Meetings

Soil’s Role in Restoring Ecosystem Services: A Conference to Explore Soils in a Societal Context

Human life depends on soil’s ability to provide consumable products, regulate and support ecosystem processes, and enhance our cultural experiences. These benefits to humankind, or ecosystem services, are the subject of a unique conference that will be held 6–9 Mar. 2014, in Sacramento, CA. During this conference, co-sponsored by SSSA, experts and students from diverse disciplines will gather to summarize the current understanding and identify research needs on soil’s role in climate change adaptation and mitigation; food, energy, and water security; human health; sustaining biodiversity, and slowing desertification.

“Civilization is rooted in how it treats its soil, yet the majority of people lack the understanding or appreciation of soil’s importance,” says co-organizer and SSSA member Dr. Mary Stromberger. “People connect with soil, however, when they realize they benefit from it. And people appreciate soil biodiversity when they learn how it affects their health, such as when soil organisms degrade contaminants or produce cancer-fighting compounds or antibiotics. Thus, I believe that the study of soil from a human-centric point of view is key to getting public and ultimately government support for long-term soil conservation and management, as well as amelioration of degraded soils.”

“The Soil Science Society of America recognizes that responding effectively to the many challenges affecting soils and ecosystem services will require strengthened connections and partnerships across disciplines and stakeholders,” says Dr. Diana Wall, SSSA member and past president of the Ecological Society of America (ESA). “This single-topic conference will therefore incorporate and link the breadth of research represented by SSSA, ESA, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the American Geophysical Union.”

Invited speakers and panelists are: Dr. Diana Wall (Colorado State University; soil biodiversity), Dr. Kenneth Cassman (University of Nebraska; sustainable agriculture and food security), Dr. Richard Pouyat (USDA Forest Service; urban soil ecology), Dr. Stephen Polasky (University of Minnesota; ecological and environmental economics), and Dr. Rattan Lal (Ohio State University; climate change and soil resilience).

For an agenda and information on abstract submission, registration, and housing, please visit the conference website at www.soils.org/meetings/specialized-conferences/ecosystem-services.

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Grad Students: Join Us at the Graduate Student Committee Breakfast Meeting in Tampa

The Graduate Student Committee and relies on continued graduate student participation and new ideas to effectively work with each other. New members are always welcome, and all graduate students are encouraged to participate whenever possible. If you are interested in joining the Graduate Student Committee, please join us for our annual breakfast meeting Wednesday, 6 November from 7 to 8:30 am or contact Susan Chapman (schapman@sciencesocieties.org). Attendance at the Annual Meetings is not required for committee participation, so if you are interested in joining but unable to attend the breakfast or the Annual Meetings, contact us anyways; it’s a great way to get involved!