



# SHOW-ME CHAPTER

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION SOCIETY

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

BY MIKE MORRIS



Whew, I made it back from the National Meeting in Tucson. I had a very nice time but I can honestly say I have some new insight into what it is like to be held hostage, more on that latter. Lot's of interesting stuff to consider and report on and can you believe it's September already? Time sure flies when you're having fun!

The National SWCS Annual Meeting took place July 27-30, in Tucson, Arizona. I had the opportunity to attend along with Roger Hansen and Bob Ball from NRCS and several of our Show-Me Chapter members from the University of Missouri. I would be remiss if I did not point out that one of our UMC Show-Me Chapter members is Clark Gantzer who just so happens to be a National Board Member. Good job Clark!

One of the highlights of this meeting was to be present at the Annual Award Banquet and witness Bob Ball being presented as one of four SWCS Fellow Award recipients for 2008. While his introduction lacked the flair of the one he received at the 2008 MNRC when he received the Show-Me Chapter Professional Conservationist of the Year Award, the fact that Bob is now a Fellows Award recipient is a grand testimony to what his service has meant to SWCS. Well done Bob!

The "State of the Society" address was presented by our National President, Peggie James. One of the main points of her address that she presented with particular enthusiasm was a report on membership. While SWCS nationally had a drop in membership the percentage was 3% verses the 5% trend experienced over the past several years. It reminded me of a Garfield cartoon where Garfield celebrates the effectiveness of his new diet in that he ONLY gained a pound during the past week! I need to note that part of her enthusiasm was based on the fact that during the past quarter SWCS nationally had a membership increase so the tide may be turning. Let's hope so.

I alluded in my opening comments about a hostage mentality. The site of the conference this year was the J.W. Marriott Resort and Spa (when they call themselves a resort and spa look out!) in the foothills outside of Tucson, Arizona. Everything about this resort was extravagant including the prices! (I'm sorry but I refuse to pay \$20 for two eggs with bacon!) The problem which was the resorts "ace in the hole" was the cost of transportation to Tucson and their fee structure for having a vehicle on site. In the end you have to weigh scenery verses competitive amenities. This was definitely a scenery year.

This week in Tucson served to remind me yet again why I am a member of SWCS and why it is so important from a career standpoint. I think it's safe to say that everyone at some point (some more then others) allows their career to become just a job. Membership and INVOLVEMENT in the SWCS is very effective in recharging the career "batteries" as well as maintaining that charge. This week I was surrounded by highly motivated conservation individuals giving very comprehensive insights into most if not all the conservation issues of this time. You cannot help but experience a rejuvenation of you enthusiasm for your conservation career in settings like this. The scenery helped too, even if it was pricey!!

While everyone cannot go to national meetings all the time, there are plenty of opportunities here at home to stay current with conservation issues and in contact with other conservation professionals. I CHALLENGE you to experience how involvement with the Show-Me Chapter of the SWCS can help to keep your job a career.

I am proud to be your President!

Mike

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### SEPTEMBER 2008

#### Special points of interest:

- \* Page 3 has information about the Fall Forum being planned.
- \* Page 5 2008 2nd place Scholarship Essay

# 2009 SWCS SCHOLARSHIPS

Missouri Show-Me Chapter, Soil and Water Conservation Society

**Objective:** The SWCS Scholarships provide financial assistance to students wishing to pursue studies with a natural resource conservation orientation at properly accredited colleges or universities.

**Amount:** One \$2,000 First Place scholarship and one \$1000 Second Place scholarship will be awarded. Scholarship recipients also receive a complimentary one-year membership in SWCS and the local chapter. Scholarship recipients will be recognized at the Missouri Natural Resources Conference at Tan-Tar-A Resort, Lake of the Ozarks, Missouri, on February 4-6, 2009. Cash awards will be made directly to the recipients' college or university for the Fall '09 term.

**Eligibility:** This scholarship is for students who graduated from an accredited high school in Missouri. The student need not be a SWCS member. Applicants must be in their senior year of high school, or in a full-time undergraduate academic study. They must major in a conservation or natural resource-related field. Applicants must attend, or plan to attend, a college or university that is properly accredited by national or regional accrediting bodies, or their equivalence. Financial need will not be a factor in selection.

