



SOIL
AND WATER
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY

MI-SWCS Newsletter

Soil and Water Conservation Society
Michigan Chapter

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MICHIGAN CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING AND WORKSHOP

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

Soaring Eagle Casino
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan

The Michigan Chapter Soil and Water Conservation Society will hold its Annual Meeting and Technical Workshop on Wednesday, December 16th, at the Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. The Workshop will start at 1:45 p.m. and conclude at 4:50 p.m. The Chapter Annual Meeting will follow from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m. Following the Annual Meeting Chapter members may choose to join other members for dinner at a local restaurant, at their own expense.

Michigan Chapter SWCS Workshop, 1:45 to 4:50 p.m.

*Reaching absentee landowners:
Sales and marketing lessons learned*

Presented by Agren, Inc.

Do you consider sales and marketing to be part of your job description? Whether we like it or not, many of us are in the business of “selling” conservation. And, just like selling cars or windows, selling conservation, especially to a new audience, requires hard work, numerous contacts, and a thoughtful, targeted approach.

Agren, Inc. has initiated multi-contact, multi-media direct marketing campaigns to absentee landowners on a pilot basis in the Great Lakes and other regions since 2006. Through this fun, fast-paced and interactive workshop, Tom Buman and Jamie Ridgely will share the highlights of what they’ve learned and provide you tools to improve your landowner outreach program.

REACHING ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS:

SALES AND MARKETING LESSONS LEARNED

Presenter Biographies

Tom Buman, Agren President, founded the Iowa-based company with a love for both agriculture and the environment. Fourteen years with the NRCS helped him recognize the need for creative solutions to critical problems. At Agren, Tom fosters a can-do attitude that inspires innovative results for all clients.

Jamie Ridgely, Vice President of Planning and Projects, joined Agren in 2000. Among many other things, Jamie spearheads Agren's efforts to reach out to absentee landowners. And, she's learned a good bit about sales and marketing along the way. Jamie and her husband live with their three young daughters on the Ridgely family's central-Iowa Century Farm, where they raise corn, soybeans and Belgian draft horses.

ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS: A TIPPING POINT FOR CONSERVATION?

(Agren, Inc. will also make a 1 hour presentation at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 17.)

Over 40 percent of our nation's landowners do not operate the land they own. In many areas of the U.S., non-operator landowners own the majority of agricultural land. And, today more than ever, agencies are being pushed to focus their assistance on critical resource areas, where it is necessary to work with a variety of client groups.

Agricultural census data comparing enrollment in the Conservation Reserve (CRP) and Wetland Reserve (WRP) programs indicates absentee landowners lag owner-operator enrollment by 64%. Special implementation strategies may be needed to achieve higher levels of adoption. However, little is known about this non-traditional group or their interest, understanding, or motivation for conserving and improving natural resources.

ABSENTEE LANDOWNERS: A TIPPING POINT FOR CONSERVATION?

Cont'd.

Recently collected socio-economic data reported by non-operator or "absentee" agricultural landowners indicates that they may hold an extraordinary opportunity for conserving natural resources. For example, from a list of 20 subjects, conservation topics were identified as the top 4 most important to landowners regarding their land. And "conservation/concern for the environment" was cited as the largest influence on decision making. Additional findings from the study also support the idea that absentee landowners may be a significant untapped audience for conservation.

But, with promising attitudinal findings, a big question still remains: Can the interest and motivations reported by these landowners be turned into real conservation action?

Topics and Speakers:

- The top 10 reasons you should be reaching out to absentee landowner – Tom Buman, President, Agren, Inc.
- Absentee Landowners: Marketing and outreach lessons learned – Jamie Ridgely, VP, Planning & Projects, Agren, Inc.

ANNUAL MEETING REGISTRATION AND LODGING INFORMATION

Registration information is still being developed. To get the latest, go to:

<http://www.macd.org/convention.html> or:

www.miswcs.org.

For lodging information, go to :

http://www.macd.org/assets/downloads/convention/SoaringEagle_HotelRegForm.pdf.

BALLOT COMING SOON!

By Daniel F. Kesselring

The ballot for election of 2010 officers will be out shortly. This ballot will contain an additional item: a proposal to make some changes in the *Michigan Scholarships in Conservation Program*.

The Michigan Scholarships in Conservation Program was originally established in 1970 as the result of a gift from an anonymous donor. It was first called "Scholarships in Conservation." It was to provide \$300 annually for three years to a person who has a conservation related major and has completed two years of college.

In 1972, the anonymous donor who made the Scholarship in Conservation possible was identified. He was Clarence A. Engberg, past Councilman from East North Central Region.

In 1973, the Scholarship Program was renamed "Clarence and Cora Engberg Conservation Scholarship."

In 1974 the program was renamed again from the "Clarence and Cora Engberg Scholarship" to the "Michigan Chapter Scholarship."

Scholarships were awarded each year until 1977. No scholarships were awarded again until 1982. This may be because the initial funds were exhausted.

According to the November 7, 1980, Chapter Annual Meeting Minutes, the Chapter passed a resolution to re-establish a scholarship program and to increase Chapter member dues by \$2.00 per year to provide funding for the program. This raised the member dues from \$5.00 to \$7.00 per year. The "History of the Michigan Chapter" shows that the Chapter also deposited \$2000 in the fund and resumed awarding scholarships in 1982.

The policy developed for the program in 1981 is the policy that we have been using up to now. That policy states, in part, that the annual total scholarship award not exceed 10% of the fund principal calculated at the beginning of the preceding calendar year. At that time Chapter membership was about 200, so the member dues assessment was generating about \$400 per year.

