North Dakota Commemorates
90 Years of Soil Survey

Hal Weiser

Lincoln-Oakes Nursery in Bismarck, ND, was the site of the Last Acre Ceremony. Although a crude survey by today's standard, the first soil survey began in Grand Forks County in 1902. This was the beginning of a proud history of soil survey in North Dakota. Many state, national, and international leaders in soil survey have worked in North Dakota. Charles Kellogg, Roy Simonson, and William Johnson are some of the more prominent. It was in this tradition that in 1990, Sy Ekart, then State Soil Scientist, decided to start planning a commemorative event to celebrate the once-over soil survey in North Dakota.

On the evening of Sept. 14, 1992, the Professional Soil Classifiers Association of North Dakota sponsored a banquet for all individuals who have contributed to soil survey. With nearly 100 people in attendance, from every corner of the USA, the evening was a success with many soil scientists getting reacquainted. Roy Simonson gave the banquet address and was presented a plaque designating him an honorary life member of the association. Ken Thompson was also recognized for his dedication in completing the book, History of Soil Survey in North Dakota.

The morning of Sept. 15, 1992, began with self-guided tours of the nursery and the USDA-Plant Materials Center. Several historical and educational exhibits were on display at the nursery. The afternoon ceremony was attended by more than 300 people with several speakers addressing the crowd. Governor of North Dakota, George A. Sinner, gave the well received Last Acre Address. The last event of the day, to culminate 90 yr of soil survey, was the final acre delineation. Some of the participants included John Peterson, assistant chief, Midwest, USDA-SCS; Dr. H.R. Lund, director, NDSU Agricultural Experiment Station; Richard W. Arnold, director, NHQ Soil Survey Division, USDA-SCS; and James R. Culver, national leader, MNTC Soil Survey Quality Assurance Staff, USDA-SCS.

The Last Acre Ceremony was a great success and brought much publicity for soil survey in North Dakota. It is highly recommended that other states nearing completion consider planning a similar event.

A limited number of books History of Soil Survey in North Dakota are available from Ken Thompson, 1141 12th Ave. West, Dickinson, ND 58601, at a cost of $23 each.

---

1 Soil scientist, USDA-SCS. Dep. of Soil Science, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND 58105.