

## GOVERNING BOARD

### **PRESIDENT:**

Cheryl K. Simmons  
1055 Hazeltine Rd  
Moscow, ID 83843  
(817) 542-2725  
[cksoil@aol.com](mailto:cksoil@aol.com)

### **PRESIDENT-ELECT:**

Arnold D. King  
1900 Canaveral Ct.  
Granbury, TX 76048-4370  
(817) 578-8177  
[arnolddking@hotmail.com](mailto:arnolddking@hotmail.com)

### **IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT:**

Dana York  
Green Earth Connection  
P.O. Box 324  
Jonesborough, TN 37659  
(410) 708-6794  
[dyork818@yahoo.com](mailto:dyork818@yahoo.com)

### **SECRETARY:** Jack R. Carlson

2937 Garrett Drive  
Fort Collins, CO 80526-6222  
(970) 980-7443  
[pspicata@gmail.com](mailto:pspicata@gmail.com)

### **TREASURER:** Donna Beggs

P.O. Box 8965, Moscow, ID  
83843  
(518) 524-8907  
[arcse.treas@gmail.com](mailto:arcse.treas@gmail.com)

### **REGIONAL VICE-PRESIDENTS**

#### **EAST:** Melvin Womack

10307 Scots Landing  
Mechanicsville, VA 23116  
(804) 803-8940  
[mwpocket2@comcast.net](mailto:mwpocket2@comcast.net)

#### **WEST:** Bill Ward

3029 Nikol Street  
Sacramento, CA 95826  
(916) 769-0280  
[bluegrassbillward@gmail.com](mailto:bluegrassbillward@gmail.com)

#### **SOUTH:** William Kuenstler

79 Gulf Winds Way  
Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459  
(817) 845-65158  
[bkuenstler@gmail.com](mailto:bkuenstler@gmail.com)

#### **MIDWEST:** Rebecca Fletcher

15 Danridge Drive  
Danville, IN 46122-1342  
(317) 371-6944  
[becky\\_fletcher@sbcglobal.net](mailto:becky_fletcher@sbcglobal.net)

## SUPPORT MEMBERS

### **MEMBERSHIP CHAIR:**

Paul Benedict  
PO Box 1149  
Stephens City, VA 22655  
(202)-578-8226  
[soilwarden@verizon.net](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net)

### **HISTORIAN:** Vacant

### **EDITOR:** Jerry Bernard

15 Apple Blossom Ct.,  
Stafford, VA 22554  
(540) 720-5644  
[jbernard.nrcsret@gmail.com](mailto:jbernard.nrcsret@gmail.com)

### **WEBMASTER:** David Buland

720 Lake View Dr.  
Crowley, TX 76036  
(817) 295-9245  
[davidbuland@gmail.com](mailto:davidbuland@gmail.com)

## NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC:

Doug and Patty Lawrence  
416 Seward Square SE  
(202) 329-9558  
[doug.lawrence.wdc@gmail.com](mailto:doug.lawrence.wdc@gmail.com)

## SR. CONSERVATIONIST

### **CHRONICLER:**

Marc Safley  
11975 William and Mary Circle,  
Woodbridge, VA 22192  
(703) 494-8074  
[Jsafley1@verizon.net](mailto:Jsafley1@verizon.net)



# NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter for Retired Conservation Service Employees

Vol. 48, No. 2 March/April 2021

The **ARCSE Newsletter** is published bi-monthly by the Association of Retired Conservation Service Employees, P.O. Box 8965, Moscow, ID 83843

Website: [www.arcse.org](http://www.arcse.org)

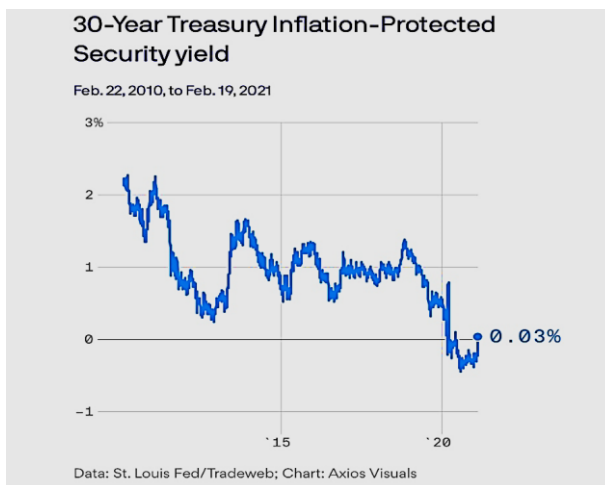
## **NOTES FROM THE POTOMAC**

Doug Lawrence and Patty Lawrence

We are happy to report that both of us have had our first COVID-19 vaccination shot. We hope that you have been able to get vaccinated. Have a great spring.

### The Economy

For longer term Treasury bonds real yields have risen above zero for the first time since June 2020. Financial managers see this as good news for the economy because it means it's healing. What out for two things. First, the pace at which interest rates are rising matters: if they rise too fast, they could cause problems for all assets. Second, one of the driving forces of the rise in stock indices is there were few good options to park money other than the stock market which means that we could see a pull-back in stock indices.



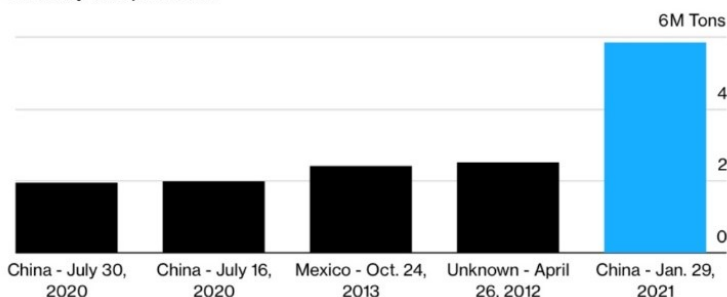
## Agricultural Trade

In late January 2021 China made the largest purchase of corn over a week on record. China's purchase was made through private brokers and signals that they may buy as much as 22 million metric tons of corn this marketing year.

### **Buying Spree**

China's weeklong buying of U.S. corn eclipses previous records

■ Weekly corn purchases

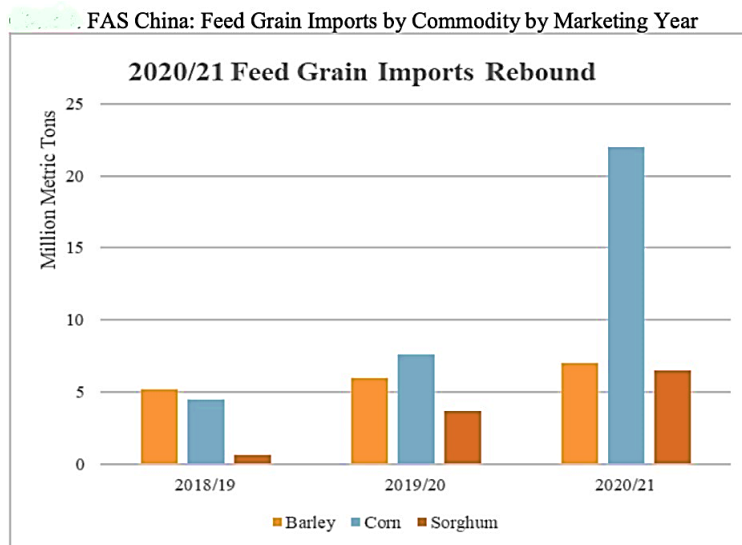


Source: USDA

Note: Total of China's flash purchases for week ending Jan. 29 compared to historic weekly sales by a single country

The following graph shows the significant increase in feed grain purchases by China.

**ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED CONSERVATION SERVICE EMPLOYEES**



### USDA Senior Staff Appointments

On February 23, 2021 the Senate confirmed **Tom Vilsack** by a vote of 92 to 7 as the 32<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of Agriculture. As you recall, Vilsack was the Secretary of Agriculture for all eight years of the Obama administration. In his first stint as Secretary Vilsack served 2,857 days making him the fourth longest serving Secretary. He only needs to serve 66 days to move into second place.

**James Wilson** Served 5,843 days (March 6, 1897, to March 5, 1913, the longest term of any Cabinet member and the only one to serve under three Presidents.)

