



SOIL  
AND WATER  
CONSERVATION  
SOCIETY

# MI-SWCS Newsletter

Soil and Water Conservation Society  
Michigan Chapter

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## In This Issue:

ANR Week Seminar.....	1
Max Benne to receive 2009 Chapter Commendation Award..	2
Dr. Kirk Heinze to receive 2009 Chapter News/Media Award.....	2
West Virginia Chapter to host Regional Leadership Development Workshop in March .....	3
Annual Meeting Surprise!!.....	3
December Workshop.....	4
Chapter Members Recognized.....	4
Annual Meeting Reports.	4
2009 Election Results ...	5
Spring Highway Cleanup Planned.....	5
Your Executive Council.....	5



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## A MATTER OF BALANCE: PEAK PHOSPHORUS – BALANCING DEMAND, SUPPLY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Michigan Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society Seminar**  
**Wednesday, March 10, 2010, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**  
**Michigamme Room, Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center**  
**Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan**

“Peak Phosphorus”, like “Peak Oil”, is a term used to represent the point at which the mining of phosphorus will peak and begin to decline, and is associated with increasing cost of extraction, decreasing availability and increasing costs to the consumer. There is no substitute for phosphorus. Current sources of readily available mined phosphorus will be exhausted in 50 to 130 years, according to many sources.

Phosphorus is one of the key essential elements in modern agriculture. Yet phosphorus, along with nitrogen, is being discharged into surface waters from many sources and contributes to high phosphorus levels in lakes and rivers in Michigan and elsewhere. These high nutrient levels can result in major environmental damage such as the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico.

This Seminar will introduce the issue of peak phosphorus; review the phosphorus cycle and explore how phosphorus behaves in the environment, including the pathways for waste or loss; consider how phosphorus behaves in the food chain; examine the soil and water quality relationships of phosphorus; and consider management practices that can reduce loss of this resource and the resulting environmental impacts.

### Speakers include:

Jerry Grigar, State Agronomist, USDA-NRCS, East Lansing, Michigan  
Dr. Stephen Hamilton, Professor, MSU-Kellogg Biological Station, Hickory Corners, MI  
Natalie Rector, Manure Nutrient Management Specialist., MSU Extension, Marshall, MI  
Dr. Dale Rozeboom, Assoc. Professor, Dept. of Animal Science, MSU, East Lansing, MI  
Dr. Kurt Steinke, Assistant Prof., Dept. of Crop and Soil Sciences, MSU, East Lansing, MI  
Dr. David Vaccari, Director, Civil, Environmental and Ocean Engineering, Stevens Institute of Technology, Hoboken, NJ

**Pre-registration is required.** For **early registration**, please mail the completed registration form below with your full payment by **February 26, 2010**. **Late registrations** are due by **March 5**. Registrations canceled prior to February 26 will be reimbursed less \$10. **No refunds after Feb. 26.**

For a registration form, [click here](#) or email [Daniel.Kesselring@miswcs.org](mailto:Daniel.Kesselring@miswcs.org).

For a list of planned presentations, [click here](#).

## MAX BENNE TO RECEIVE 2009 COMMENDATION AWARD

The Michigan Chapter 2009 Commendation Award goes to Chapter member Max Benne. The Commendation Award is presented to the Michigan Chapter SWCS member who has made exceptional contributions to the science and art of wise land use in Michigan. Max Benne is an advocate for conservation and agriculture. Max owns two farms: Windy Knoll Farm which is in partnership with his wife, Beverley; and Benne Farms which is in partnership with his brother, Richard, and neighbor, Douglas. Benne Farms, Inc., located in St. Joseph County raises hogs, sheep, seed corn, corn, soybeans, snap beans, wheat and hay. Windy Knoll Farm in Chippewa County grows hay to be harvested and provides summer pasture for the ewes.

