SSSA President’s Message

Broadening the Scope and Identity of Soil Science and Our Society

Broadening the scope and identity of soil science and our Society is always one of our goals. Over the next 12 months, SSSA is organizing several single-topic meetings:

- **Ecosystem Services Conference** (6–9 Mar. 2014, Sacramento, CA, www.soils.org/meetings/specialized/ecosystem-services); and

Each of these conferences will bring together a broad group of scientists, practitioners, educators, and policy makers that may as yet be on the periphery of our discipline. With support from these individuals as well as from our members, we hope to extend knowledge of the role of soils into wider areas as well as enhance the SSSA brand and identity. Our goal is to have at least one of these single-topic conferences each year. If you have an idea for a conference, refer to the S733 SSSA Conference Committee webpage (www.soils.org/meetings/specialized) for details on submitting a proposal.

Efforts to broaden our scope do not end with these single-topic meetings. For the past five years, we have had a presence at the annual meeting of the National Science Teachers Association through our K-12 committee. At these meetings, we have interacted with science teachers around the country in an effort to help them incorporate soils into their science curriculum. We have done several workshops as well as an exhibit where we demonstrate some of our K-12 lesson plans. Those who visited the SSSA K-12 booth at our Annual Meeting in Cincinnati last year saw an example of our efforts. The response from teachers has been positive, and we have stayed in contact with them to answer questions that arise as they implement their curriculum. Over time, we hope to inspire teachers to not only use soils in their classroom, but to talk about soil science as a possible career in the same way they discuss biology or engineering.

Encouraging Cooperation with Other Geoscientists

At the recent European Geosciences Union (EGU) General Assembly, SSSA presented papers and exhibited. Of the 23 divisions in the EGU, the Soil Systems Sciences Division had the fourth largest number of abstracts submitted, demonstrating a strong interest in soil science at this meeting. Dr. Artemi Cerdà, president of that division, told me that he was pleased with the number of abstracts and presentations, yet he indicated a desire to have more agriculturally focused soil science papers presented at the General Assembly. There is a need for scientists in the geosciences to recognize that agriculture is as much a part of the field as any other discipline. Although there were papers in the Soil Systems Division that dealt with erosion, nutrients, management, and water quality related to agriculture, expanding the breadth of papers would go far to demonstrate the importance of soil science to the larger geosciences community. Other opportunities discussed include a soils-agroecology tour in Russia (www.uni-goettingen.de/en/315517.html) and upcoming workshops on rates of soil formation (https://ppsg2011.uni-hohenheim.de/94442).

This year, the Geological Society of America celebrates its 125th anniversary. In efforts to strengthen ties with this society as well as get exposure to a broader audience, we are cosponsoring a session on “The Co-evolution of Soils and Landscapes in the Quaternary” at the society’s annual meeting 27–30 Oct. 2013 in Denver, CO (http://community.geosociety.org/2013AnnualMeeting/Home). We are also planning to exhibit at this meeting to further promote SSSA and encourage cooperation with other geoscientists.

While we promote soil science to new audiences, we must also remember our roots and core constituency. This year’s Annual Meeting theme, “Water, Food, Energy & Innovation for a Sustainable World,” should make that connection clear. Furthermore, our Cross-Divisional Symposium, “How Can Global Food/Fiber Security and Environmental Quality be Simultaneously Achieved?”, connects soils to agriculture, water quality, and ecosystems services and will spark further discussion that should lead to promoting the role soils and soil scientists play in sustaining the world through our efforts in agriculture, the environment, hydrology, and related areas. Our efforts to broaden our scope and identity are well under way and will continue to be a focus of activities in years to come.