- **Ezra Taft Benson** Served 2,922 days (January 21, 1953, to January 20, 1961)
- **Orville Freeman** Served 2,922 days (January 21, 1961, until January 20, 1969)
- **Henry Wallace** Served 2,742 days (March 4, 1933, until September 4, 1940)
- **David Franklin Houston** Served 2,525 days (March 6, 1913, to February 2, 1920)

Since January 20, 2021, USDA has announced appointments of 34 senior and confidential staff. There are names you'll remember, but most are new to USDA if not agriculture. While announcements have not yet been made for the NRCS Chief at the time of this writing, the word is that it is expected very soon. The following is a short list of key appointments related to the conservation mission, but you can see the full crowd by looking at the press releases at the end of each group.

*Jan. 20, 2021:*

**Katharine Ferguson**—Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary. Most recently, Ferguson served as Associate Director of the Aspen Institute Community Strategies Group. Ferguson served in the Obama Administration as Chief of Staff for the White House Domestic Policy Council and as Chief of Staff for Rural Development at USDA.

**Robert Bonnie**—Deputy Chief of Staff for Policy and Senior Advisor, Climate, Office of the Secretary. Most recently Bonnie served as an executive in residence at the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions at Duke University. During the Obama Administration, he served as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment and as a Senior Advisor to Secretary Vilsack for climate and the environment.

**Sara Bleich, PhD**—Senior Advisor, COVID-19, Office of the Secretary. Previously, Bleich served as a Professor of Public Health Policy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

**Kumar Chandran**—Senior Advisor, Nutrition, Office of the Secretary. Most recently, Chandran was Policy Director for FoodCorps and led the Washington, D.C. office.

**Gregory Parham**—Interim Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration. Dr. Parham served as Assistant Secretary for Administration from 2013-2016. Previously, he served as Administrator of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

**Justo Robles**—White House Liaison, Office of the Secretary. Prior to joining USDA, Robles served as Georgia Deputy Coalitions Director for Biden for President.

You can read more in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/01/20/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-staff-appointments>

*Jan. 21, 2021:*

**David Grahn**—Principal Deputy General Counsel, Office of General Counsel. Most recently, Grahn served as the Director of the Office of Regulatory Policy at the Farm Credit Administration.

**Mike Schmidt**—Senior Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary, Farm Production and Conservation. Previously, Schmidt was Senior Professional Staff for the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry under ranking member Senator Debbie Stabenow.

**Marcus Graham**—Deputy Administrator for Field Operations, Farm Service Agency. Most recently, Graham served as the Legislative Director in the Office of External Affairs, among other positions at the Farm Service Agency.

**Matt Herrick**—Director of Communications, Office of Communications. Most recently, Herrick served as Senior Vice President with the International Dairy Foods Association. Previously, he served as USDA Director of Communications in the Obama Administration.

You can read more in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/01/21/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-staff-appointments>

Jan. 25, 2021:

**Heather Dawn Thompson**—Director, Office of Tribal Relations (OTR). Thompson is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, a Harvard Law School graduate, and an expert in American Indian law, tribal sovereignty, and rural tribal economic development. You can read more in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/01/25/us-department-agriculture-announces-heather-dawn-thompson-director>

Jan. 27, 2021:

**Tharun Vemulapalli**—Confidential Assistant, Office of the Under Secretary, Farm Production and Conservation. Vemulapalli served as a field organizer for the Democratic Party, working primaries, caucuses and the general election.

You can read more in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/01/27/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-staff-appointments>

Feb. 4, 2021:

**Anne Knapke**—Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. Knapke previously was a Senior Program Officer focusing on nutrition at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

**Liz Archuleta**—Director in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. Archuleta served as a County Supervisor for Coconino County, Arizona, where she was the first Latina ever elected to that office in Coconino County.

**Jasmine Dickerson**—Legislative Director, Office of Congressional Relations. Dickerson served as Staff Director for the Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Departmental Operations on the House Committee on Agriculture.

**Brandon Chaderton**—Deputy White House Liaison, Office of the Secretary. Most recently, Chaderton served as Director of Human Resources for the 2021 Presidential Inaugural Committee.

You can read more about them in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/02/04/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-staff-appointments>

Feb. 16, 2021:

**Monica Armster Rainge**—Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Civil Rights. Rainge is an agricultural lawyer and mediator, working in the public and private agricultural sectors for more than 25 years.

You can read more in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/02/16/us-department-agriculture-announces-monica-rainge-deputy-assistant>

Feb. 19, 2021:

**Gloria Montaño Greene**—Deputy Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC). Montaño Greene was a former FSA State Executive Director in Arizona from 2014-2017, a position she was appointed to by President Obama.

**Zach Ducheneaux**—Administrator, Farm Service Agency (FSA). Ducheneaux is the current Executive Director of the Intertribal Agriculture Council, the largest, longest-standing Native American agriculture organization in the United States

You can read more about them in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/02/19/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-leadership-farm-production>

Feb. 22, 2021:

**Maribel Duran**—Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Office of the Secretary. Duran recently served as Managing Director for Equity and Inclusion for the Aspen Institute, as well as Chief of Staff for its Leadership Division.

**Mickeala Carter**—Deputy Director of Communications, Office of Communications. Carter served as Director of Communications and External Affairs for the House Agriculture Committee where she worked for Chairman David Scott.

**Lynn Overmann**—Senior Advisor for Data and Technology, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Overmann previously served as a Senior Data Strategist for Opportunity Insights, working on harnessing big data to improve upward mobility in America.

**Bidisha Bhattacharyya**—Senior Policy Advisor, Farm Service Agency (FSA). Previously, Bhattacharyya served as director for Climate and Energy Policy at the Center for American Progress.

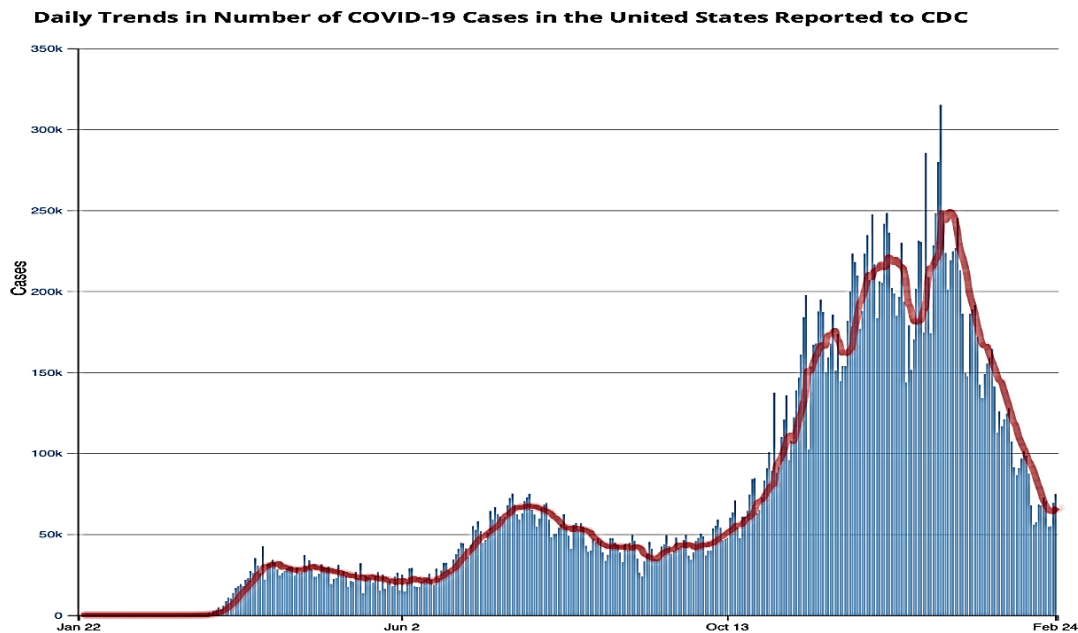
You can read more about them in the news release at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/02/22/us-department-agriculture-announces-key-staff-appointments>

## **COVID-19 Update**

Johns Hopkins University data indicates that the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the US has risen since the December “Notes from the Potomac” from 19,093,000 confirmed cases to 28,415,626 cases (an increase of 49%). The number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths has grown from 334,900 to 508,359 (an increase of 52%).

The CDC chart below displays the daily number of COVID-19 cases in the US that have been reported to CDC. The good news is that the daily number of new cases has dropped significantly to about levels we saw that summer.

