



## WV CHAPTER SWCS

### Spring 2015 NEWSLETTER

#### A Message from President Melissa Merritt

Greetings, fellow conservationists!

With spring comes the excitement of new possibilities. The first thing I would like to address in this initial newsletter of the year, is to thank our previous President, Jason Dalrymple, for his work leading the Chapter for the past year and a half. Your work during this extended role went above and beyond, and was definitely appreciated!

My name is Melissa Merritt, and I work for the West Virginia Conservation Agency out of Moorefield, WV. My current focus is the Chesapeake Bay Watershed by providing outreach and grant funding for water quality-related projects to communities within the Potomac Valley Conservation District. I have been a member the Soil and Water Conservation Society since 2011. I have been involved with the WV Chapter Executive Committee as Membership Chair and President Elect in that time frame, as well as a member of the National SWCS's Leadership Committee. I will be the WV Chapter President for the 2015 year.

The WV Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is a small chapter, but one that I'm hoping will become more prominent in the next couple years. Our committee is planning our annual trainings for 2015. The chapter makes sure to provide two trainings each year dealing with natural resource concerns as well as new and innovative technologies to address those concerns. We consistently offer Nutrient Management, Conservation Planner, and Certified Crop Adviser CEUs.

Furthermore, the WV Chapter of SWCS helps with other programs beyond annual trainings. We host the annual silent auction at the District Partnership Conference in order to provide scholarships to students attending higher education in West Virginia. We also sponsor ads in various publications to promote the WV Grassland Contest. The Chapter is an active member of the WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame. In addition, we support the WVU Soil Judging Team by providing funds to defray the travel costs of representing West Virginia at regional and national contests.

2015 is shaping up to be a good year for the WV Chapter. We have some new blood, as well as members who have been with the group for years. This should be a perfect mix to keep the chapter running smoothly and provide new and original ideas for our membership. Our objective as the WV Chapter is to promote and advance all phases of the science and art of good land use and development and the conservation of soil, water and related resources. As the President of the Chapter, I hope to be able to serve the membership in the best way possible. If there are any ideas or suggestions you might have for our Society, please don't hesitate to let me know! Thank you.

#### *Inside:*

Winter Training Meeting - 2

2015 Executive Council – 2

Meet Suzy Lucas - 3

WV Wins Awards – 3

Lyme Disease – 3

Soil Judging Team – 4 & 5

Scholarship Winner – 6

70<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting - 6

GIS Training - 7

Bits & Pieces – 8

Upcoming Events - 8

## Winter Training Meeting

by *Melissa Merritt*

The Winter Meeting of the Soil and Water Conservation Society occurred January 13, 2014 at the Steer Steakhouse in Weston, WV. Thirty-nine conservation professionals attended. Participants received two hours of Nutrient Management CEUs and five hours of Conservation Planning CEUs. This was one of the more diverse trainings, focusing on topics ranging from Marcellus Shale in West Virginia to Composting Eco-Barrels for farms.

This meeting held four sessions focusing on conservation topics beginning with authority and responsibilities for WV Marcellus Shale Activity. David Belcher, Assistant Chief of Enforcement in the Office of Oil and Gas at the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, reviewed WVDEP's regulatory components in regards to horizontal well development rules, as well as the history of the Marcellus Shale development in West Virginia. While well development has increased in past years, the number of permits in the past year has held stable.

Dr. Laura Christianson, a fellow member of the Soil and Water Conservation Society with The Conservation Fund, discussed her research on denitrification bioreactors in treating nitrogen from agricultural operations. There is current research on these affordable "wood chip bioreactors" happening in West Virginia, which could also aid in nitrogen reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

Dustin Wichterman, Potomac Headwater's Project Leader for Trout Unlimited, gave an overview of Trout Unlimited's priorities and the assistance it is able to provide to landowners and farmers who want to protect the native brook trout populations in West Virginia. Some of the main conservation practices touched on included exclusion fencing, riparian tree plantings, armored stream crossings, and alternative water sources.

Byron Irwin, National Sales Manager for EcoDrum, discussed the principles of composting. Currently,

EcoDrum, the type of composter that automatically rotates materials for the most effective composting in the shortest amount of time, is partnered with NRCS and even has a costshare program in Dayton, Virginia. EcoDrum also contracts with Virginia Division of Transportation for all mortality composting. The EcoDrum is touted as biosecure and odor free; processing mortality compost in the shortest amount of time.

Elections results were announced during the meeting. Melissa Merritt became President for the upcoming year. Both Jamey Darlington as treasurer, and Becky Bowers as secretary, agreed to continue their service. Anyone interested in joining the Soil and Water Conservation Society, or becoming more involved in the West Virginia Chapter, should contact any one of these board members, or email [mmerritt@wvca.us](mailto:mmerritt@wvca.us).

