ASA’s Biochar: Agronomic and Environmental Uses Community was formed in November 2010. The Community’s initial function has been providing a forum at the Annual Meetings to fill the need for a scientific organization focused on the environmental and agronomic impacts of biochar, particularly related to soil applications.

Fundamentally, biochar is the solid residual produced from the chemical and/or thermal alteration of biomass, which focuses on the residue serving as a carbon sequestration agent. Simultaneously, biochar has been promoted as a means to improve soil fertility and productivity. It is gathering both scientific and popular interest due to its dual roles in bioenergy (energy from the biomass pyrolysis) and carbon sequestration potential (biochar). There is also considerable global interest in using biochar to revitalize worn-out, unproductive soils. However, since not all biochars or soils are equal, there is a need to develop recommendations for successful biochar use in agronomic systems as well as provide scientific data for U.S. and international policy guidelines.

By looking at the past number of papers presented in our Community’s sessions at the Annual Meetings, one can see the growth from 12 in 2011 to 49 papers presented in 2012. We are optimistic that the numbers will continue to grow in 2013. For this year’s meeting in Tampa (3–6 November), the community is organizing a total of five sessions—four oral sessions and a poster session:

1. Biochar Impacts on Soil Moisture/Hydraulic Properties
2. Biochar Effects on Plant Growth and Agronomic Yields
3. Field Application and Case Studies of Biochar Use
4. Other Agronomic or Environmental Uses of Biochar
5. Poster Session—Biochar: Agronomic and Environmental Uses

Across all of these sessions, we will also have a graduate and undergraduate student competition both for oral and poster presentations.

For more information, please contact us at kurt.spokas@ars.usda.gov or jeff.novak@ars.usda.gov. To add the Biochar: Agronomic and Environmental Uses Community to your ASA membership, visit: www.agronomy.org/account/communities/asa.

K. Spokas, Community Leader, and J. Novak, Community Vice Leader

Bobbitt, Matthew E, Knoxville, TN, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Knapp, Victoria Grace, Knoxville, TN, ASA
Rieff, Jacob M, Abernathy, TX, ASA
Chick, Christopher Roberts, College Station, TX, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Wilson, Jeffrey Norman, Lubbock, TX, ASA, CSSA
Bozarth, Melissa Ann, Nacogdoches, TX, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
O’Neill, Katherine P, Salem, VA, SSSA
Milosavljevic, Ivan, Pullman, WA, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Chatterjee, Nirmalya, Puyallup, WA, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Anderson, Tyler Jason, Madison, WI, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Griffin, Caleb, Morgantown, WV, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Nottingham, Andrienne, Morgantown, WV, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Baker, Jennifer L, St Mary’s, WV, ASA, CSSA, SSSA
Members Newly Certified
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Reeves, Geoffrey W, CCA Northeast Region, Lansing, NY
Ramsier, Dustin Paul, CCA Ohio, Sterling, OH
Kochuba, Michael Nicholas, CPSS, Bentleyville, PA
Van Dyke, Adam, CCA Northwest, West Jordan, UT
Schwalbach, Elizabeth A, CCA Wisconsin, Appleton, WI

1 See www.agronomy.org/membership/communities/biochar-agronomic-and-environmental-uses
2 doi:10.2134/csa2013-58-4-14

From l to r: Jim Ippolito (Past Leader), Kurt Spokas (Current Leader), and Jeff Novak (Vice-Chair) of the Biochar: Agronomic and Environmental Uses Community of ASA.