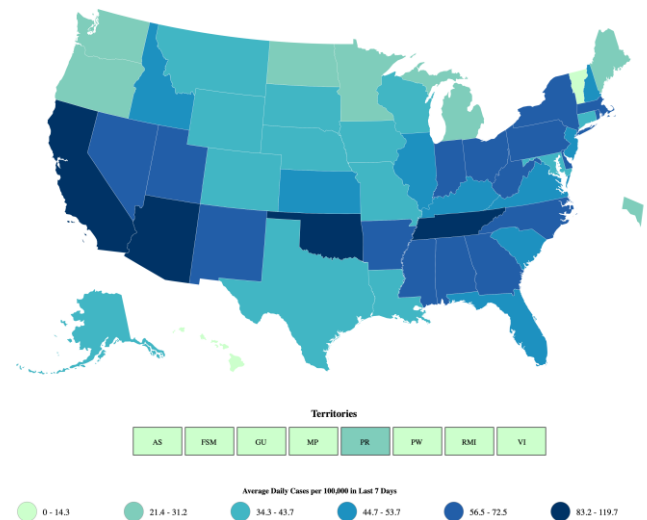
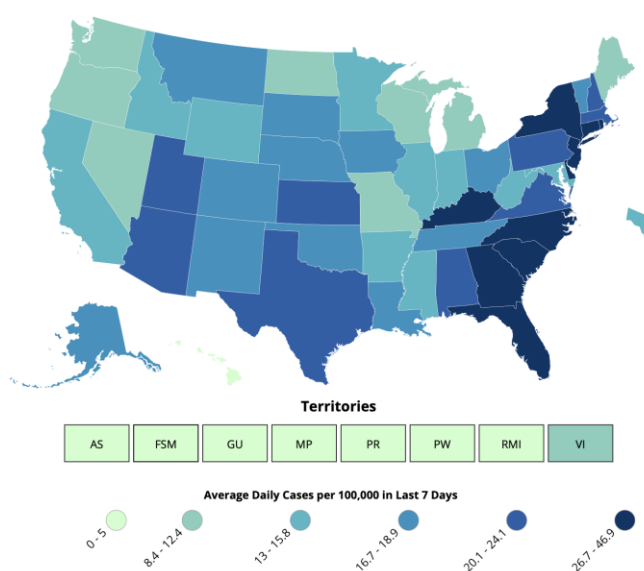


The COVID-19 average daily case rate over the past 7 days by state as measured in cases per 100,000 persons. You can see that the higher rates of infection have shifted to the east coast from the Sun Belt.

February 26, 2021

December 26, 2020

US COVID-19 Average Daily Case Rate in Last 7 Days, by State/Territory (cases per 100K)



### Conservation Programs Update

Despite the winter weather, NRCS' conservation team deployed programs to roll out over \$57 million in projects aimed at locally important resource issues, prepared to aid those most in need from the disastrous winter weather, and finalized important farm bill rules that will provide flexibilities for participants. Innovation remains on the front burner, and with the new USDA leadership starting to take form, we anticipate a much broader role for conservation programs. And, it's never too soon to start thinking about the next Farm Bill!

### Program Investments

On Feb. 17, 2021 USDA reminded rural communities, farmers and ranchers, families and small businesses affected by the recent winter storms of its programs that provide assistance. In addition to insurance, and other disaster response programs, USDA highlighted the financial resources through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help with immediate needs and long-term support to help recover from natural disasters and conserve water resources. Assistance may also be available for emergency animal mortality disposal from natural disasters and other causes.

On Feb. 5, 2021, USDA announced extension of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) General Signup period, which had previously been announced as ending on Feb. 12, 2021. USDA will continue to accept offers as it takes this opportunity for the



incoming Administration to evaluate ways to increase enrollment. Signup for CRP Grasslands runs March 15, 2021 through April 23, 2021. You can see more at:

<https://www.usda.gov/media/press-releases/2021/02/05/usda-extends-general-signup-conservation-reserve-program>

On Jan. 14, 2021, USDA announced it was investing more than \$46 million through the Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership for projects that mitigate wildfire risk, improve water quality, and restore healthy forest ecosystems on public and private lands. Funding for 37 projects includes \$13 million for eight new projects and \$33.3 million to complete work on 29 projects previously selected in 2019 and 2020. Through the projects, USDA's Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are working hand-in-hand with agricultural producers, forest landowners, and National Forest System lands to improve forest health using available Farm Bill conservation programs and other authorities. For full project descriptions and information on completed projects, visit

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/initiatives/?cid=stelprdb1244394>

On Jan. 13, 2021, USDA announced \$11.65 million going to 14 projects to help agricultural producers and private landowners trap and control feral swine as part of the Feral Swine Eradication and Control Pilot Program. This investment expands the pilot program to new projects in Alabama, Hawaii, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas. All partner work will be closely coordinated with the APHIS operations in the pilot project areas. Additional information about the expectations for the 34 active projects across 12 states can be found at

[www.nrcs.usda.gov/FSCP](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/FSCP).

### **Program Rules**

On Feb. 4, 2021, NRCS released the final rule for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). NRCS received more than 570 comments on the ACEP interim rule, which was published in January 2020. Overall, comments expressed support for the changes made in the interim rule but requested some clarifications and additional changes. The final rule responds to these comments and adopts the interim rule with minor changes. You can view the final rule at:

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-02-04/pdf/2021-02268.pdf>

On Jan. 13, 2021, NRCS released the final rule for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP). The 2018 Farm Bill made RCP a stand-alone program with its own dedicated funding and simplified rules for partners and producers. NRCS received comments from more than 65 organizations and individuals on the interim rule, which was published in February 2020. To integrate that feedback, the final rule adopts the interim rule with minor changes. You can read the final rule here:

<https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2021-00300.pdf>.

### **Advising**

USDA announced the new appointments to Task Force on Agricultural Air Quality Research on Jan. 19, 2021. The 26 newly appointed members will serve terms of up to two years beginning January 4, 2021 through 2023. You can read more about the new members and the task force at

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/air/taskforce/>

On Jan. 6, 2021, USDA announced it was seeking members for a new advisory committee on urban agriculture, part of a broader effort to focus on the needs of urban farmers. The 12-person committee will advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production practices as well as identify any barriers to urban agriculture. Nomination must be submitted by mail or email by March 5, 2021. You can read more about the committee and nominations at:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/newsroom/releases/?cid=NRCSEPRD1721228>

### **Technology and Innovation**

Building on Innovation: A Pathway to Resilience was the theme for USDA's 97th Agricultural Outlook Forum held virtually on Feb. 18-19, 2021. The focus was on the central role science and innovation have played in helping the agricultural sector overcome challenges and build resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sessions were conducted in five thematic areas:

- Supply Chain Resilience
- Commodity Market Outlooks
- Food Price and Farm Income Outlooks
- U.S. Trade and the Global Market Place
- Managing Risk and Ensuring Sustainability
- Innovation, Technology, and Productivity

While previous forums have highlighted natural resources and conservation individually, this year the conservation topics that were included were integrated within the five themes. Of note were presentations in the Innovation and Technology theme related to the 4 Rs, precision agriculture, and water quality and quantity. You can view the program and available slides at:

<https://www.usda.gov/oce/ag-outlook-forum>.

On Jan. 12, 2021, USDA released its U.S. Agriculture Innovation Strategy Directional Vision for Research summary and dashboard intended to help guide future research decisions within USDA. The strategy synthesizes the information USDA collected as part of a public announcement earlier this year engaging the public on research priorities under the Agriculture Innovation Agenda (AIA). Conservation and sustainable agriculture appear in the summary within individual goals for crops, livestock, and forestry. It also highlights the use of USDA data to create benchmarks and evaluate USDA progress in six areas: agriculture productivity, forest management, food loss and waste, carbon sequestration and greenhouse gas, water quality, and renewable energy. You can view the strategy here:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/AIS.508-01.06.2021.pdf>

And the dashboard here: <https://www.ree.usda.gov/AIS-dashboard>

## Payments?

Expect to start hearing more about Market Facilitation Program (MFP, 2018-2020) and Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP, 2020) payments, which dwarfed agricultural spending since their inception. MFP was intended to soften the blow to agriculture from the tariff conflict initiated in 2018 and CFAP was intended to compensate farmers for market losses in the time of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. MFP signup concluded at the end of 2019, and USDA has suspended signup and processing of CFAP payments as they evaluate "additional steps to bring relief and support to all parts of food and agriculture during the coronavirus pandemic..."

