SSSA President’s Message

SSSA Partnership with CSSA and ASA Remains Strong

Reflecting on progress this year, I realized that my term as the Society’s president is at the halfway point, which is an opportune time for an update. Much progress was made at our recent SSSA board meeting in Sacramento, CA, coinciding with the opening of the Dig It! soil exhibition in early May. As much of the context of these discussions involves the Societies of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, I would like to direct this month’s column to all of our readers.

Since its founding in 1936, the scope of the SSSA has been largely agronomic, but the soil science discipline has evolved towards broader applications in environmental sciences and more recently in the earth sciences. Soil scientists have become effective partners with other organizations representing the relevance of soils across a wide range of ecosystem services and functions. This broader view of soils is evident from the 12 themes that were identified for the International Year of the Soils (IYS) celebration next year. Also, our most recent strategic plan prioritizes the promotion of soil science to a broader audience in areas of education, research, and professional practice. Nevertheless, the large majority of our SSSA membership views the strong partnership with CSSA and ASA as essential to address the broad societal challenges, such as impacts of climate and land use change, the need to provide sufficient and nutritious food for the growing world population, environmental protection of local natural resources of land and water, and the provisioning of services and biodiversity by both agricultural and natural ecosystems.

Changing SSSA’s Membership Dues Structure

The SSSA board voted unanimously in support of a change in the Society’s dues structure that may affect all three societies. It proposed to eliminate the discounted membership option and develop a reduced dues rate structure by which SSSA members pay the same membership rate for each of the Societies, regardless of the number of Societies one joins. Moreover, SSSA is considering one or more low-cost membership options with limited benefits/Society services. The main motivation for the proposed separate dues structure is first and foremost to increase and diversify SSSA membership, ensuring a vital Society with a broad base and maintaining its agronomic foundations, strong partnerships with ASA and CSSA, as they may choose to affiliate with the SSSA as a professional home. A task force has been charged with developing membership rate options that are financially sound and can be aligned with the ASA and CSSA membership rates. In parallel, we are working with headquarters towards streamlining and simplifying the web-based membership application process. When everything is in place, we plan for a membership drive next year in conjunction with the International Year of Soils celebration.

Future Annual Meeting Planning

It is a SSSA goal to independently organize our Annual Meeting every five years, starting in 2018. The main motivation is to occasionally hold a soil-centric meeting with expanded and exciting options for different venues and meeting times as well as to co-organize with other related organizations. A contract has been signed for an SSSA meeting in January 2019 to be held in San Diego. Discussions are under way for the 2021 meeting in conjunction with the Canadian and Mexican Soil Science Societies as well as the Clay Mineral Society. It is envisioned that additional collaborations will evolve, especially planning for joint sessions with other professional organizations such as the Geological Society of America, the American Geophysical Union, and the Ecological Society of America with whom we have recently developed joint memoranda of understanding.

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