**Applications:** Applications for 2008-2009 scholarships must be **postmarked by December 1, 2008**. The scholarship application form is available on the Show-Me Chapter SWCS web site home page (<http://swcs.missouri.edu>) or by contacting Beverly Maltsberger, Buchanan County Extension Center 4125 Mitchell Ave., St. Joseph, MO 64507, phone (816) 279-1691 email: [maltsbergerb@missouri.edu](mailto:maltsbergerb@missouri.edu).

### **Essay Background Information:**

The theme for the 2009 Show-Me SWCS Scholarship is *"Global Trends, Missouri Impacts: Adapting to Climate Change*. Whether climate change is a natural, cyclical action or is aggravated by man's effects on the environment, natural resource professionals will have to deal with the consequences.

Scholarship applications must include a 3 to 5-page essay (please include sources) addressing the following questions and issues:

### **Essay Topic:**

Based on your interests, select a Missouri ecosystem element (i.e. Red Cedar, thick topsoil, tornados, etc.) and give a brief history/explanation of the element, what environmental conditions are necessary for it's existence/production, how changing climate (wetter, drier, warmer, cooler, etc.) could affect it's sustainability, and what part humans can, and should, play in the adaptation of your chosen element to new locations or conditions. Discuss your view of man's ethical responsibility to nature's adaptation and preservation.

## Bob Ball Awarded the 2008 Fellow Award

The Show-Me Chapter wants to congratulate Bob Ball for receiving the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) 2008 Fellow Award for outstanding contributions in advocating the conservation of soil, water and related natural resources. SWCS states:

"Bob Ball has a strong personal desire to improve our natural resources and has demonstrated his commitment for over 30 years. He has actively participated in 12 Society conferences presenting papers and presentations. Bob has been an active member of the Missouri Chapter serving in far too many positions and committees to mention. Working for the United States Department of Agriculture Natural

Resources Conservation Service as the State Resource Conservationist, he is recognized for his outstanding work in the professional areas of water resources and water quality conservation. He is recognized for his work with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Water Protection Program, the 319 Water Quality grant projects in Missouri, and leadership of the Missouri-NRCS ecological science initiatives. Bob is a longtime friend and promoter of the Society and is a deserving recipient of the 2008 Fellow Award."

The Show-Me Chapter wants to thank Bob for his contributions to the chapter and looks forward to

celebrating many more years of achievements with him.



## MISSOURI ENVIROTHON TEAM TAKES SECOND!

The Missouri Envirothon team from Parkway North High School placed second at the Canon Envirothon in Flagstaff, Arizona with a score of 606.7 out of a possible 700 points. Each of the students on the team will receive a \$4,000 scholarship.

There were 54 teams from 8 Canadian provinces and 46 states competing. The winning team was Delaware and the other three making up the top five were Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York.



## Fall Forum 2008 Being Planned Carbon Sequestration, Opportunities or Not, in Missouri: The Science, the Policy and the Market

Global warming is caused by the build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which traps heat. Human activity contributes to this gas accumulation by the burning of fossil fuels to provide the energy and services that we use every day. We burn fossil fuels for electricity in our homes and businesses, for our transportation, and to create the food, clothes and other products that we buy and consume.

Carbon sequestration is an approach to mitigating global warming based on capturing carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from large point sources and storing it, instead of releasing it into the atmosphere. The term “carbon sink” is used to describe a “reservoir”, such as agricultural and forestry lands, that absorb CO<sub>2</sub>, a prominent global warming gas emitted by human activities.

Sequestration activities can help reduce the effects of global warming by enhancing carbon storage in trees and soils, preserving existing tree and soil carbon, and by reducing emissions of CO<sub>2</sub>, methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O).

Carbon offsets enable individuals and businesses to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions for which they are responsible by offsetting, reducing or displacing the CO<sub>2</sub> in another place, typically where it is more economical to do so. Carbon offsets typically include renewable energy, energy efficiency and

reforestation projects.

The carbon sequestration market is creating a new revenue opportunity for producers with continuously no-tilled fields, newly established grasslands, rangeland, forest committed to an improvement program, managed reforestation or new plantings on forested land, and on-farm methane digesters and other agricultural-related practices.

