In my August presidential message, I discussed the growing interest in soils from NGOs, food and retail companies, agri-businesses and commodity groups, and organizations that work with urban and natural soils. I see this as a response to the increasing concerns around water scarcity, nutrient problems in water resources, climate change, and soils in urban environments. Everyone asserts that they want “science-based solutions.” Now mix in the opportunities around the soil microbiome and digital technologies (the so-called Fourth Industrial Revolution), and you can see why we are a growing community.

At the board’s summer strategic planning effort (we do this every three years), we discussed our response to these new opportunities. We resolved that our Society can better engage with this interested community, but the questions are: What are the needs, and how do we respond?

First, I need to stress that SSSA already plays an important leadership role that serves many outside our Society. We publish scientific results in our journals and books, hold meetings where scientific information is exchanged, provide professional certification, advocate for funding and policies, and promote awareness through educational programs. This has been part of our strategic vision for years, which in the new strategic plan, is organized around three main goals:

- to advocate, promote, and disseminate soil science research
- to promote soil science awareness and education
- to expand soil science as a profession

We now added a new goal:

- to be the leader in soil science. It involves objectives around bringing together soil-centric groups, being a resource, and promoting consensus-driven standards and protocols.

Soil Alliance

This brings me to an exciting new initiative. In the context of this new goal, we are proposing a Soil Alliance to foster greater communication and collaboration among these interest groups, including government agencies, scientific societies, academia, industry, and organizations focused on sustainability. The Soil Alliance would serve as a coalition to cultivate common goals and priorities and promote science-based solutions. We are also promoting a more unified vision for soil science and practice and advocating for soil research and education. Mostly, we believe that the Soil Alliance will better link our members with the organizations that are interested in science-based solutions.

“**We believe that [a Soil Alliance will better link our members with the organizations that are interested in science-based solutions.”**

If you have thoughts on this, please let me know. We will also have an opportunity to discuss this at the SSSA Town Hall meeting next month in Phoenix. See you there!