BALLOT COMING SOON!

Cont'd.

Our membership has been between 70 and 100 for several years, so now our member dues contribution to the scholarship fund has been less than \$200 per year. In addition, interest rates are much lower than in the '80s and '90s. Following the policy would mean gradually depleting the fund. For the past several years, the Executive Council has been drawing interest from the scholarship fund, adding the annual membership deposit to it, and then adding enough from the General Fund to provide a \$500 scholarship. However, sometimes the General Fund balance is not sufficient make up the difference, so a scholarship is not awarded that year.

The Executive Council believes that the intent was, and should be, to have a permanent and perpetual fund with scholarships coming out of interest earnings. To assure that this happens, the scholarship fund policy needs to be revised for future guidance. This is the primary reason for the proposed policy revisions.

However, the Scholarship Committee also noted that the policy specified the timing in the Scholarship Program; a timing that seemed suitable in 1981, but not in the digital age.

The Scholarship Committee also felt that the 1981 policy was too limiting as to the study areas considered eligible. The current policy limited scholarships to an agricultural, natural resources or conservation curriculum. It was felt that a new area, environmental journalism, would be excluded with this definition. Therefore, the policy proposed is for a curriculum associated with soil and water conservation.

The current scholarship program policy can be obtained at:

<http://www.miswcs.org/resources/1981+Mich+Scholarships+Prog+Doc.pdf>

The proposed scholarship program policy revisions can be seen at:

<http://www.miswcs.org/resources/ProposedScholarshiprevisions.pdf>

The Executive Council asks members to please

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (MORE HISTORY TO CONSIDER)

When the membership dues were increased by \$2.00 to \$7.00 in 1980, the National organization collected Chapter dues along with national dues. Chapter dues varied across the Nation.

Sometime in the mid 1990s, the National Office stopped collecting individual Chapter dues. Instead, they returned \$5 of each member's dues to their Chapter, and made this uniform for all Chapters.

Because of that change, the dues that the Michigan Chapter received from each member was reduced back to \$5.00. However, \$2.00 of those dues continued to go to the Scholarship Fund, because the contribution was set by Chapter policy, and to stop contributing \$2.00 to the Fund would mean the Fund would eventually disappear.

That meant the Chapter General Fund allocation was reduced from \$5 to \$3 per member per year, which made funding Professional Development and supplementing an annual scholarship much more difficult.

Because of this situation, the Executive Council is considering conducting a **Fund Raising Campaign for the Michigan Scholarships in Conservation Program**. No decisions have been made yet, but the Council would appreciate hearing suggestions from anyone.

65th INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars! The 2010 Soil and Water Conservation Society's International Annual Conference will be held July 18-21 in St. Louis, Missouri. The 2010 conference's special emphasis is Ecosystem Services: Applications for Conservation Science, Policy and Practice. The call for presentations and symposia is now available. Abstracts are due December 17, 2009. More information about the conference and the call for papers is available on line at www.swcs.org.

MICHIGAN CHAPTER SWCS AG AND NATURAL RESOURCES WEEK SEMINAR

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 2010

Mark your calendars! The Michigan Chapter's ANR Week Seminar will be held on Wednesday, March 10, 2010. The theme of the Seminar is "*A Matter of Balance – Peak Phosphorus: Balancing Demand, Supply and the Environment.*"

"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.

Keep checking our web-site for more information in the future. Also, check the MSU ANR Week web-site and the ANR Week brochure that MSU will send out early next year for more information on other ANR Week programming.

Registration materials will be placed on our web site and mailed to members early next year.

CHAPTER WEB SITE

The Michigan Chapter now has a web site. Have you checked it out? It's at www.miswcs.org which is an easy domain name to remember. Dan Kesselring is managing the site.

You will find news on current events, such as, the ANR Week Seminar and the SWCS International Annual Conference; current and past newsletters; Michigan Chapter Bylaws; lists of officers, with email links, and committees; portable document files of PowerPoint presentations from past seminars and workshops; and links to other Chapters, organizations and agencies.

Take a look and let us know what you think.

LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS BOTH NEEDED!

The Michigan Chapter is always in need of members to step forward and volunteer to help. We need both new members and seasoned veterans to get involved, or continue to be involved in Chapter activities.

Officers on the Executive Council are particularly important! The positions of President-elect, Vice President, Region 1 Director and Region 3 Director will be open for election again this year, and we need candidates for all. Some incumbents are likely to run again, but the President-elect position must be new. Talk to any officer about the duties of any position.

Also, we have a number of committees that constantly need new vision and ideas. Go to: <http://www.miswcs.org/6.html> for a list of committees, then contact President Lauster to volunteer.

DO YOU NING?

If you do, then you know what that means. If not, NING is simply a professional networking website for SWCS members and other natural resource professionals. It's free and easy to sign up. Go to www.swcsnetwork.ning.com.

Once you create your account, you can network with other professionals in Michigan, the United States and around the world. Be sure to join the Michigan Chapter group and browse other groups for topics of interest.

If you are already a member of NING and part of the Michigan Chapter group, I encourage you to use the group to start discussions, especially related to our chapter's professional development and other chapter business.

DON'T FORGET! **CHAPTER ANNUAL MEETING** **AND** **WORKSHOP** **WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16** **SOARING EAGLE CASINO** **MT. PLEASANT, MI**

1:45 – 4:50 p.m. - WORKSHOP

5:00 – 5:30 p.m. - ANNUAL MTG.

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