In order to get more information regarding carbon sequestration, a Fall Forum is being planned by the Missouri Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society titled *Carbon Sequestration, Opportunities or Not, in Missouri: The Science, the Policy and the Market*. Speakers and panel discussions will focus around mitigation of climate change through sequestration, the pros and cons, marketing, getting the information out to Missourians on carbon credit opportunities, and discussion from federal, state and local levels on the policy of carbon sequestration. The Fall Forum will be held on October 29, 2008 at the Lincoln University George Washington Carver Farm outside Jefferson City from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. If you are interested in attending, complete the registration form available at [www.swcs.missouri.edu](http://www.swcs.missouri.edu). Any additional questions or details needed concerning the Fall Forum, please contact Diane Bradley at [diane.bradley@mo.usda.gov](mailto:diane.bradley@mo.usda.gov).

## “Technology, Influencing the Future of Natural Resources Sustainability”

An Essay by Rebecca Bunton

Seventeen years ago, a young farmer in Southwest Missouri decided that he needed to enhance his farming techniques. For years, he had worked alongside his father and grandfather on the family farm, harvesting what you would consider, “enough,” yield for a good crop. However, for this young man, it wasn’t enough. You see, the young farmer had a desire for bigger and better things. There was gleam in his eye and drive in his heart to make his vision of a better farm come true.

*Continued on pg. 5*

# WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR SWCS

BY MIKE MORRIS

This past week while at the SWCS National Convention in Tucson, Arizona, I had the opportunity to listen to outgoing Executive Director Craig Cox share his final remarks to Society members concerning his vision for the future of soil and water conservation as a whole. Craig has been very outspoken in his belief that climate change is a reality confronting agriculture world wide and one of his reasons for leaving SWCS (October 30 was his last day) is to have a greater voice in advocating conservation measures that addresses this issue directly. During this address he made a statement which I will paraphrase as I was unable to write it down verbatim. He basically said that the United States Treasury does not have enough money to sustain voluntary conservation and that the SWCS will be irrelevant unless we look at what is necessary to achieve conservation in face of climate change and market pressures. As the gravity of his statement struck me I could not help but feel a sense of dread and something very close to actual fear as I pondered if these words could possibly be true.

One aspect of my work career (which includes my involvement with the SWCS) that I am grateful for is the opportunity to provide conservation technical assistance to landowners on a voluntary basis. I greatly enjoy providing conservation assistance to a landowner who has come into the office wanting help with a conservation issue. I also take great pride in viewing conservation practices that I had a part in, continue to function over time. It is very gratifying when conservation is applied to the land through a “partnership” with the landowner. Are we facing a crisis that will bring this era of “partnership” to an end? Will voluntary conservation no longer be enough to assure agriculture production and resource conservation indefinitely?

What about the SWCS? Any professional society that does not seek to be relevant in its professional field has no reason to exist. Does that mean the SWCS needs to look past voluntary conservation as a means of conservation application? I am definitely out of my comfort zone!!

I do not know if the climate is changing or if humanity has a role in it if it is. I do believe the threat of climate change needs to have contingency plans developed to address “what now” scenarios as it would be foolish to ignore anything that could threaten agriculture and our natural resources. I also realize that when you consider catastrophic events consideration must be made to use any means available including proverbial “nuclear options” to ensure humanities survival. The reality is that we must determine what is truly a threat and it’s magnitude before we can effectively determine what an appropriate response is. Personally, I consider any conservation action that is not voluntary to be a nuclear option to be used only as a last resort. I can’t help but wonder if tomorrow we will be worrying about something else entirely with the subject of climate change being a distant memory.

Something I am sure of, conservation professionals have plenty of challenges that have been clearly identified. It’s a fact, Midwest agriculture is contributing to the hypoxia zone in the Gulf of Mexico, bio fuel production and increasing world population demand increased production of agriculture commodities, and if I don’t eat, I will starve! We have, for the most part, a voluntary program that is getting conservation on the land. If it’s to be successful and in tern be considered relevant, then we must continue to get conservation practices implemented on the land. As far as the SWCS is concerned, I believe we will be relative if we can promote conservation in a way that voluntary compliance is all that will ever be necessary. I don’t want to be an enforcer.

Also at Tucson, I attended a session of speakers who were presenting information on the effects of the flooding this spring and summer in Wisconsin and Iowa. One of the speakers noted that while touring the flood impacted areas, fields with conservation practices fared far better from the effects of sheet and rill erosion then fields that lacked conservation practices. This led him to ask a basic question of “why are conservation practices not getting implemented on all fields?” A survey of conservation professionals and landowners revealed many contributing causes but there were two that grabbed my attention. One was absentee landowners. They tend not to be as conservation minded and the producer while being conservation minded on the land they own tend not to want to invest in conservation on rented ground. The second issue was the fact that there is a trend away from conservation compliance enforcement within NRCS. I guess I’m not the only one who does not want to be an enforcer!

