



MARCH 2013

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Association of Professional Soil Scientists
PO Box 871, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

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**Nominations for
2014-2016 Board
of Directors are
now being
accepted**

Hydric Soil & Wetland Delineation Educational Workshops April 23 and April 24, 2013 Wysox, Bradford County, PA

PAPSS will be assisting staff from the USDA NRCS and the Army Corps of Engineers during an educational session covering hydric soil identification and descriptions, along with other areas of the Regional Supplement to the Corps Wetland Delineation Manual. The one-day session will be offered on April 23 and April 24 at the Stoll Natural Resource Center in Bradford County. Cost to attend is \$100 for PAPSS members and \$150 for non-members.

Course instruction will be provided by Frank Plewa of the Army Corps of Engineers and John Chirbirka and Yuri Plowden of the USDA-NRCS. The course will include morning classroom instruction followed by five hours of field instruction at various soil stations. The event will be held rain or shine, so come prepared.

If you have not already signed up, please go to www.papss.org for registration information.

An additional hydric soil/wetland workshop is planned for May 31, 2013 at the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Allegheny County. This event will include instruction from Dr. William Mitsch of Ohio State, founder and editor-in-chief of Ecological Engineering The Journal of Ecosystem Restoration. Stay tuned for details. ■

Legislative Committee Report By Michael Lane

The PAPSS legislative and licensing committee has had several teleconference meetings to promote the re-introduction and passage of the bill to require licensing of soil scientists in PA. Senator Mike Brubaker introduced Senate Bill 1506 in June of 2012 and the bill was referred to the Consumer Protection and Licensure Committee, where it died at the end of the 2011-2012 session.

Senator Brubaker has offered to reintroduce the bill in the current session, and PAPSS lobbyist Vince Phillips is working to see that it occurs as soon as possible. Committee members have had meetings with influential Senators, including a January meeting with Dominic Pileggi, Senate Majority Leader.

On the House side, Laurel Mueller and Mr. Phillips have secured sponsorship of the bill from Representative Scott Petri (R-Bucks). Congressman Petri will be sending out a co-sponsorship memo soon so be ready to contact your local Representative for support.

A Day on the Hill is scheduled for March 13, 2013 beginning at 8am at the Capitol building. Mr. Phillips is scheduling meetings throughout the day to educate Senators and Representatives about the importance of soil science and to solicit their support for soil science licensing. ■



Review of The Dust Bowl: A Film by Ken Burns By Michael Lane

The Dust Bowl: A Film by Ken Burns covers one of the great environmental tragedies of the last century. The early 20th century saw a period of above average rainfall in the area described in the film as “no man’s land”. Encompassing portions of eastern Colorado, southern Kansas, and the panhandles of Texas and Oklahoma, no man’s land was producing record crops of wheat in the 1920s. In the late 20s one federal agency proclaimed, “The soil is the one indestructible, immutable asset that the nation possesses. It is the one resource that cannot be exhausted, that cannot be used up.”

How wrong was that assertion? In the 1920s homesteaders were harvesting 30 bushels of wheat per acre and land was being plowed up as fast as the machinery would allow. However, when the drought was in full effect in 1933, a farmer would be lucky to get 4 bushels per acre. The wet period preceding the dust bowl, coupled with government policies in place at the time, encouraged the massive plow-up without consideration for the consequences. The resulting calamity affected over 2 million people and resulted in the creation of the Soil Erosion Service, precursor to today’s Natural Resource Conservation Service.



Dust storm approaching Stratford, TX. April 18, 1935 (NOAA)

Burns’ film suffers at times from repetition, but makes excellent use of those who were raised in no man’s land. There is one pair of brothers, now in their 80s, who share a tear-filled account of the death of their little sister from dust-pneumonia. By the end of the four-hour film, through use of live-action footage and still photographs from the dust bowl, you are connected the people who lived it.

I would recommend the documentary, especially to those of us who know that soil is not indestructible. It will re-air on PBS in two parts on April 23 and April 30, 2013. ■

Les Gregor, an 85-year-old retired ad agency art director, makes soil maps of the United States. He was inspired when he accidentally dropped some art adhesive on the ground and picked up a layer of soil. He obtained soil samples from all fifty states and prepared a beautiful map of the country, with each state represented by a thin layer of soil.

A full story and photograph of his map can be found at :
http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/design/2012/12/u_s_soil_map_a_map_made_with_dirt_samples_from_each_state.html Thanks to Russ Losco for this link. ■

President's Message

Chris Whitman, 2013 PAPSS President

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As 2013 gets underway, PAPSS has much to look forward to.

First and foremost, our licensing effort continues to move forward with the assistance of our legislators, lobbyist, members, the Soil Science Society of America, the Delaware Valley College Alumni Association, and many others. On March 13th, representatives of PAPSS will be travelling to Harrisburg to meet directly with our State Representatives and Senators to muster support for our licensing bill. Since Senator Brubaker's initial sponsorship in early 2012, several additional legislators have pledged their support and for that we are grateful. As word spreads of the proposed bill and supporters emerge, it is apparent we are not alone in our belief that our licensing bill is timely and relevant. We intend to continue our push and remain optimistic that additional support will emerge in the coming months. Ultimately, the proposed licensing bill must be passed in both the House and the Senate, prior to the Governor's final approval.