On the Benne Farm, Max has completed a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) and is verified in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) in the Livestock, Farmstead, and Cropping systems. Max has completed a whole farm conservation plan, with assistance from USDA-NRCS, for Benne Farm. Max and his brother have fenced off a river; implemented irrigation scheduling; updated the center pivot irrigation system; installed barn roof gutters, buffer zones, a wildlife refuge and windbreak; and implemented manure management.

On Windy Knoll Farm, Max has completed a CNMP and is MAEAP verified in all three systems as well. The farm was accepted in the Conservation Security Program (CSP) and is now at the highest tier. Windy Knoll Farm has implemented rotational grazing practices, sound watering facilities, and worked with plans for pasture and timberland improvement.

The land owned by Windy Knoll Farm in St. Joseph County is in the Michigan Farmland Preservation Program and the State of Michigan has been deeded the development rights. The Windy Knoll Farm in Chippewa County is in PA116.

Max was a member of the St. Joseph County Conservation District Board of Directors for 12 years and chairman for four. He is a member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society and was on the Michigan Board of Directors. Max is a member of the Nature Conservancy and Farm Bureau. He was chairman of the St. Joseph County committee that developed the County's Purchase of Development Rights Ordinance.

Max Benne has also won several awards for his efforts in conservation and land use. Benne Farms was named the Conservation Farm of the Year for 1995 by the St. Joseph County Conservation District. Windy Knoll Farm was named Cooperator of the Year for 2008 by the Chippewa-Mackinac Conservation District. Benne Farms was named the Michigan Farm Bureau's 2009 Ecology Leadership Award winner.

This award will be presented at the Seminar on March 10<sup>th</sup>.

## DR. KIRK L. HEINZE, HOST OF *WJR'S "GREENING OF THE GREAT LAKES"*, TO RECEIVE MICHIGAN CHAPTER 2009 NEWS/MEDIA AWARD

Dr. Kirk L. Heinze, host of the *Greening of the Great Lakes* program, is to be presented the Michigan Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society 2009 News/Media Award. This award recognizes the dedication and promotion of natural resource issues in the news/media.

The weekly program on 760 WJR covers all angles of sustainability relating to economics, environment and community. Dr. Heinze, has had Michiganders on his program talking about everything from solar energy and the MSU student organic farm, to how to save money on your own home's energy bill.

As Dr. Heinze explains, "We talk with experts who have varying perspectives on these issues, and our listeners form their own judgments based on what they hear. This program represents an exciting, collaborative partnership between WJR and MSU –providing an educational forum focusing on issues that are important not only to those living in the Great Lakes region, but also to those living across the United States."

Dr. Heinze has served in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) for three decades as a faculty member, a department chairperson and, most recently, as director of Agriculture and Natural Resources Communication, a unit that provides wide-ranging communications support for CANR, MSU Extension and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station.

The majority of Dr. Heinze's work is focused on creating greater public understanding of issues related to agriculture, food and the environment. He is an ardent proponent of the value of undergraduate international experience, and he has planned and participated in study abroad programs in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, England and Nepal. In addition, he has conducted substantial teaching/training work at the University of Chapingo, Texcoco, Mexico.

More information and insight into the organizations committed to making the Great Lakes region a leader in environmental practices is available at:

[www.greeningofthegreatlakes.com](http://www.greeningofthegreatlakes.com).

This award will be presented at the Michigan Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society Seminar on March 10<sup>th</sup> at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing, Michigan.

**WEST VIRGINIA CHAPTER  
TO HOST REGIONAL  
LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP  
MARCH 18 AND 19, 2010  
MORGANTOWN, WV**

By Peg Reese, WV Chapter

The West Virginia Chapter of SWCS will host the Leadership Development Workshop for the East North Central Region in Morgantown, WV, on March 18-19, 2010. Most of the professional development portion will take place on West Virginia University's Organic Research Farm on the afternoon of March 18<sup>th</sup>. The Workshop will include the following presentations on organic agriculture.

**Overview of Organic Agriculture** by Dr. James Kotcon, Associate Professor of Plant Pathology at West Virginia University and coordinator of the Organic Research Farm project. His research has included studies of pest population dynamics, alternative pest management methods, and soil microbiology. Current projects involve fruits, vegetables, field crops and biofuel crops.