## 2015 Executive Council

President – Melissa Merritt  
 President Elect – Suze Lucas  
 Secretary – Becky Bowers  
 Treasurer – Jamey Darlington  
 Past-President – Jason Dalrymple  
 Scholarship Committee Chair – Jeff Skousen  
 Training Committee Chair - Thomas Basden  
 Newsletter Editor – Peg Reese



*Left to right: Melissa Merritt, Jamey Darlington, Becky Bowers, and Suze Lucas*

## Meet Suzy Lucas

A native of WV's Eastern Panhandle, Suzy grew up in Hampshire County where she still resides. She graduated from WVU in 2011 with a Bachelor's of Science in Agriculture in Environmental Protection with an emphasis in Soil and Water Conservation. While studying at WVU, she held student worker positions assisting graduate students and professors with research in soil chemistry and land reclamation. She interned with the WV Department of Environmental Protection under the Potomac Basin Coordinator for several summers. Upon exiting her internship, she gained a position with the West Virginia Conservation Agency as a Conservation Specialist in the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District. Some highlights of her past three years with WVCA have been organizing several small trainings and conferences, writing and managing several grants, and implementing a number of educational and BMP programs, just to name a few. She is honored to be appointed as SWCS's President Elect and is very excited to begin contributing to the organization.

## WV Wins Awards

SWCS Executive Director James B. Gulliford has notified the WV Chapter that we will receive several awards during the award luncheon at the upcoming 70th International Annual Conference in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Past-president Jason Dalrymple will receive the Society's Commendation Award for his accomplishments while President of the West Virginia Chapter and his work on the Society's Professional Development Committee.

The West Virginia Chapter will receive two awards: Professional Development and Sustained Development. The Professional Development recognizes chapters that impact the professionalism of participants working in the conservation field. The Sustained Development recognizes outstanding

accomplishments over the past five years. Some of the accomplishments include:

- holding multiple trainings and workshops for conservation professionals which enable participants to earn conservation planner, certified crop advisor and WV Nutrient Management Planning CEUs;
- giving scholarships to college students studying agriculture, soil and environmental-related programs that is funded by a silent auction held at the WV Conservation Partnership Conference;
- supporting the WVU Soil Judging Team by establishing an endowment fund to help fund travel and hosting expenses of competing in regional and national competitions;
- being a member of, and participating in, the nomination review committee's selection of WV Agriculture and Forestry Hall of Fame inductees (Member Pat Bowen was one of the 2013 inductees); and
- providing a chapter newsletter for our membership.

Congratulations to Jason and to everyone who contributed to the success of our chapter.

## Lyme Disease

Lyme disease, the most common vector-borne disease in the U.S., can affect skin, joints, nervous system, heart and eyes. To learn more about Lyme disease or how to handle tick encounters check out one of the following websites:

[www.cdc.gov/lyme](http://www.cdc.gov/lyme)

[www.tickencounter.org](http://www.tickencounter.org)

[www.lymedisease.org](http://www.lymedisease.org)

[www.lymeinfo.net](http://www.lymeinfo.net)

[www.lymediseaseassociation.org](http://www.lymediseaseassociation.org)



## **WVU Soils Team Wins 2<sup>nd</sup> Place** by *James A. Thompson, Professor and Coach of the WVU Soils Team*

The WVU Soils Team was in southeastern Arkansas last week (April 19-24) for the 2015 National Collegiate Soils Contest, hosted by the University of Arkansas at Monticello. The nine students from the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Design were among those representing 22 different schools from across the country that gathered for the 55th annual soil judging championship.

The students that traveled with the WVU Soils Team were David Ackley, Ellie Bell, Riley Biddle, Ashley Johnson, Jimmy Leonard, Emily Lessman, Adrienne Nottingham, Becca Swope, and Emily Wells. Heather Watson, a Ph.D. student in Plant and Soil Science served as the assistant coach. The team spent four days practicing for the two-day contest, examining representative soils and landscapes of the area.

The flood plains and terraces of the Mississippi Delta region are flat (especially compared to landscapes in West Virginia) and the soils are naturally wet because of the low relief. With rainfall on already wet soils, we spent some time each day pumping and bailing water from the practice pits. But with daily high temperatures in the 80's, we tended to dry out quickly (and get a little sunburn too).

Despite the mud, the team had an excellent week and performed well in the contest. Adrienne Nottingham was the top individual finisher from WVU, placing third in the field of 86 competitors. Also competing in the individual competition were Ellie Bell and Becca Swope (who tied for 17th place) and Emily Wells. Combining the results from the individual and group judging (in which WVU finished 8th), WVU placed second in the overall competition. This marks the seventh top-ten finish for WVU in the past ten years and WVU's best finish since winning the national championship in 2006.

