Your SSSA board holds monthly calls and has two face-to-face meetings a year. We will hold the first face-to-face board meeting in early May 2015 and, among other items, will begin the process of updating the current SSSA Strategic Plan.\(^1\) The Strategic Plan is our organizational process for direction, making decisions on setting priorities, focusing and allocating resources, and strengthening operations to pursue common goals. It is divided into several short sections.

In addition to vision and mission statements, we have five core professional values: (1) Adherence to scientific, professional, and ethical standards; (2) Pursuit, dissemination, and application of knowledge; (3) Advocacy of science-based policy; (4) Environmental stewardship; and (5) Sustainable use of land and other resources.

In addition, we have three goals: (1) Promote soil science education to a broad audience; (2) Promote soil science research; and (3) Promote soil science as a profession.

The focus of the plan will be general, on a very broad and high level for determining the direction for the Society in the next few years and potentially beyond. This is your Society. Please think seriously about the current plan, how we might move forward, what we are missing, and what needs updating. Provide comments to your board representatives before our 11 May meeting.

Putting our operations in order through a regularly updated Strategic Plan is only one aspect of a thriving professional society. Common research priorities and corresponding critical knowledge gaps need to be documented and revisited on a regular basis. In response to addressing the common scientific priorities for the Society, SSSA developed a Grand Challenges document in 2009. In 2014, seeking to assess the relevancy and to update this document, the Societies’ Science Policy Office surveyed the membership for input, and the response was gratifying. The Science Policy Office is in the process of analyzing the survey results and developing a template for a new challenge document relevant to SSSA. This document will be reviewed by the SSSA documents in upcoming magazine.

SSSA Membership

If you belong to more than one of the Societies, when logging on to the SSSA webpages this year you will have noticed a survey questionnaire. We are exploring ways to increase flexibility among the three Societies and while advancing the unique goals for each Society. We have asked that you select your primary, secondary, and third membership, if applicable, to help us better understand membership preferences. If you have not logged on since December, please take the time to do so and complete the survey. We have reached the greatest number of members in a year, and it takes less than five minutes to complete. Changes to your choices can be made later by logging on and selecting “My Membership.”

International Year of Soils

Last month, I challenged you to find someone new every week to mention the International Year of Soils to and the importance of soils and our website. I’ve been working hard on that challenge myself. Thanks to you, the SSSA IYS website is generating a great deal of traffic. The monthly videos have recorded more than 7,000 downloads since January alone. The theme for April is “Soils and Water.” Let’s see what we can use for examples.

By the time this issue of CSA News magazine is released, the northeastern U.S. and particularly New England should be able to provide plenty of examples for discussions with friends and neighbors about the water cycle and soils. At this writing, we’ve heard that Boston had received approximately 2.6 m (8.5 ft) of snow, mostly in February. Snowmelt and compaction, runoff, and what happens to soils at capacity prior to leaf out are just a few topics to examine.

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