Organic agriculture is a system of farming in compliance with USDA's National Organic Program rules to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity. The WVU Organic Research Farm conducts scientifically sound research designed to provide best practice recommendations for organic farmers and home gardeners.

Participants in this session will review the principles of organic practices, summarize soil and water conservation methods used on organic farms, and identify sources of information to address problems and opportunities faced by organic growers.

**Organic Crop Livestock Production** by Dr. William Bryan, Professor of Agronomy at West Virginia University and manager of the crop livestock experiment on the Organic Research Farm. His research has included brush control, pasture improvement, grazing season extension, and intercropping. His current projects are organic crop livestock production systems and pasture based beef production.

The Crop Livestock Experiment at the WVU Organic Research Farm compares farm systems with and without sheep and with and without off-farm manure. All systems have crop rotations and have been in place starting in 2000.

Participants in this session will review details of crop and lamb production using organic practices, including weed control, grazing and soil fertility management, and internal parasite control.

**Nutrient Management for Organic Farming Systems** by Dr. Louis McDonald, Associate Professor of Environmental Soil Chemistry and Fertility at West Virginia University. His research is in nutrient cycling in managed (organic and grassland) and disturbed (contaminated and reclaimed minesoils). Dr. McDonald will provide a summary of the opportunities and challenges in working with organic farmers.

Society, Chapter and committee reports will be given on Friday morning. On Friday afternoon, participants will have the opportunity to explore one energy option for small farms by observing a wind turbine on the farm of NRCS Engineer Barbara Broxterman.

Note: The East North Central Region Leadership Development workshops rotate around the four states in the Region: Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia. The workshop was held in Ohio last year. Michigan will host the workshop next year.

Contact Jean Gagliardo at [jean.gagliardo@miswcs.org](mailto:jean.gagliardo@miswcs.org) for more information.

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**UNUSUAL CHAPTER ANNUAL  
MEETING HELD AT SOARING  
EAGLE CASINO, December 16<sup>th</sup>**

By Daniel F. Kesselring, Secretary

A funny thing happened on the way to the forum! The Chapter Annual Meeting was supposed to start at 5:00 p.m. right after the afternoon technical workshop. However, around 4:15 p.m. Soaring Eagle management came into the Workshop and told us we would have to leave immediately because they had received a bomb threat. Everybody grabbed their things and bailed out!

We were then sent to another building across the road and west of the Casino. This was Soaring Eagle's Hotel and Conference Center. Because of the confusion, and trying to find another meeting room, the Annual Meeting didn't get started until 6:00 p.m., and several members who had only planned to be in Mt. Pleasant one day, had decided to head home rather than wait to see if things were pulled back together. So, we ended up with only 11 members present at the Annual Meeting. However, Bylaws provide that the Annual Meeting proceeds with any number of members as long as there is at least a quorum of the Executive Council.

After 63 years, I suspect this is a first for the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society!

## REACHING ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS SUBJECT OF DECEMBER WORKSHOP

*Reaching Absentee Landowners – Sales and Marketing Lessons Learned* was the title of the Michigan Chapter's Annual December Workshop held prior to the Annual Meeting. The Workshop was presented by Jamie Ridgely and Tom Buman of Agren, Inc., an Iowa Agricultural Consulting Firm. Twenty-five members and others attended which was a very satisfactory attendance given the economic climate at the time. Agren, Inc. is a Gold Level Corporate member of SWCS.

According to Agren, an Absentee Landowner is someone who owns land, but does not operate the land and does not live there. The Statistics show that there are 3.4 million owners of Agricultural land in the United States; that 42% of those owners do not operate their land; that 23% live 50 miles or more away; and that 15% live 150 miles or more away.

In Michigan, 41% of the total agricultural land is owned by absentee landowners, and 51% of the owners are absentee, according to Agren. This presents a daunting challenge to conservation organizations trying to promote conservation practices and management on agricultural land.

