



# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

OFFICERS 2019-2020

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## IN THIS ISSUE

<b>REMEMBERING WALTER VALASEK</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2019 GOLF TOURNAMENT</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ANNUAL MEETING REPORT</b>	<b>2-4</b>
<b>INTERNATIONAL MEETING REPORTS</b>	<b>4-6</b>
<b>MEMBERSHIP INFO AND GOALS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>YOUR CHAPTER AND FOUNDATION UPDATES</b>	<b>7</b>



[CHECK IT OUT](#)  
[NEBRASKA SWCS IS NOW ON FACEBOOK](#)

## REMEMBERING WALTER “WALLY” VALASEK



[Walter “Wally” J. Valasek Jr. \(1948 – 2019\)](#) passed away at home, surrounded by his family September 5, 2019. Wally retired after 37 years with NRCS where he worked in Beatrice, Wilber, Auburn, North Platte and Ord, NE.

SWCS NEWS – Page 1

Wally was an active member in the Nebraska Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society. He served as the Chapter president in 2002 and as the Director for the Blue-Nemaha Section for 16 years. He served as chairman of the Nebraska SWCS nominating committee for 15 years. He served on or was chairman for six annual conferences focused on the science of soil and water conservation activities, to promote the professional development and education of the participants.

When he was president of the Nebraska SWCS chapter, it hosted the Northern Plains Professional Development Conference “Excellence in Conservation Planning.” Prior to the merging of all the Nebraska chapters into one chapter, Wally served the very active Blue Nemaha Chapter many times as president, secretary and treasurer. He will be greatly missed by the Nebraska SWCS chapter.

## WALLY VALASEK - SWCS CONTRIBUTIONS Doug Garrison

With the recent passing of longtime SWCS Member Wally Valasek we take time to reflect on his contributions to our chapter and members. Wally could always be counted on for hosting a local meeting. He had numerous contacts in southeast Nebraska with Extension, NRD and other conservation related organizations. Wally served SWCS in many capacities from Chapter President to long standing Nominations Chair.

Many of us could count on getting a call from Wally looking for us to step up to take vacant leadership roles. The phone call would always have long pauses and Wally would just hang in there until he got some kind of commitment from the individual he was talking with. Wally was all in for SWCS and in his memory I encourage everyone reading this to think of ways they can step forward to help the Nebraska Chapter of SWCS. Consider contacting one of our current board members and volunteering to lead the NE SWCS Chapter into future endeavors.

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# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

## DAVE LANGEMEIER MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT Corey Brubaker

The 23rd Annual SWCS Golf Tournament was held on August 30, 2019 at the Highlands Golf Course in Lincoln, NE. The golf tournament was begun in 1997 by former Nebraska SWCS Chapter treasurer Dave Langemeier to raise money for scholarships for students pursuing degrees in natural resources related fields.

A total of 39 golfers registered for the event which raised \$2,531 for the scholarship funds. Gary Buttermore, Mike Eisenbarth, Tom Malmstrom and Dan Ross made up the winning team. Second place went to the team of Rich Torpin, Jake Bliven, Dana Snyder and Joe Rodriguez. The low gross individual score went to Gary Wells and the low net individual score went to Tom Malmstrom. The long putt contest was won by James Brubaker, Ryan Kroemer, and Roland Langemeier. Winner of the Cam Cup Competition was Doug Wagner.

A special thanks to our sponsors for the tournament:

- Aurora Coop
- Bank of Red Lodge
- Green Cover Seed
- Lincoln USDA Credit Union
- Lower Platte North NRD
- Lower Platte South NRD
- Midwest Laboratories
- Nebraska Agri-Business Association
- Nebraska Department of Agriculture – Entomology Program
- Nebraska Association of Natural Resource Districts
- Stifel Investment Services
- Stock Seed Farms
- Ward Laboratories
- Sandy Langemeier
- Roland Langemeier
- Teri Loerch
- Beth O'Farrell
- Becky Keep
- Bob Batterman
- Norm Kempf



(l-r) Steve Grube, Robin Foulk, and Kris Reed checking in golfers and selling raffle and activity tickets at the Dave Langemeier Memorial golf tournament held August 30, 2019.