Outside of Commodity and Crop Insurance programs, these programs alone will have pumped almost \$47 billion into the farm economy over three years—more than 250 percent of the conservation program spending levels over the same time period. That \$47 billion, authorized outside of the Farm Bill, will not figure into the baseline as lawmakers begin to consider the 2023 Farm Bill in the coming year. That said, participants of both programs were required to comply with sodbuster and swampbuster. Conservation groups are looking at the resulting disparity created between farm and conservation programs, so we anticipate a robust discussion going forward.

You can read more about MFP and CFAP at:

<https://www.farmers.gov/manage/mfp>

<https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2019/11/the-market-facilitation-program-a-new-direction-in-public-agricultural-policy.html>

<https://www.farmers.gov/cfap1>

<https://www.farmers.gov/cfap2>

<https://farmdocdaily.illinois.edu/2020/09/the-distribution-of-cfap-payments-across-commodities-and-states.html>

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

**Cheryl Simmons**, <http://www.arcse.org/>

### HEADED TO SPRING!

ARCSE is looking for volunteers for nomination to President Elect. It is a great position, and you get two years to absorb the ARCSE structure and visit with representatives and members before moving to President. We have a great supportive board and conduct bi-monthly board visits. Please let us know if you have a recommendation or can consider the position.

As ARCSE moves forward, we hope to continue to support student related efforts. The SWCS (<https://www.swcs.org/>), in partnership with ARCSE (<http://www.arcse.org>) is moving to accept applications for the summer intern position. The deadline to apply is March 5<sup>th</sup>. By going virtual for the 2021 annual meeting, we are all saving potential travel money, so consider contributing to support student activities.

Our hearts go out to all dealing with the aftermath of extreme weather and the pandemic. Spring is on its way, and we hope for better as we move through this year. As the "normal" settles into place, please feel free to reach out to ARCSE. We enjoy hearing from all for the newsletter but visiting at the State and local levels can also be a great chance to catch up with co-workers and new friends in conservation.



**ARCSE President, Cheryl Simmons, Moscow, ID**

ARCSE is accepting nominations for 2021 ARCSE Awards for Outstanding Community Service, Meritorious and Distinguished Service. Please alert your representative or any board member to nominate for these awards. More is on our website at [arcse.org](http://www.arcse.org).

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

**Paul Benedict, Membership Chair**

### New Member

**Craig Derickson**—Lincoln, Nebraska

### New Life Members

**Kevin D. Norton**—Woodworth, Louisiana

**Greg Walker**—Raleigh, North Carolina

### Membership Dues

I would like to thank all the ARCSE members who have paid their 2021 dues and hard copy fees. Please remember, if you wish to get the next **ARCSE Newsletter** and **2021 ARCSE Directory** you must pay your 2021 dues by **April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021**. I will be sending you a friendly reminder postcard in the next couple of weeks if I do not have record of your 2021 dues payment, so you can save me effort and postage if you pay your dues right away.

**2021 ARCSE Directory**

The 2021 ARCSE Directory will be coming out with the May/June Newsletter. Please make sure I have your correct information for the Directory. Email me at [soilwarden@verizon.net](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net) if there is anything you want added or removed from the directory.

**ARCSE MEMBERSHIP DUES**

Member	\$18 per year
Affiliate	\$18 per year
Life (One-time payment)	
Age 64 or younger	\$250
Age 65 thru 74	\$200
Age 75 or older	\$125

*NOTE: Dues payment includes receipt of the bimonthly electronic newsletter only. All members (both life members and those who pay annual dues) who desire a hard copy of the newsletter must pay an additional fee of \$12.00 per year. Please submit Dues to ARCSE at P.O. Box 8965 Moscow, ID 83843*

**DEADLINE FOR MAY/JUNE 2021 NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS IS APRIL 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

**ALABAMA**

**Earl Norton, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [earl.norton@charter.net](mailto:earl.norton@charter.net)**

Current news regarding our retirees continues to be short. A small group (4–6) continue to meet monthly for breakfast in Auburn. New COVID-19 cases are decreasing weekly, and seniors over 65 years old can get their vaccination shots. So we expect that our “regulars” will be returning for breakfast during the next couple of months. At this point, we are complimenting our retirees for staying home and well. As far as the local group knows, none of our Alabama retirees have died because of COVID-19 complications. **Morris Gillespie**, retired information specialist for Alabama, passed away on February 21<sup>st</sup> from an extended illness involving several non-COVID-19 related problems.

On a somewhat personal note, I can add that the past year provided especially favorable growing conditions for forests and pastures. Longleaf seedlings planted at my forest during December 2019 came through their first year with excellent survival. Most cattle farmers have more than enough hay for this winter, and their cow-calf herds appear to have gone through the winter exceptionally well. Row crop farmers generally had plenty of rain last year, but two hurricanes caused a lot of damage in certain areas to row crops and pecan orchards.

I attempt to highlight one of our retirees in each newsletter. However, it is difficult to get a retiree to provide information about their activities and accomplishments, and there were no volunteers for this newsletter. I will try harder to highlight one of our retirees next month.

On a very personal note, I should add that I received the Lifetime Achievement Award recently from EnviroCert International for CPESC activities (Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control). I want to take this opportunity to thank fellow SCS/NRCS retirees **John Peterson** (VA), **Don Lake** (NY) and **Eric Scherer** (RI) for the support that they provided along my path.

**CALIFORNIA**

**Bill Ward, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [bluegrassbillward@gmail.com](mailto:bluegrassbillward@gmail.com)**

Greetings from California! We hope all our fellow retirees across the nation are doing well as we move into the spring.

**California Update on Coronavirus:** There are two good news items to report. The daily number of both new cases and deaths is beginning to drop in the recent period from about mid-January to the first of February. In addition, vaccines are becoming more available, and many of my fellow retirees are reporting that they have gotten the first vaccine shots. I am now scheduled for my first vaccine on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

We had a California record number of participants in our last monthly Zoom Meeting, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, with participants as shown below.

Following is a report I shared With California retirees regarding that meeting.

“Hi Folks, it was great Zooming with the folks who made it to our first Wednesday of the month Zoom session last week. We did have a record size group of 20 join us. We also had a special guest join us, Carlos Suarez, our current State Conservationist, who wished us all well in the New Year and shared a little how our current staff is working in this COVID environment.

From Carlos, the agency's work continues on with the biggest change that many staff members are doing a lot of work from home. Carlos wished all our retirees the best in the New Year. From Carlos's comments it is clear our agency is still a people-oriented group that cares for and enjoys working with each other. Thank you, Carlos for joining us and sharing your encouraging messages. You are welcome anytime.





**Top row L-R: Vicki Davis, Bill Ward, Madalene Ransome, Paul Benedict, and Jolene Lau. Next Row: Ron Schultz, Rich Casale, Helen Flach, Al Cerna, and Jack Bramhall. Next Row: Anita Brown, Jim Chapman, Pat Grover, Hank Wyman, and Harold Honeyfield. Bottom Row: Carlos Suarez, Mark Parson, Ed Schmidt, Bob Snieckus, and Walt Sykes.**

From our retirees the news shared by folks was generally good news. Most people are doing the same things, staying close to home and being careful. Many folks shared they had received their first COVID Vaccine shots."

Many thanks to all who could join us, Best wishes to all—Bill."

I talked last time about getting a Zoom meeting together for the CA Eng/Design and WNTC staffs that worked together for many years on important projects for California. I am happy to report success in that effort, having the meeting Feb 10<sup>th</sup>. In addition, the Zoom session was made even more special by having local sponsor staff join us from the two counties noted above.

The group who participated are shown below.



**TOP ROW, L-R: Don Wallin, Bill Ward, Don Stettler, Jon Frye. MIDDLE ROW: Matt Griffin, Leland Saele, Bob Snieckus, Harold Honeyfield. BOTTOM ROW: Lowell Kenedy, Peter Sheyday, Jim Chapman, Walt Sykes**

**Bill Ward** recognized the people who made it all happen— NRCS Staff from California, the WNTC, and Staff from Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

**Peter Sheydayi** and **Hugh Claybaugh** of Ventura County, and **Jon Frye** and **Matt Griffin**, from Santa Barbara County, shared some photos and history of accomplishments working with NRCS.

It was a very enjoyable gathering for all of us. I had not seen or talked to a number of these folks in more than a decade. It was a very positive re-connection for us, and I continue to say Zoom is a great way for all of us to stay connected.

Well, that is it from California, until next time, wishing all retirees the best and to be safe!