The contest was won by the Auburn University, and Purdue University was third. The other schools who finished in the top ten were Oklahoma State University (fourth), the University of Wisconsin—Platteville (fifth), Virginia Tech (sixth), North Carolina State (seventh), Kansas State University (eighth), Delaware Valley University (ninth), and the University of Nebraska (tenth).

By placing in the top four individually, Adrienne Nottingham has earned the opportunity to represent the United States at the International Soil Judging Contest in Hungary in September 2015.



***WVU Soil Judging Team members: Becca Swope, Emily Wells, Ellie Bell, and Adrienne Nottingham***

As always, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments of all of these students, and I hope that you will join me in congratulating them. These students continue to build upon the past success of the WVU Soils Team. I believe this speaks to the quality of the training that these students receive from the Division of Plant & Soil Sciences. It also reflects the overall strength of the academic programs across the Davis College. Thank you for your support of these students, particularly when they are away from campus for extended periods at critical times during the semester.

**Thank you** by James A. Thompson  
*Professor and Coach of the WVU Soils Team*

Dear Melissa,

On behalf of the West Virginia University Soils Team, I want to thank you and the members of the West Virginia Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society for your support of the team. The commitment by the WV SWCS to sponsor soil judging at WVU provides invaluable opportunities to the students of the WVU Soils Team.

Following the team's second place finish in the Southeast Regional Soils Contest this past October, the students were looking forward to the challenges and opportunities provided by the National Collegiate Soils Contest in southeastern Arkansas. Their effort was focused throughout the week, and the students proudly represented West Virginia.

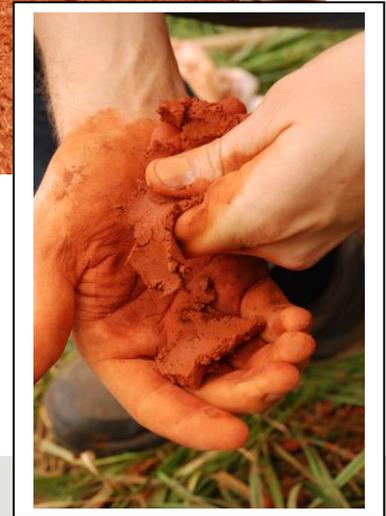
The team's hard work yielded a second place finish. The top individual finishers from WVU were Adrienne Nottingham from Green Bank, who finished third, and Ellie Bell from Mingo and Becca Swope from Columbiana, OH, who were both tied for 17th.

The students' dedication and enthusiasm was evident throughout our week of travel. I know that this was an experience that will stay with them throughout their lives. By placing in the top four individually, Adrienne Nottingham has earned the opportunity to represent the United States at the International Soil Judging Contest in Hungary in September 2015.

Please share my appreciation with the members of WV SWCS. If you would like to hear more about the Team and their efforts during their trip to Arkansas, please contact me at my office phone at 304-293-2921, or via Email at james.thompson@mail.wvu.edu.



*Riley Biddle*



*Adrienne Nottingham and Jim Thompson*

## 2015 SWCS Scholarship Winner

By Jeff Skousen, Scholarship Chairman



Bethani Chambers grew up in St. Marys, West Virginia. She was an active member of the St. Marys FFA Chapter and participated in Land Judging, Environthon, Conservation Camp and AP classes in Environmental Science. She attended Potomac State College where she received an Associates degree in Agronomy in 2014.

Bethani transferred to West Virginia University and is currently majoring in Environmental Protection with an emphasis in Soil and Water Conservation. She has a 3.7 college GPA for 93 credit hours and expects to graduate in May 2016.

During her college career, Bethani was captain of the Potomac State College softball team from 2013-2014, and served as the vice-president of the Society of Environmental Professionals in 2015 at WVU. Bethani and her twin sister both attend WVU, and they will be first generation college graduates in their family.

Bethani hopes to acquire a position with a federal or state agency such as NRCS to help protect the environment and help farmers and businesses with water and soil issues.

# 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL

• SOIL AND WATER •  
CONSERVATION SOCIETY  
•• CONFERENCE ••



• COMING HOME •  
• TO CONSERVATION •

...  
PUTTING SCIENCE INTO PRACTICE

...  
JULY 26 - 29, 2015

• GREENSBORO •  
NORTH CAROLINA  
...

Get more information about the annual conference at [www.swcs.org](http://www.swcs.org).