## 2019 NEBRASKA SWCS ANNUAL MEETING – SOIL HEALTH AND COVER CROPS Darwin Hinrichs

The 2019 Nebraska SWCS annual conference was held in Lincoln August 29, 2019 with a technical focus on soil health and cover crops. Gary Lesoing from the University of Nebraska Extension provided a presentation on a cover crop selection tool. Gary has been involved with using the SARE program with addressing diversity of cover crops available to producers. He covered the benefits of cover crops including erosion prevention, forage production, adding nitrogen, adding carbon, moisture conservation, improved infiltration, weed and disease suppression, nutrient recycling and nitrogen scavenging. Challenges of using cover crops include termination, pests, voles, nitrogen being tied up, crop insurance restrictions and herbicide restrictions.

Aaron Hird, Nebraska NRCS State Soil Health Specialist, was the second conference speaker. Aaron presented a Cover Crop Design Worksheet that NRCS uses as a tool to develop mixtures. Aaron explained that the first questions for producers is Why, How and When in considering using cover crops. It is important to know if the objective is erosion control, forage production, adding nitrogen or other objectives. Aaron provided the conference participants three Cover Crop Design Worksheets to show examples of crop species and rates

<http://www.nebraskaswcs.org/>



# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

producers could use. His examples also considered the cost share rate available through NRCS to help with expenses. He also discussed the timing of aerial application of a mix into crops like corn, applying right after fall harvest or into stubble after wheat harvest.

Doug Garrison, NRCS Area Resource Conservationist, presented the topic of Soil Health Assessments. There are eight soil health field observations to use after completion of a texture and infiltration test at a field site. Doug provided a brief history of the methods NRCS has used in the past for some of the ways to evaluate soil health. Some soil resource concerns to consider are compaction, soil organic matter depletion, aggregate instability and soil organism habitat degradation. On the national scene there are eleven indicators to consider for soil health.

The final morning speakers were Dr. Humberto Blanco, UNL professor in Soil Management and Soil Physics with research in the field of Soil Health, and Dr. Sabrina Ruis, post doctorate at UNL. Dr. Blanco's presentation was focused on the question - Do cover crops improve soil health? He has variety sites in eastern and central Nebraska. He has found some increase in soil organic matter and aggregate stability using grass species over 6-10 years. He found several factors that influence soil health changes like biomass production and duration with latest termination were the best to show increases in O.M. The best conditions for showing an increase in soil O.M. were in problem soils showing low organic matter content and in sandy soils. His recommendation is to use grasses for a cover crop and to terminate late.

The afternoon was spent at the UNL Rogers Research Farm east of Lincoln. It was hosted by Paul Jasa a UNL Research Extension Specialist. Paul gave an excellent history of the Rogers Farm. He is the Education and Demonstration Coordinator for the farm and has done work at the farm since 1981. Paul had eight seed mixes he called cover crop cocktails that were drilled into wheat stubble. Paul discussed timing of cover crop seeding and showed with the plots that early seeding resulted in better weed control. Paul has been using no-till for his tillage operations since 1981 with many rotations using corn, sorghum and soybeans as the main crops.

The final presentation was by Doug Garrison showing how to do a soil health assessment in the field by digging

a pit and using the eight soil health indicators/assessment method to evaluate the overall soil health of a given site.

The Nebraska SWCS chapter would like to give thanks to all those that presented, attended and organized another successful annual meeting. A special thank you to Corey Brubaker for all his work on the meeting!



Gary Lesoing (front right) with UNL Extension provided a presentation on cover crops to Nebraska SWCS annual meeting attendees. Corey Brubaker (front left) served as the MC and meeting coordinator.