## COLORADO

**Jack Carlson, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [pspicata@gmail.com](mailto:pspicata@gmail.com)**

Not a whole lot of news from Colorado. Many of us beyond 70 have received our 1<sup>st</sup> and now 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccine shots and are therefore close to being able to get out and about more. I have been able to continue helping CSU with several environmental modeling research projects, supporting high volume simulations using the WEPP (runoff, water erosion, sediment), WEPS (wind erosion, PM10 air particulates), SWAT+ (nutrient loss), DayCent (soil carbon, CO<sub>2</sub> & N<sub>2</sub>O emissions), and DSSAT (cropping systems), involving several locations across the country. Zoom with stakeholders, GIS/maps, photos, scatterplots. Sort of a virtual travel experience, but nothing like the real world.

You may want to check out the partially completed Missouri River Recovery Program Information Management System at <https://mrrp.erams.com>. Click "Guest" and proceed. We're just starting the last year of a three-year project for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This not-yet-advertised version is from last November, which we'll be updating soon to include a bird population model, more figures, some infographics, and other features. Emphasis on management options to maintain and improve sandbar habitat for birds and conditions for sustaining pallid sturgeon populations. Will check Google analytics to see if we get a web traffic bump from the ARCSE community.

## FLORIDA

**Bill Kuenstler, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [bkuenstler@gmail.com](mailto:bkuenstler@gmail.com)**

There was no "brutal winter" here in the Panhandle of Florida, but it has been a colder winter than usual. Our plants are just starting to show signs of life, with buds swelling on some, and a few others getting a little new growth. I have had "memories" showing up on my Facebook feed showing pictures of plants fully leafed out on this date last year or two years ago, and those same plants are just beginning to show new growth this week.

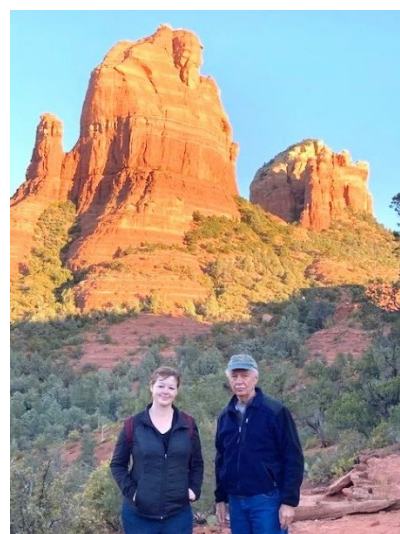
It was a different story for our daughter and son-in-law in Austin, TX. They lost power at about 2:00am on Monday, Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, and didn't get it back until about 3:00am Thursday, Feb. 18<sup>th</sup>. Then the water went off Wed. Feb. 17<sup>th</sup>, and was off until Sunday, Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>. They had filled their bathtub and some buckets with water, so they had some they could use to flush the toilet. But they couldn't cook anything because the power was off, and the stove is electric. The house temperature got down to around 45°, but they stayed warm with extra clothes and blankets, and by cuddling with their two cats—their "cat ovens" as **Jackie** called them. Fortunately for them (and for us, because they rent the house from us), there were no frozen pipes, so they made it through relatively unscathed. As a bonus they learned some new coping skills.

## IOWA

**Mark Jensen, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [amjens1@gmail.com](mailto:amjens1@gmail.com)**

**Barb Stewart** reports that she is still doing some contract work with the National Farmers Union. Her primary job is doing conservation planning, specifically targeting the underserved. She will be continuing this work at least through August. Barb also has some other interesting activities going on. She did some hiking in the Tucson, AZ area last year. Then last fall, Barb, her husband **Randy**, and daughter **Jenny** went to Sedona, AZ to do some hiking in the Red Rock country. When Barb was telling me about her activities, she was watching the blizzard that was going on outside and wishing she was back down there. I don't blame her! Barb and Randy have been raising Morgan horses for quite a few years. The pictures show two foals from last year. They have both found their permanent homes up in Minnesota.



**Giant Saguaro cactus in the Tucson Area****Barb and Randy Stewart hiking near Sedona, AZ****Morgan foals raised by Barb and Randy Stewart**

**Norm Koester** has been working on an interesting project to help pass time during the long winter. He is scanning, arranging, enhancing, and organizing old slides and photos. At last count, he was working with 7,424 slides and photos. Norm said that it turned into a bigger project than he originally thought it would be. I'm guessing that there are a lot of us who would like to get ourselves motivated to take on a similar project.

Thanks to **Lyle Asell** for the following report on their December deer hunt: "Two of our three sons were home for the second shotgun deer season in December. Along with a friend, we hunted from blinds on our farm and neighboring farms the first day with no luck. I did watch three bobcats for about 15 minutes, which was really cool. It was cold, so we quit early. When the boys retrieved a pickup, they noticed a deer in a hay field near our house, but quite a ways out. I have mentioned, several times, that I wanted to shoot a deer from the deck before I croak. Jeff, son number two, grabbed his shotgun and snuggled close to the deck while the rest of us enjoyed a beverage. There was animated conversation about the chances of him hitting the deer with some hope he would miss, because it was cold and it would need to be field dressed, hung, etc. Using the railing as a rest, and a shotgun modified by numerous gadgets including a scope, there was a loud BOOM followed by the dead deer hitting the ground. After numerous editorial comments, and a fair amount of bragging, the distance was paced at 240 yards from the deck to the deer. Luck and skill were both involved along with flat shooting slugs." Even with good slugs and a scope, that was quite a shot!

This was a good year for deer hunting with family members. **Deb Vonnahme**, her husband **Tony**, their daughter and son-in-law, and two grandkids went deer hunting in Guthrie County. Deb took the prize with a nice 10-point buck. This was the first year of actual hunting for her 13-year-old grandson, carrying a gun. Deb said he got his first deer with about 15 minutes of daylight left on the last day of the season. Her 15-year-old granddaughter got her third deer this year. The rest of the group got two 8-point bucks and another doe. They butcher their own deer, including making jerky, jerky bits, and summer sausage to go along with the steaks, roasts, stew meat, butterfly chops, etc. There will be a bunch of good eating for the next year!

**Keith Krause** reports that he's been keeping busy shoveling snow, avoiding the virus, and doing outdoor activities. He has done some ice fishing in local ponds, getting bluegills and bass for the skillet. He also had a good deer hunting story. A group of seven family members set up deer camp during the shotgun season. They had a successful hunt, tagging four bucks and four does. After doing all their own butchering, they also ended up with a lot of good venison in the freezer.

**Deb Vonnahme with her 10-point buck**

During the past couple of months, we have welcomed several folks into our retiree family. These include: **Deanna Rohrer**, DC in Estherville; **Mark Bienemann**, SCT on the Vinton Resource Team; **Lane Collins**, ASTC(FO) in Fairfield; **Kevin Funni**, DC in Oskaloosa; and **Dennis Sande**, Resource Team Leader on the Charles City Resource Team.

We were recently saddened by the passing of **Paul Johnson**, former Chief of the NRCS, who lived on his farm near Decorah. See the In Memoriam section for more details.



## KANSAS

**Deanne Lull, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [rlull2@cox.net](mailto:rlull2@cox.net)**

In the last couple of months there has been happiness (eight new retirees), hope (COVID-19 vaccine is now available), and sadness (five retirees passed away). As the pandemic continues, watch for special moments—a beautiful sunrise or sunset, a hug from a loved one, a lawn covered with snow glistening like diamonds, getting a thinking-of-you call or card, or receiving a bouquet of flowers.

Famous last words—I am not going car shopping with temperatures in the single digits. The next day I am looking at a new vehicle sitting in my driveway. As we drove by our car dealership, we saw a vehicle that we thought would end my struggles of getting in and out of the SUV we were driving. In less than an hour, Ron and I had found the perfect vehicle, and my problem was solved.

**Andy Phelps** volunteered again this year to help with the Salina community Christmas dinner. The dinner was a carry-out meal this year, giving approximately 4,500 people the opportunity to have a good meal to take home. This is the eighth year he has driven into Salina from Dorrance, KS, on Christmas Day to offer his service.