You would think the members of the Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society would elect for their President one who has a clear vision of the future of this society. Sadly, I do not. In fact, I don’t even own a crystal ball. All that I can say is that I know where I hope this society and conservation does NOT haft to go to be relevant. Only time will tell.

*Mike Morris is the current President of the Show-Me Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and recently attended National Convention in Tucson, Arizona.*

*Essay by Rebecca Bunton, continued*

All of his life, the young farmer had been taught how to manage and save his hard earned time and money. Being efficient was an important role of success to his family. As time progressed in his farming career, the young man began seeing other farmers in the area using newer technology to enhance their yields. It was then that he envisioned endless rows of tall, lustful green corn and what seemed to be miles of bountiful soybean fields – and the best part was, it was all his!

“How am I ever going to make this work on my farm?” He thought to himself, “I know! I will invest in an irrigation system!” It was then that the young farmer went out on his search for a cost effective way to install an irrigation system on his land. He searched countless ad’s, read numerous articles, and most importantly, talked to people who had experience in this field. After gaining an abundance of knowledge, the young farmer found a great deal on two used Valley water-drive pivots. He mapped out the area where he would install these pivots, and surveyed his ground to started digging his first irrigation lake. Ironically enough, this young farmer is my dad.

As you can imagine, things blossomed from this point on in my father’s career. He has since then become successful in installing and upgrading irrigation systems on all of our farms. In the process, he has equipped our land with drainage tile systems for greater productivity.

Like many American farmers today, my father prides taking care of his land, in order to reap the benefits of a plentiful crop. In our society, achieving greatness has become a must and one way for us to do that is by continuous improvement on the farm.

In ancient times, we saw irrigation simply as building large ditches to direct water flow from major rivers. As years passed, new technology allowed us to improve these systems of irrigation. From “ditches” to “steel” or even “plastic,” you might say.

New inventions in irrigation gave us the ability to choose. To choose what method of irrigation to use, to choose rate and percentage applications, and even the ability to choose what we send through our irrigation system – whether it be simply water, or a herbicide/ insecticide.

As researchers found these great options for farmers to use in the irrigation systems, they also found problems along the way. As the old saying goes, “If man can make it, he can break it.” Something new for research to look at is, “how are we going to make every aspect of an irrigation system more efficient for the average farmer?”

Researchers are challenged with two major things. One, with dramatically increasing prices of fuel and energy; we need to design an irrigation program that will run more cost friendly as well as environmentally friendly. Secondly, researchers in all aspects of agriculture need to be constantly looking for ways to maintain our natural resources.

As a natural resource professional, I believe that improvement in technology of irrigation can and will change the future of this great nation. One thing I foresee is a change in the way we operate irrigation systems. At this point and time, the water we pump, whether it be from a well, or reservoir, is generally powered by either an electric pump or a diesel engine. In my mind, a more efficient use of energy would be a switch over to solar power to fuel irrigation pumps. If technology allows, we may be able to find a way to create enough pressure to effectively pump water onto a crop. Another option we may be looking at in alternative fuel sources is the use of hydrogen powered pumps. In the near future, I predict that these techniques will be used in American agriculture.

One thing that environmentalists are concerned about is the massive use of water used in irrigation affecting the water table. To regulate this use, specialists have designed drop regulators for irrigation systems. It is the technology that we are able to use like this that keeps American agriculture ahead of the game, or so to speak.

Just like my father had a vision for his farm becoming more productive, we as American agriculturalists need to have a vision for a more productive future as well. Had my dad not seen something greater for his farm, he probably never would have been successful. If we dream big, I believe it is possible to flourish. The only way we can do this is by sustaining our natural resources and believing that American agriculture can and will hold true to its best traditions. We just have to remember that “where there’s smoke, there’s fire.” It is our job to light that fire!

*Second place, and \$1000 scholarship winner is Rebecca Bunton. Rebecca is a University of Missouri junior from Liberal, MO*

*Fostering the science and  
art of soil, water and  
related natural resource  
management to achieve  
sustainability.*



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