President-elect will Suzy Lucas will represent the West Virginia chapter at the International Conference in Greensboro. Other West Virginians also plan to attend, including past-president Jason Dalrymple who will receive Society's Commendation Award at the Awards Luncheon. Read more about the awards on page 3.

This conference will highlight the advancements begun by Hugh Hammond Bennett.



West Virginia  
Conservation Agency



Chesapeake Bay Program  
*Science. Restoration. Partnership.*

## **WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITY: Basic GIS Resources for Natural Resources Conservation**

The Soil and Water Conservation Society and the West Virginia Conservation Agency, with help from the Chesapeake Bay Program, are proud to offer a hands-on seminar regarding basic GIS Resources for conservation. How to find and utilize data available online that can help with conservation work, as well as utilizing basic analysis tools to help use the data for your specific work, are the main objectives of this training. This training, taught by the West Virginia GIS Technical Center, covers topics that can be covered both with the free GIS resources online, as well as topics that can be further explored with ArcGIS 10.2. This training assumes no prior GIS experience, and is considered to be suitable for GIS novices.

**Target Audience:** Field staff from state and local agencies, as well as nonprofits and watershed groups.

**Where:** National Conservation Training Center 698 Conservation Way, Shepherdstown, WV 25443. If needed, rooms are available on the premises. For rates and reservations, please call 304 876-1600.

**Schedule:** 8:30 am to 5:00 pm on Tuesday, July 14, 2015

**TO REGISTER:** RSVP to Melissa Merritt, [mmerritt@wvca.us](mailto:mmerritt@wvca.us) or 304-538-7581 by July 10, 2015. Please respond with the day of your arrival and departure and whether you will be purchasing lunch on site. Hurry, the course is limited to 24 participants! No fee for this workshop.

### **Topics Covered:**

- Finding and downloading data
- Loading and adding data layers
- Data preparation and formats
- Basic Analysis Tools
- Further Training with ArcGIS: Stream Quality Mapping, Stream Conservation Mapping, Stormwater Reduction Initiatives
- Making a Map
- Adding Data Layers
- Loading Data

Lunch is available at the NCTC cafeteria for \$13.00. The cafeteria accepts cash or credit cards. There is no charge for the workshop.

## Bits & Pieces

- ✓ The SWCS-WV Executive Council negotiated with the WVU Foundation to manage the Soil Judging Team Endowment Fund. The Executive Council believes this change will be beneficial to the Soil Judging Team as the Foundation will solicit donations and invest the funds for higher returns than we currently earn. New Fund is 3V1001 - WV Chapter of the SWCS Soil Judging Endowment
- ✓ Preston County Delegate Larry Williams resigned his legislative office to take a job with the WV Department of Agriculture. As coordinator of special programs, Williams will promote agriculture and agribusiness and serve as a liaison with deer farmers. Passage of SB 237 transferred oversight of deer farms from DNR to WVDA.
- ✓ NOAA and NASA calculated that in 2014, the world had its hottest year in 135 years of record keeping.
- ✓ NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program is investing \$9 million dollars in West Virginia's land, water, and wildlife. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, USDA signed agreements with the Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture to enhance the habitat of the cerulean warbler and the West Virginia Agricultural Land Protection Authority to protect land and water in 8 Eastern Panhandle Counties.
- ✓ The week of April 26, 2015, marked the 60th Anniversary of Soil and Water Stewardship Week.
- ✓ A 5-year, \$11 million agreement between the U.S Department of Energy , WVU and Ohio State University was signed to create and manage the Marcellus Shale Energy and Environment Laboratory at the Morgantown Industrial Park. The lab will engage a

diverse team of scientists and public health professionals to identify and demonstrate best management practices.

- ✓ The Potomac Conservancy is raising money to buy 1,700 acres of Hampshire County forest to protect it from development. The non-profit hopes to raise at least \$35,000 through an on-line campaign toward the \$3.2 million dollar purchase of White Horse Mountain. If it is purchased, the Conservancy plans to transfer the land's title to the WV Division of Natural Resources to use for public recreation activities.
- ✓ Steve Bonanno was selected as the new dean and director of the WVU Extension Service. He has served as interim director since 2011.
- ✓ WVU received a \$6.7 million dollar gift to revitalize the horse education facilities at the 995-acre Reedsville Experiment Farm in Preston County. In recognition of the gift, the facility will be renamed the Hazel Ruby McQuain Equine Education and Resource Center and farm will be called the J.W. Ruby Research Farm.



## Upcoming Events



### July

- 8 Deadline to submit RCPP Project Proposals
- 14 GIS Training, Sheperdstown
- 26-29 70<sup>th</sup> SWCS Conference, Greensboro, NC

### August

- 2-4 National Association of Conservation Districts NE Regional Meeting, Canaan Valley Resort