December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, was the retirement date for eight new retirees. Retiring were:

**Jodi L. Cushenbery**, Supervisory District Conservationist, in the Independence Office in the Independence Management Unit; **Kent E. Fravel**, Soil Conservation Technician, in the Dodge City Office in the Dodge City Management Unit; **David A. Funke**, Soil Conservationist, in the Lyndon Office in the Lawrence Management Unit; **Gary D. Headrick**, District Conservationist, in the Sublette Office in the Ulysses Management Unit; **David J. Kraft**, Regional Ecological Site Specialist, in the Northern Great Plains Soil Survey Office in the State Office, Salina; **Cynthia S. Lucas**, Office Assistant, on the Water Resources Staff in the State Office in Salina; **Amanda D. Shaw**, Supervisory District Conservationist, in the Garden City Office in the Garden City Management Unit; and **Douglas J. Svitak**, Soil Conservation Technician, in the Marion Office in the Marion Management Unit

We were saddened to learn that five retirees have passed away. Passing away on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020, were **Thomas D. Cyre** and **Ernest O. Haefner, Jr.** Tom retired in 2016 as a Geologist in the State Office in Salina. He is survived by his wife, **Sandra**. **Ernest** retired in 1995 as the District Conservationist in the Junction City, KS, Field Office. His wife, **Nila**, preceded him in death. **Karen F. Churchman** died on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. When she retired in 2010, she was the Secretary to the State Conservationist in the State Office in Salina. Her husband, **Ralph**, preceded her in death. **Michael C. Dassel-Stuke** died on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. **Michael** retired in 2011 as a Soil Conservation Technician headquartered in the Hiawatha Management Unit in Hiawatha, KS. His wife, **Donna**, survives. Passing away on February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021, was **Maurice “Mike” Eugene Ahern**. **Mike** served as the Personnel Officer in the State Office in Salina, until he retired in 1990. **Margery**, his wife of 64 years, survives.

## MICHIGAN

**William Fude, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [nigel482@aol.com](mailto:nigel482@aol.com)**

Nothing has changed in Michigan. Not aware of anyone going on to their reward in their next life. Everybody is hunkered down hoping for a COVID vaccination. Got both of mine and made it to Florida. Sun and warmth help shorten the winter. Stay safe and be well.

## MID-ATLANTIC STATES

**Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC**

**Ken Carter, ARCSE Representative**

**Email: [duckheadone@gmail.com](mailto:duckheadone@gmail.com)**

Mid- Atlantic activity is slow due the virus. Everyone seems to be staying home and trying to be safe while waiting for their vaccine shots.

**George and Ellen Norris** are pleased to report the birth on Feb. 15<sup>th</sup> of twin great grandsons, **Westin and Cody**, born to **Savannah and John Mark** and grandparents **Beth and Daniel Hamilton**. The great grands are looking forward to the time when they can visit in person.

**Carl Bouchard** reports that all NARFE activities in Delaware have been suspended except for the newsletter.

Progress around the region on vaccine distribution is erratic. Many people I have talked to are still waiting on a long list. Others have had their first shots and few, like myself, have been lucky to have received both. Please take every opportunity you can to get vaccinated and help end this craziness.

This in from **John Peterson**: This National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) was started here in the DC metro area by the Water Environment Federation (WEF), and it was recently taken over by EnviroCert International. SWCD staff in urban and urbanizing areas along with county governments such as ours here in Fairfax County, VA recommend and use it.



**After 30 years, Carl has added a new member to the family in a 9-month old rescued miniature Schnauzer mix named Kona.**



Envirocert International, Inc. (ECI), recently acquired the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program (NGICP) from the Water Environment Federation (WEF). The NGICP sets national certification standards for green infrastructure (GI). NGICP meets international best practice standards and advances sustainable communities by promoting GI as an environmentally and economically beneficial stormwater management option. The NGICP also supports green workforces and establishes a career path for skilled GI workers. The NGICP was approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in 2019. ANSI is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1918 that administers and coordinates voluntary standards and conformity assessment systems.

WEF is a not-for-profit technical and educational organization of 35,000 individual members and 75 affiliated Member Associations representing water quality professionals around the world since 1928. In 2015 WEF created the NGICP. After developing and incubating the program, including achieving ANSI certification, WEF, a membership organization, decided to transfer the NGICP to an organization that is focused on operating and maintaining certifications. After a search of many such certification organizations, WEF chose ECI as the most capable, and WEF and ECI negotiated and completed the purchase. The transaction has ECI and WEF planning future projects together. ECI offers internationally recognized professional certifications, which can be earned by demonstrating qualifications based on a combination of education, experience, and passing rigorous examinations. All ECI certifications assure governmental regulatory agencies throughout the world that ECI Certified Professionals have the necessary credentials for their work. Currently ECI administers the following professional certifications worldwide; Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC), Certified Professional in Stormwater Quality (CPSWQ), Certified Professional in Municipal Stormwater Management (CPMSM), Certified Professional in Industrial Stormwater Management (CPISM), Certified Erosion, Sediment and Stormwater Inspector (CESSWI). The NGICP Program compliments these ECI Certification Programs as well as the Qualified Stormwater Manager (QSM) Certificate of Training.

John also reported that Chief **Paul Johnson** recently died. Additionally, **Alex Barbarika** died in a house fire on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021.



From Jerry Bernard: a friendly fox came out of the woods and gave us the eye. He was hunting mice and voles that were attracted by our bird feeders.

## MINNESOTA

**John Brach, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [jcb1153@yahoo.com](mailto:jcb1153@yahoo.com)

### First Black District Conservationist in Minnesota

The way people treat the land, a lot of the time, is the way they treat other people too. ~Charlie Loggins



Charlie Loggins surveying a farm. PHOTO CREDIT: Winona Daily News.

**Charlie Loggins** was studying agricultural education at Alcorn State University when he was recruited along with 12 other students in his class to work for the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as part of **President Lyndon B. Johnson's** Great Society.

The Great Society consisted of a series of policies, legislation and programs intended to end poverty, reduce crime, abolish inequality and improve the environment. The initiative included recruitment of students from Black universities into federal agencies.

In 1974, Loggins became the district conservationist (DC) for Winona County, MN, a position he held through 1987. He was the first Black DC in Minnesota, and the first person of color most of his stakeholders had ever met.

Because of the historic erosion and flooding problems in the Whitewater River valley, Loggins' work in Minnesota is an important part of the watershed history.

#### Loggins' Work

- Conservation plans and installment of erosion control structures in farms.
- River restoration efforts on Garvin Brook and the Whitewater River.
- Conservation field days for farmers to learn from one another.
- Wildlife conservation workshop, with participants and presenters from different states and countries.

Convincing farmers to incorporate conservation practices wasn't easy, admitted Loggins: "You work to get their confidence. People change their minds about things if they feel you have their best interests."

In his 40-year career in the Midwest, Charlie Loggins left a lasting conservation legacy. But he reminds us of the importance of those who paved the way before him and the commitment of agencies and stakeholders to protect natural resources.

## MISSOURI

**Dave Rastorfer**, ARCSE Representative

Email: [daverastorfer@aol.com](mailto:daverastorfer@aol.com), [moarscse@aol.com](mailto:moarscse@aol.com)

**Jan Barker:** COVID is not a subject to be taken lightly. **Gary Barker** had COVID early in December. He was taken to the ER after a week of 100–103° fever and numerous symptoms. He had pneumonia by then, but they sent us home. His fever raged for another week. After being in touch with our family physician, he finally agreed to see him. By this time, his oxygen saturation had gone down to 78-79% (at 70% you are on a ventilator), and he could hardly walk. Very scary times. Kansas City hospitals were full as was Mosaic in St Joseph. Our choice was Mosaic at Albany or Maryville. If he needed a ventilator, neither had one. He was hospitalized for eight days. Gary still struggles to breathe. He has had numerous tests, labs, and doctors' visits, but as of Feb. 9<sup>th</sup>, had not seen a pulmonologist. We are presently at the Mayo Clinic. He's lost 20-25 lbs, is very weak, has extreme fatigue, terrible cough, and shortness of air. Needless to say, we probably won't be snow birds this year! Keep him in your prayers.

**Bob Ball:** Something I have longed to do in life is write a book. Those who know me are likely thinking I achieved that a few thousand emails ago! But I have read many true books, so why not write my own? Last Christmas my daughter and son-in-law gifted me a subscription to "StoryWorth." I receive a new question each week, then I develop my personal story responding to the specific questions. My daughter submitted questions for each week of the year. At the conclusion of these writings, StoryWorth compiles a book about my life, written by me, which includes photos I have submitted with each weekly response. Typical questions are: "How did you get your first job?" or "What were your friends like in high school?" My answers are typically 1.5 pages in length, including captions for submitted photos. Responding to these questions is not easy. A lot of thought is needed, especially when the focus is on friends or teachers and not family members where it is much easier to express. For more about StoryWorth visit their website: [www.storyworth.com](http://www.storyworth.com). Digging up the photos to support my answers began a second project—finding, categorizing, and filing thousands of family photos. Actually, I have taken more photos than I have written emails. Believe it or not! We tackled our color slides and videos last year by viewing every slide, throwing out many, then shipping the better slides to a commercial site to be digitized. I copied the videos onto DVDs. Black and white photos and color photos are much greater in number and much more challenging to categorize than store or file. This has been a very time-consuming endeavor for both **Lenore** and I, but it has kept our minds somewhat away from political events and the pandemic, while making progress in recording some of our family history.