PAPSS is also actively planning several additional ACOE Regional Supplement information sessions, which have met with great success in the past several years. Two sessions are planned at this time; one in Bradford County and a second in Pittsburgh, with the hopes of extending PAPSS' presence to the western part of the state. The 2013 Annual Meeting will also be held in the fall. Although the topic of the Annual Meeting remains open, attendees can look forward to the speakers and panel of experts that our organizers always arrange.

As always, the Association welcomes the input and assistance of our membership. Only through the continued efforts of our members will we be successful in acquiring licensing for soil scientists in PA, as has been accomplished in sixteen other States. PAPSS must continue to maintain its voice in soil science affairs and in those of our community, including municipalities, conservation districts, PADEP, Health Departments, and engineering firms that utilize our services. For the most part, we represent a specialized niche in what we do and we must continue to impress this on all our clients and colleagues by maintaining a high degree of professionalism and expertise in our daily work.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the members who, over the years, have volunteered their valuable time to run the Association's affairs. Without the work of our past Boards of Directors and active members, this Association would not be in the position that it is today, and on the cusp of achieving a major milestone for soil scientists in the state of Pennsylvania. ■

Visit PAPSS online

www.papss.org

Web Soil Survey

websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx

NRCS Digital Soil Survey App

<http://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/drupal/node/886>

Comments or contributions?

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In Memoriam – Lester Rothermel



E. Lester Rothermel, age 68, of Klingerstown and a charter member of PAPSS, died November 30, 2012 from Alzheimer's. Lester was retired from DEP after nearly 35 years as a soil scientist. He was also a long-time member and past officer of the Soil and Water Conservation Society, Keystone Chapter, and a past President of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

Lester was raised on a farm near Rough and Ready, Schuylkill County, and lived his life in that area. An agronomy graduate of Penn State, he in 1970 joined Bill Pounds and Leonard Tritt under the direction of Dr. Glade Loughry in the Soil Science Section of the PA Dept. of Health, which later became part of the Dept. of Environmental Resources (now known as Dept. of Environmental Protection). In 1980 he became the Regional Soil Scientist for DEP's Harrisburg Region, where he worked until retirement in 2005. His 'other job' for nearly 45 years was growing apples. He and his wife, Louise, operated an apple orchard until Lester could not continue.

On Lester's first day at the Health Dept., we met this smiling, personable, yes, talkative guy with a Pennsylvania Dutch accent. You couldn't help but like him. We came to find he also had a penchant for learning, always striving to learn more about the new or unfamiliar [to him] soil or geomorphic features he'd find on the job. He strove for accuracy. He came to work closely with other soil scientists and numerous SEOs through his Regional Soil Scientist position.

Lester's battle with Alzheimer's lasted over five years and took many years of life away from him. But he surely made good with the time he had as a husband, father, grandfather, church and Boy Scout leader, orchardist, friend, and in the soil science profession. Remember Lester as the good, capable, diligent, and congenial man he was.

Leonard Tritt

In Memoriam – John Zarichansky



With great regret, we belatedly report the death of PAPSS Honorary Member John Zarichansky. He died March 2, 2012 in Carlisle, PA. He was 86.

John grew up near Monroeville, Allegheny County and spent the latter years of WW II in the Army Air Force. Later he earned a degree in Forestry from Penn State. Thereafter he joined the Soil Conservation Service, working as a soil scientist until retiring in 1983. John was party chief for the Jefferson County Soil Survey (1964), and for the Cumberland and Perry Counties Soil Survey (1986), and assisted in others. He was an SCS Million Acre Mapper.

Like all SCS, and likely NRCS, soil scientists, John had lots of stories. One day in very rural western Perry County, he needed gas for his government truck, so he stopped at a gas pump at a country store. He showed the man the U.S. government credit card, and the guy said, "What am I supposed to do with that?" John paid cash from his wallet and got reimbursed.

We early state Health Dept. soil scientists were indoctrinated by training under SCS soil scientists then working in counties near Harrisburg. I spent two weeks with John. He knew where everything was in his counties. One hot day, we went to a broad mountaintop in western Perry County to an expanse of Vanderlip that was ripe with wild blueberries. It's safe to say now nearly 44 years later, we didn't get too much mapping done that afternoon, but those blueberries sure tasted good!

In Jefferson County one day, John had to map hundreds of acres of forest land with no roads through it. When he found an abandoned railroad railbed going right into it, he saw a way to avoid alot of walking to get to the interior. As he drove on the railbed, it became elevated on a fill, and several miles in, he got to a washed-out bridge. With no room to turn around on the fill and not wanting to back out several miles, he jacked up the front of the truck and pushed the truck sideways until he had it turned around. Then he drove out forward. I told him that was brilliant; he just smiled. See why they call John's generation "The Greatest Generation"?

John Zarichansky was a good man with a wonderful personality and sense of humor. Those of us who knew him well will not forget him.

Leonard Tritt