Aaron Hird, Nebraska NRCS State Soil Health Specialist presented on cover crop species, rates and timing during the SWCS annual meeting in Lincoln.





# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER



Paul Jasa, UNL Research Extension Specialist, provided an in-field discussion on no-till and cover crops at Rogers Research Farm east of Lincoln



Norm Helzer(L) and Jim Culver(R), both retired Soil Scientists, were huge assets at the recent SWCS Soil Health Assessment Technical Meeting in August of 2019. Photo posted on the [Nebraska SWCS Facebook page](#).

## 74<sup>th</sup> SWCS INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE – PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA Dave Bedlan

I would like to thank the Nebraska SWCS Chapter and NRCS for the opportunity to attend my first international annual conference. The focus of this year’s meeting, Bridging the Divide: looks at urban, rural, and the spaces in between into a holistic conservation framework. The conference location was very close to the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers where they form the Ohio. Bridging the Divide was an appropriate metaphor as Pittsburgh has 446 bridges.

I attended the State of Society Address, Regional Roundtables and House of Delegates meeting. Many topics were discussed at the North Central Region Roundtable. The focus was connecting better with existing and potential SWCS members. For example, is there a tech gap or other barriers to outreach to potential new members or between existing members. How do we better advertise and articulate the benefits of SWCS membership.

Tracy Mehan Director of Government affairs for the American Water Works Association gave opening remarks. He is involved in setting national water policy and advocating for projects through farm bill and regional conservation partnership program. The 2018 farm bill has 4 billion in funding set to address source water protection. He highlighted source water projects in Cedar Rapids IA and at Milford Lake KS to protect and improve urban drinking water systems. The point of urban and rural working together to achieve a common goal was emphasized.

The conference was full of very informative seminars provided by experts in their respective fields. Sessions the I attended included Conservation Economics and Policy, Adaptive Management of Conservation Efforts and Water Erosion Prediction Tools. This was a good day of integrating conservation planning tools with programs and policy. A lot of water quality items and best management practices in agriculture to help source water. There was an interesting presentation on urban gardening and agriculture in Pittsburgh.



# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief Matt Lohr addressed the conference and pledged his support of SWCS. He gave an inspirational speech about being passionate about conservation and working hard to achieve sustainable agriculture while protecting our natural resources. He shared personal experiences from his family farm and how the conservation ethic was instilled in him by his parents when he was child.

I attended many other sessions related to planning and application of conservation practices. The Conservation Assessment Ranking Tool (CART) overview and Conservation Desktop are examples of new tools coming to NRCS. They will help the agency more efficiently provide service to our customers and prioritize conservation dollars to better address natural resource concerns. Other sessions were focused on soil health, cover cropping, nutrient and pest management.

In summary, I want to again express my gratitude to SWCS for the opportunity to attend this year's conference. It was an honor to accept the 2019 Outstanding Chapter Award for SWCS Nebraska. Indeed, bridging the gap from rural to urban is a great challenge in the conservation of our nation's soil and water. National and State policy makers, as well as, local individuals are responsible for working together to provide healthy land and clean water for life.



Awards Luncheon 2019 by Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Dave Bedlan accepted the 2019 Outstanding Chapter Award from Clare Lindahl, CEO SWCS presented to the Nebraska SWCS Chapter during the 74<sup>th</sup> International SWCS Conference.

## DAVIS STUDENT MODERATOR AT 74TH INTERNATIONAL SWCS CONFERENCE



Alexa Davis represented Nebraska SWCS as a student moderator at the 74<sup>th</sup> SWCS International Conference and provided the following narrative of her experience.

My name is Alexa Davis and I'm a master's student at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln studying Hydrological Sciences. I was selected to be in the student moderator program for the 74th international Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from July 28-31, 2019.

Being involved in the student moderator program was an extraordinary experience getting to learn how connected natural resources are all over the United States, as well as how many people are striving to protect them. Being selected to go to this conference enabled me to network with specialists in so many fields and potentially start a collaboration for my master's thesis work. I gained valuable insight on new technologies, techniques, and mindsets being utilized to conserve our finite, precious natural resources. I was able to gain perspective into expanding my own research and to enhance my ability to communicate my research in a more professional way.



# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER

There was something powerful about listening to professionals talk about their research and being able to understand, give feedback, and learn from their knowledge. The student moderator program was an amazing experience and I believe SWCS students from all over the country should apply to it in the future. I'm so thankful to have been selected to attend and represent Nebraska.

## NEBRASKA SWCS MEMBERSHIP GOALS Claudia Stevenson

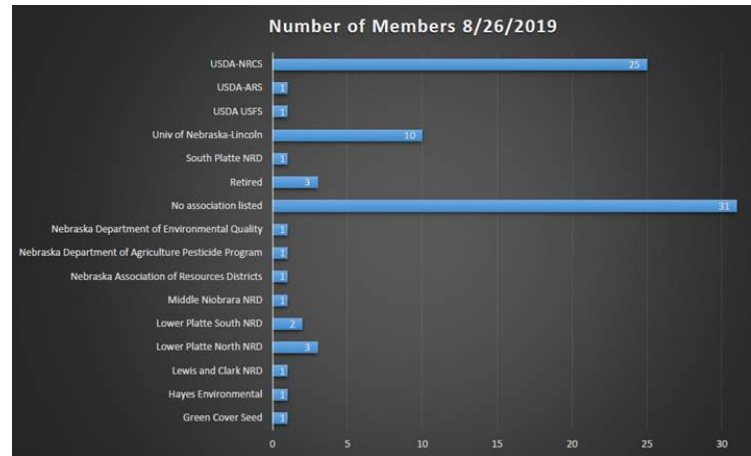
Membership – what does it mean to be a member of an organization? Participation varies from paying only the dues to being a leader at state or national level. Every effort is appreciated and our efforts can change through the years due to our own personal commitments, health, and work commitments. Where are you in your commitment to your various memberships? Maybe you are looking for an opportunity to help and just do not know which committee needs your help. I am looking for two individuals to help me with a membership outreach. I have a few membership goals for Nebraska SWCS. Can you help me?

**Goal – Reach out to all members in the Step Up campaign.**

**Goal – Contact each NRD about membership to Nebraska SWCS.**

**Goal – Help create a list of leading Ag Businesses, Leading Farmers and Ranchers in the communities, Banks/Lenders - this will become a list to contact to encourage membership in Nebraska SWCS**

Please let me know if you have 4 hours to work towards this goal. One hour a month to help me reach this goal by March 2020.



## IN THE NEWS.....

- ❖ Familiar names and faces can be found in the [UNL Department of Agronomy and Horticulture's Annual Newsletter](#)
- ❖ Check out the short film [Conservation Professionals: Inspiring a Movement](#) which highlights the essential role of conservation professionals in the soil health movement by documenting the lasting impact that one conservationist—Mike Collins, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service—had on the landscape and his community. Collins, a soil health advocate within the region and SWCS Board of Directors member, passed away in 2016, but left behind an active conservation network.
- ❖ [UNL Soil Judging Team swept regionals](#), walking away with a first place in the group, overall and individual contests.  
View contest photos here:
  - <https://twitter.com/UNLSNR?lang=en>
  - <https://twitter.com/samanthateten?lang=en&lang=en>





# Nebraska Society News

DECEMBER 2019 NEWSLETTER



SWCS Past President Robin Foulk presented Emery Fox - Heritage Seed Company Inc. with the 2018 SWCS Chapter Merit Award. Emery was not able to attend the 2018 Annual Meeting in Gering to receive the award.

## SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION FOUNDATION Kris Reed

All Nebraska SWCS Chapter members are members of the Nebraska Soil & Water Conservation Foundation, and the Foundation Board of Directors would like to hear from you regarding ideas for educational or demonstration type projects. Look around your office or those you associate with to see if you know someone who would benefit from a grant or scholarship.

