working with planting equipment and tillage system evaluation at the university since 1978.

Green Cover Seed of Bladen received the Merit Award in recognition of an outstanding activity, product, or service promoting the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. Accepting the award were owners Brian and Keith Berns of Bladen. Green Cover Seeds provides customized cover crop mixes and consulting to over 7,000 customers and contributes to soil health education programs, putting a strong emphasis on soil regeneration and soil biology.



Among the Nebraskans attending the 2018 Soil and Water Conservation Society annual conference were (top, L-R) Brian Berns, Bijesh Maharjan, Keith Berns; (bottom, L-R) AnitaNein, Krista Reed, Scott Bohaty, Paul Jasa and Steve Nein.

Krista Reed, Natural Resources Planner in the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources, was honored with the Outstanding Service Award. It's given to SWCS members in recognition of distinguished service in helping the Society develop and carry out its program over a sustained time. Reed has been an active member of SWCS since 1986, serving in multiple state officer roles. She also has served on Nebraska's Soil and Water Conservation Foundation for over a decade.

Scott Bohaty, resource conservationist in the Wilber office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, received a Commendation Award for service to the local SWCS chapter or council of chapters. Bohaty, who has been active in SWCS for many years, has served in several leadership roles in the Nebraska Chapter. He also organized the 2010 Annual State meeting, arranging for tours of noxious weed test plots and presentations by well-known resource conservationists.

SWCS State Award Winners

Each year the Nebraska Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society recognizes and honors work that honors its goals.

Merit Award

The Merit Award is presented in recognition of an outstanding activity, product, or service by a group, business firm, corporation, or organization that promotes the conservation of soil, water, and related natural resources. Listed below are the winners of this year's Merit Awards.

Bridgeport FFA Chapter

(Awarded in 2014, but received in person in 2018)

The Bridgeport FFA Chapter was presented the Merit Award early this year for reinvigorating and growing its chapter. In the fall of 2012 the Bridgeport FFA came alive again when, with support from the community and local businesses, it raised over \$100,000 to build a classroom for the agricultural education program. Since then the chapter has grown, developed, and achieved many things, thanks to great community support and a dedicated teacher, Mrs. Alissa Copple, who was passionate about FFA, agriculture, and agriculture education. With community and teacher support the rejuvenated chapter has competed well at district, state and even national contests.

Tom Wiens

Tom Wiens of Bayard was recognized for his work in modern arboriculture. Known as "Tom the Tree Man," Wiens is a certified arborist whose focus is on tree health, thus his motto: "Healthy trees do not get disease." He works with clients and their trees on site, performing an array of services including consulting on diagnosis, planting, care, trimming, removal, spraying, fertilizing, and evergreen shearing in Nebraska and Wyoming. A former president, Tom is presently a board member of the International Society of Arborists, Rocky Mountain Chapter.

Heritage Seed Company Incorporated, Emery Fox

Emery Fox, owner of Heritage Seed Company Inc. in Crawford, cleans and markets seed and sells feed and chemical. Heritage serves hundreds of customers from South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, and Nebraska. Fox also works closely with NRCS and producers to get the right mix when planting cropland back to grass to reduce erosion or increase grazing/haying opportunities. The company also provides seed for wildlife and butterfly habitats. These mixtures often include seed from uncommon plants and Fox works well to provide a product that is affordable and productive.

The Monument Valley Iris Society

The Monument Valley Iris Society is a group of energetic people from the Panhandle of western Nebraska and eastern Wyoming united by a love for growing and enjoying the herbaceous plants with linear basal leaves and large showy flowers called iris. The Monument Valley Iris society plants and cares for the iris display garden at the University of Nebraska Panhandle Research and Extension Center's D.A. Murphy Panhandle Arboretum. and each year in early June hosts an iris show sanctioned by the American Iris Society. The show normally consists of 150 to 200 entries, is judged by nationally certified judges. and is one of the top shows in the five-state region.

Commendation Award

The Commendation Award recognizes SWCS members for service to their chapter or council of chapters.

Shirley Ferguson

Shirley Ferguson began her career with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, then the Soil Conservation Service, in November 1992 as a WAE Soil Conservation Aide and Earth Team Volunteer. She became a full time Soil Conservation Technician in March 1993. The past 25 years she served as a soil conservation technician in the Hayes Center Field Office. She has been assisting the Middle Republican, Twin Platte, and Upper Republican Natural Resources Districts to complete conservation projects, including flat channel terrace systems with grassed waterways and area range- and land-judging events.



SWCS Merit Award (L-R): Robin Foulk, Nebraska Chapter SWCS president, Katie Ramos and Abraham Ramos, Bridgeport FFA Chapter, and Anita Nein, Nebraska Chapter SWCS awards committee.



SWCS Merit Award
(L-R): Robin Foulk, Nebraska Chapter SWCS president, Tom Wiens, award recipient, and Edwin Harms, Nebraska Chapter SWCS



SWCS Merit Award (L-R): Doug Garrison, Nebraska SWCS awards committee, and representatives of the Monument Valley Iris Society.



SWCS Commendation Award (L-R): Robin Foulk, Nebraska Chapter SWCS president and presenter; Shirley Ferguson, honoree; and Anita Nein, Nebraska Chapter SWCS awards committee.

Michael Murphy

Michael Murphy has been a Nebraska Chapter SWCS member since 2001 and has been the general manager of the Middle Niobrara NRD since November 2002. He says that it is because of the landowners and their love of the land that resource management has been successful locally, noting that that is one reason the MNNRD woody biomass program has progressed. By turning unwanted eastern red cedar trees and trees burned in the 2006 and 2012 Niobrara River Valley wildfires into wood chips for use on sandy trails, reseeded pastures, tree planting mulch, and on irrigated agricultural fields, the program has gained partners. Today, NDEQ, UNL researchers, UNL Extension, Nebraska Forest Service, NRCS, other NRDs, local agronomists, equipment dealers, and most importantly landowners, are interested in seeing how wood chips can help reduce soil temperatures, improve water quality, reduce water consumption, and increase soil organic matter. Wood chip composting is the newest district venture, and it's a win-win for soil health.