**Dennis Shirk:** Hi from the Shirks. We are well and have had our first shot. We'll get the second on February 26<sup>th</sup> at Rolla. Just trying to be very careful and so far, no real problems. Looks like very brutal weather for the next 7 to 10 days. We have laid in our supplies and re ready for it. "See ya down the trail."

**Alton Taylor:** Well, it has been below freezing for 72 hours and expected to continue at least that many more down here in Texas. If this is global warming, I don't like it. Hope Galveston Island is warmer next week. A little insight into 2020 West Texas farming, it was a bad year. The proof is that over 80% of my farm income was from Insurance and Gov't payments. North Texas made good crops including milo. One grandson and his wife contracted the virus, and they had a rough time with it. Two members of my Sunday school class have contracted the virus and are doing good.

**Craig King:** Good cold Belated Valentine's Day to all. Even though I grew up in Northeast Missouri, my body is not caring for cold weather. Looking forward to warmer weather. The kids made it so far attending school in person, the way it should be. **Weston** had Labrum Surgery on January 5<sup>th</sup> and is recovering from that. He is looking forward to therapy and getting back to physical training for fall football. He had to give up wrestling, but under the circumstances did the right thing. **Candra** is playing basketball, which is nearing the end. She will be participating in track in the spring. She also signed up to play on a local AAU Basketball Team. It was her decision. We've tried to teach the kids to be successful and enjoy multiple sports, while having a life



outside of them. **Andrea** is keeping busy with work. She has been going into the office more but still works from home also. We have been having lambs. Thankfully all but one of the ewes lambbed before this cold snap. Hope she can wait a few more days. I've been working in the shop on some projects "that I was always going to get to," one being an old washstand that was in Andrea's Family. Hopefully I can get it done secretly! I'll probably go back to hauling some grain for the neighbor when the weather straightens out. Also got a call the other day from a friend that is a contractor that builds conservation practices. He said he could use some extra help. Will be laying out some practices again and operating a scraper, so it looks like I'll be busy. I did go in for a Heart Cath a couple of weeks ago. Was a little short of breath. Checking on all the previous plumbing work. Had a stent collapse, but my heart created new veins. Taking different medication and it seems to be working. Besides that, we are doing well. God Bless everyone.

**Frank Miller:** Just a short message from the F Miller household. We were staying in, shopping when necessary. Always wore face masks and sanitized our hands. Well, it didn't work, as both **Kay** and myself were checked and on Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> were diagnosed as positive COVID-19. On the 30<sup>th</sup> I ran out of breath, then Kay delivered me to the ER of Boone Hospital. Was admitted and treated. Spent three days there and sent home to recuperate. Kay didn't have many effects until five days after diagnosis. She then went downhill until the third visit to ER. An infusion and doctor consultation turned her around. Both are doing fine with no major effects. We both have times that we feel low on energy, but that is improving. With no family close by, we have had very little contact with the outside world. Watch a lot of TV, DVD movies and read books. We miss our Senior Activities, Church get-togethers and friend visitations. Especially miss our retiree breakfast gathering.

**John Rice:** Hello fellow retirees. I haven't been very faithful to respond to Dave's request for news lately, and I apologize for that. At 88 (me), not much happens around here that would be news. I received the 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID-19 shot February 11<sup>th</sup> from the VA in Kansas City. So far, no serious reaction. **Margaret** gets her 2<sup>nd</sup> shot in Chillicothe Thursday the 25<sup>th</sup>. My nephew lives on the Family Farm which is incorporated into an LLC set up to pass to future generations as long as they want to keep it that way. At the present time the row crop land is cash rented to a neighbor for corn and soybean, and the pasture and hay land to another neighbor with a cow/calf operation. I still serve on the Grundy County SWCD Board, the Ag Rep on the local Industrial Development Corporation, deacon and Sunday School teacher for our local rural church, and on the Administration Committee for the local Association of Baptist Churches. Also, I serve with the local VFW Post 919 Honor Guard detail for any veteran burial in this area. This COVID-19 thing is taking out a lot of our older veterans. I am still able to cut and split enough wood for our wood burning fireplace insert. The garden gets smaller each year. For this year it will be tomatoes, green beans, and sweet corn. Travel now is mostly limited to where we have Children, Grandchildren and Great Grand which would be in South Missouri, North Carolina, and Kansas.

**Mike Blaine:** Not much happening at Blaine Hill in this cold snowy weather. I have burned a lot of firewood, pushed a lot of snow with the tractor, and am hoping that the last week of February will be the break we have been looking for. The older I get, the less I like a cold north wind! But other than the weather, we have had a good winter. Neither **Pam** nor I have had any sickness, not even a bad cold, since we both had COVID-19 in November. I am looking forward to spring and some farm work. I am planning another stream crossing (really just a big ditch) this spring. The one we did last fall has worked wonderfully. This one will be much bigger in pipe size and stage of water. I'm looking forward to it!! Best wishes to all.

**Clif Baumer:** Although it started off rough, my first year of retirement had many blessings as well. On my very first day of retirement, I impaled my hand on a cedar branch. Wife **Michele**, son **Samuel** and I were on a New Year's Day hike at Rock Bridge State Park. I slipped on an icy spot and when I swung my hand back to break my fall, a sharp cedar branch got me. It didn't go all the way through my hand, but was pretty close. Changing the dressing twice a day involved pulling a long string of packing out of the wound and replacing it. That was not fun, but it did heal nicely.

In February, Michele and I went skiing in Colorado. We were having a great time until the third day when she fell and tore her anterior cruciate ligament. Two surgeries later, she is recovering well but has not yet been cleared to resume running. She had been running marathons prior to her injury and really misses the training and the women she ran with.



**Back Country Pizza, Nederland, CO**

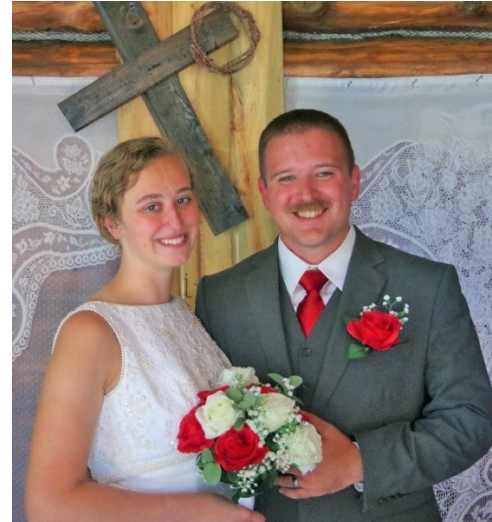


In March, I began a part-time job with Allstate Consultants. I have been helping with the two NRCS public water supply reservoirs planned in north Missouri. Groundbreaking for the 344-acre Little Otter Creek Reservoir is scheduled for March 19<sup>th</sup>. A Section 404 permit for the 2350-acre East Locust Creek Reservoir is expected later this year.

Also, in March, Michele and I traveled to Vandenburg Air Force Base on California's Central Coast to see our older son, **Josh**, graduate from missile school. While we were waiting in Denver for our connecting flight, Josh texted to tell us that they were shutting down the base due to COVID. We got to watch a live stream of his graduation and eventually got to tour the base. We really enjoyed the beauty of the central coast.



**Clif and Michele Baumer in California**



**Mr. and Mrs. Josh and Kate Baumer**

Our biggest blessing of the year was **Josh and Kate's** wedding. Following graduation, Josh was assigned to Malmstrom AFB in Great Falls, MT. He and Kate were married July 25<sup>th</sup> in a little log chapel in the mountains outside Cascade, MT. Sixteen of us attended, including the pastor and his wife. Josh and Kate met when they were students in AFROTC Detachment #442 at Missouri University of Science and Technology (formerly UM-Rolla). Kate graduated in May 2020 with a B.S. in civil engineering, and Josh graduated in May 2019 with a B.S. in mining engineering. They petitioned the Air Force for a joint assignment and as Josh said, "with the help of God and three colonels" were assigned to Malmstrom AFB.