Another daunting task for busy Conservationists is developing the audience list. According to Agren, at least 50% of your total outreach effort should be aimed at defining your target audience.

Unfortunately, the workshop was interrupted by the bomb threat mentioned on page 3. When the workshop was finally reconvened at another location, attendance was down to eleven.



Twenty-five Chapter members and others attended the Chapter's Annual workshop in Mt. Pleasant on December 16, 2009.

## CHAPTER MEMBERS RECOGNIZED FOR OUTSTANDING SUPPORT OF THE 2009 SWCS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Several Michigan Chapter Members were recognized at the Chapter Annual Meeting for their outstanding efforts in support of the SWCS 2009 Annual International Convention held in Dearborn, Michigan last July. Kelly Goward, Past President, presented Certificates of Appreciation to:

**Gaylynn Kinter** – for her efforts in managing the International Conference Silent Auction.

**Karen Blair** – for efforts in managing the media equipment for the International Conference.

**Rebekah Dewind** – for her efforts in managing the recruitment and assignments of volunteers for the International Conference.

**Sarah VanDelfzijl** – for her efforts in assisting with many Chapter functions during the conference.

**Sarah VanDelfzijl, Award Committee Chair**, announced the winners of the Chapter's 2009 Commendation Award, and the Chapter's 2009 News/Media Award shown on page 2 of this newsletter.

Also, Sarah presented a Special Certificate of Appreciation to:

**Kelly Goward** – For excellence in tour, fellows forum, and all-around event coordination for the 2009 International Annual Conference. Kelly volunteered to take on the lion's share of the Chapter's onsite organizational responsibilities and her efforts resulted in the delivery of outstanding tours and programs. Her support and dedication to the Michigan Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is highly recognized and greatly appreciated.

## ANNUAL MEETING REPORTS

**Sarah VanDelfzijl** reported that we received \$4051.00 from the 2009 SWCS Annual International Conference Silent Auction, which has been deposited in the **Scholarship Fund**. We also received \$3939.30 as the Chapter allotment for hosting the conference. Less conference related expenses (Michigan pins = \$697.06; Ash Pens = \$180.00; Student Sponsorship = \$300.00) net income was \$2812.24 for hosting.

**President's Report:** Rebekah DeWind, 2009 President-elect, gave the President's Report for Aaron Lauster, President, who was unable to attend the Annual Meeting. The report is [attached](#).

**President's Goals for 2010:** Rebekah Dewind presented a brief report on proposed Chapter activities for the coming year. The report is [attached](#).

## 2009 CHAPTER ELECTIONS RESULTS

Tina Clemons, Elections Committee Chair, announced the results of the 2009 Election of Officers and the Ballot Proposal at the December Annual Meeting.

- Jean Gagliardo, Marquette - President-elect
- Jason Kimbrough, Traverse City -Vice President
- Michael LaPoint, Marquette - Region 1 Director
- Kelly Goward, Grand Haven – Region 3 Director
- The Michigan Scholarships in Conservation Program proposed amendments were adopted unanimously. The revised [program](#) can be seen on the Chapter [web site](#).

## NEXT HIGHWAY CLEANUP IS FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2010

The next highway clean up project is Friday May 7<sup>th</sup>. We will meet at the [USDA-NRCS State office](#) parking lot at noon. The address is 3001 Coolidge Rd., but you have to turn left on Abbey Rd., then right into the parking lot.

Eleven people helped with this event last fall. Not only do we keep our section of US-127 clean, we also talk a lot! And, after we're done with the highway, which never takes more than 2 hours, many of us end up at a local restaurant for more networking!

So, if you want to participate in a "Keep Michigan Beautiful" kind of event, and also want to have some fun, put this on your calendar to support this worthwhile cause. This is Conservation Professionals in action!

Many thanks go to GayLynn Kinter for her efforts in planning, organizing and carrying out this event.

## MICHIGAN CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

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