The Scholarship Committee has reviewed student applications for 2019 and will be contacting the recipients soon. Stay tuned for the next newsletter to see how your donations are working to help conservationists of the future. Please consider a donation to help the next round of scholarship recipients and those in the years to come.

As always, Foundation “tribute cards” can be used to make a donation to the Foundation by recognizing someone with a memorial or to recognize a memorable milestone in their career or family life. Tribute cards can be requested from any Foundation member. Please see the updated Foundation brochure at [nebraskaswcs.org](http://nebraskaswcs.org) for more information. In addition, take a look at the Honor Roll of Memorials and Recognition.

2019-20 NSWC Foundation board members are:

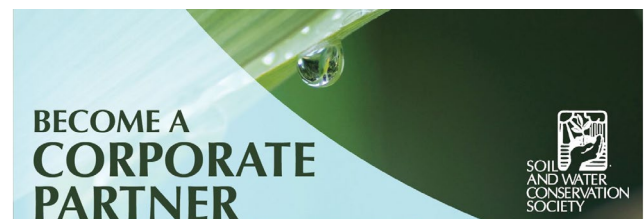
- President- Kris Reed
- Vice President - Ed Harms
- Secretary – Mike Kucera

- Treasurer and Registered Agent – Craig Romary
- Director – Dick Ehrman
- Chapter President – Dave Bedlan (non-voting member)

Thank you all for voting in the NSWC Foundation election. There was a wonderfully, high level of voting this year. A total of twenty-two ballots were received. I am pleased to announce that Dick Ehrman was elected to serve another 5-year term on the Board of Directors. Thank you for taking time to vote, and for your continuing interest in soil and water conservation in Nebraska.



The 2019 scholarship committee submitted their rankings and several members were present to discuss the applicants and how they ranked. Seven students were selected out of 17 submitting applications for consideration. SWCS members present include (l-r) Mike Kucera, Jim Culver, Corey Brubaker, Dick Ehrman and Craig Romary (not pictured). Other committee members include Doug Garrison, Kris Reed, Sarah Gray, Robin Foulk, and Ed Harms.



Do you belong to a business or organization looking to support natural resources and SWCS? Check out the benefits of corporate SWCS membership at <http://bit.ly/SWCScorp3> including international exposure and identity at SWCS events, in publications and with social media.



# Nebraska Society News

Nebraska SWCS Chapter  
4967 Lariat Loop  
Torrington, WY 82240

VISIT THE [NEBRASKA SWCS FACEBOOK PAGE](#) FOR ITEMS OF INTEREST SUCH AS THE ONE BELOW

## Nebraska State Soil Scientists from 1952 through 1995



**Lloyd Mitchell "Mitch"** — State soil Scientist from 1952 -1971 on right and **Don Yost, Soil Scientist** on left. Mitch worked on many mobile soil survey details early in his career. Graduate of University of Nebraska.



**Jim Culver** — State Soil Scientist from 1971—1988

Graduate of Oklahoma State University Worked as field soil scientist in Oklahoma, Soil Specialist in Iowa and Assistant State Soil Scientist in Iowa prior to moving to Nebraska in 1971 as State Soil Scientist.

**Norm Helzer** — State Soil Scientist from 1988—1995

Graduate of University of Nebraska and Graduate study at Iowa State University. Field soil scientist in Iowa, Foreign assignment in Saudi Arabia 1982-1984; Project Leader In Nebraska 1977-1982 and Assistant State Soil Scientist in Nebraska 1985 -1988.



Respectively Submitted by:

Jim Culver - Nebraska State Soil Scientist

Norm Helzer— Nebraska State Soil Scientist

2-15-2016



SWCS - Nebraska

September 17

More historic (geologic?) dirt on 3 of Nebraska's past USDA SCS/NRCS State Soil Scientists.

Craig Romary, SWCS - Nebraska and 2 others like this.

1 Share

photo courtesy Jim Culver