Our latest news is Samuel's engagement to **Beth** on Valentine's Weekend. Two weddings in less than a year!

Hope all of you are healthy and enjoying retirement as much as I am.

I regret to inform you that **Debra Cheshier**, wife of **Rob Cheshier**, former State Geologist, passed away December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to: Rob Cheshier, 9150 Route E, Harrisburg, MO 65256.

Also passing was **William (Bill) Staggs**, long time conservation Technician in Shelbyville and Moberly:

<https://www.greeningeaganhayes.com/obituary/john-staggs>

## MONTANA

**Dick Gooby, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [inca@3rivers.net](mailto:inca@3rivers.net)

### Montana Big Sky Report

**Joyce Swartzendruber Report:** I heard from staff yesterday that **Lorna Rae Philp** died from cancer on January 28<sup>th</sup>. Details are in the In Memoriam section.

Hope you're doing okay. I got my COVID vaccine and can go back to volunteering at the hospital in two weeks.

**Gooby Ranch Report:** Since we are staying hid out so we don't get COVID-19, I spend a lot of time watching movies. I started sipping some beer while I watch the movies. About a month ago my glasses started going out of focus after I have three beers. It gets so bad that I can hardly see the TV screen. **Mary Ann** made me an appointment to go see the eye doctor. I took a six pack of beer so I should show him how my glasses get out of focus.

The doctor checked my eyes and the glasses, and I could see fine. Then he and I sat down and drank three beers so he could check my glasses after I have three beers. Sure enough, my glasses started to get out of focus. In the meantime, the eye doctor fell asleep. As hard as I tried, I couldn't wake him up. I was never able to find out what was wrong with my glasses.

Each year Mary Ann and I have a tailgate party on Super Bowl Sunday. This Super Bowl Sunday we were having a big blizzard. The temperature was minus 10°, the wind was 40 miles an hour, and it was snowing like crazy. That shot the tailgate party.

While Mary Ann went out to feed the cattle and horses, I decided to watch some movies. The next thing I knew Mary Ann had taken the tailgate off the pickup and carried it into the house. She set the tailgate across a couple of chairs and said we are having our tailgate party right here where it is warm.

She went out on the deck, got the barbeque going, and put the hot dogs and Buffalo Wings on the cooker. I sat on the tailgate and sipped a couple beers and ate some of Mary Ann's munchies. Since it was so cold outside, it took way longer than normal for the food to get barbequed. I sipped another beer, and my glasses got all blurry again.

Finally, the food was hot and Mary Ann was done outside. She was one happy girl. She dished up the food and we had our tailgate party. It was great. Thanks to Mary Ann we were able to keep our tailgate tradition. Even my glasses got over being blurry before the game started. Mary Ann thinks we should make another eye doctor appointment.

## NEBRASKA

**Norm Kempf, Jim Culver, ARCSE Representatives**

Emails: [nkempf@neb.rr.com](mailto:nkempf@neb.rr.com), [j4culver@aol.com](mailto:j4culver@aol.com)



**Zoom screen shot by Harold Klaege, participants at our February 20, 2021 meeting. Top row–L-R: Norm Helzer, Harold Klaege, Steve Stover, and Norm Kempf. Second row–L-R: Jim Culver, Donna and Gus Dornbusch, Marc Crouch, and Thomas Reinsch. Third row–L-R: Steve Scheinost, Bill Hance, Roger Hammer, and Clint Johnson. Fourth row–L-R: Gary Muckel, Claudia Stevenson, Craig Derickson, and Jim Harder.**



**Norm Helzer and snow blower in action during record 15-inch record January snowstorm–Lincoln, Nebraska.**



**Norm Kempf is a long-term successful deer hunter. This year was no exception.**

Last month's newsletter featured **Francis King** who was to celebrate her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on December 31, 2020. We are sorry to inform you that she died of COVID just one day short of her birthday.



**Frances King, a victim of COVID-19, one day before she would have been 100 years young.**

**Jim Culver** was reviewing and sorting out some of our old Lincoln SCS/NRCS Retirees Club material and came across a letter from Neil Bogner to Frances E King congratulating Frances as being recognized as a "Senior Conservationist." The letter was



dated October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2003. We are including a letter from her daughter, **Annette Murrell**, that talks about the family's trial with COVID and expresses her appreciation for the retirees' tribute to honor her mother.

*I was in the in the hospital for twenty-three days with COVID-19 pneumonia. I spent a week on a ventilator. During my hospital stay, COVID-19 killed my mother, Frances Elizabeth King, the day before her 100th birthday. I was with Mommy during her death. We were both in the COVID unit at Bryan East and I spoke to her on the phone while she died. After she passed, the chaplain wheeled me into her room, and I was able to sit with her for some time. It was a moment of utter grief and pure grace. I believe she waited on me because she died the day I arrived by ambulance to the hospital. I miss Mom, but I feel wrapped in her strength and love. She was buried January 15<sup>th</sup> in a private and live-streamed ceremony. She is now one of the over 400,000 individuals in the U.S. who have been brutally murdered by this devastating disease.*

*The doctor who cared for me while I was on the ventilator visited me before my discharge. He thanked me for surviving because he said they needed successes to keep going. I guess not many of us make it. I feel fortunate and grateful to be alive. You do see the world and your priorities much differently after a brush with death. My family, friends, and colleagues mean the world to me, and I truly understand that those you love must come first in your life.*

*Although the ventilator saved my life, it also bent my vocal chords out of shape. I am seeing a throat specialist who has told me that while I have no permanent nerve damage, I do have an infection, for which I'm being treated. I sound like Lauren Bacall with a six-pack-a-day habit. The doctor will give me no timeline when my voice will return. I have been told patience is my friend. This, of course, is hard because, for the past fourteen years on the weekends, I have been the morning host at NET Radio, our statewide National Public Radio station. I don't know when I'll be able to return. I also don't know if I'll ever sing again. But I'm prepared to live with whatever happens.*

*However, I will return to my weekday gig at Aging Partners this Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup>, working from home. I am glad. I have to begin my new normal sometime, and even though I am still dealing with weakness and an unsteady gait, I am ready to work.*

*I want to give a special shout out to my family, especially my son, Lathan Alexander Murrell, who has been my rock. He stepped up in so many ways in dealing with his grandmother's funeral and my hospitalization. I'm bursting with pride and gratitude. I also want to thank my other family members who have stood by me and supported me with love and lots of attention.*

*The newsletter is beautiful! I am so sad Mom died the day before her birthday. I am sad she couldn't see the lovely tribute in the newsletter. She loved all of her friends and former colleagues at the Soil Conservation Service. She enjoyed her long Federal Career. Thank you for giving her a lasting tribute. Blessings, Annette Louise Murrell.*

The January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Lincoln SCS/NRCS Retirees' Club was held via Zoom because of the COVID-19 pandemic and started by **Jim Culver**, the current chairperson. There were 15 members present: **Jim Culver, Gus and Donna Dornbusch, Bill Hance, Jim Harder, Norm Helzer, Harold Klaege, Gary Muckel, Arlis Plummer, Tom Reinsch, Steve Scheinost, Ken Noonan, Keith Sheets, Arnold Mendenhall, and Roger Hammer**. Three guests were welcomed: **Craig Derickson, Marc Crouch, and Doug Christensen**. The last in-person meeting was held February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020, at Stauffer's Café.

**Tom Reinsch** reported that the following people had been contacted and agreed to serve as officers for 2021: Chairperson, **Tom Reinsch**; Vice-Chairperson, **Jim Culver**; Treasurer, **JoAnne Thiele**; and Secretary and Attendance, **Donna Dornbusch**. The nominations were unanimously approved.

**Verlon K. "Tony" Vrana**, 95, passed away on November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Lincoln, NE. He joined the USDA Soil Conservation Service in 1948. He was united in marriage to **Elaine Flowerday** on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1949, and they lived in Seward where their four children were born. In 1958 he transferred with SCS to Lincoln, where he also attended UNL. In 1962 he was promoted to USDA SCS national headquarters in Washington, D.C. and attended George Washington University, where he received BA and MBA degrees. He advanced to the Senior Executive Service as SCS Associate Deputy Chief for Administration. Following over 32 years of federal service, he and Elaine returned to Seward, Nebraska.

**Frances King** passed away on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020. In 1969, Frances moved to Lincoln to care for her ailing parents. Upon their passing, Frances left her job at the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to relocate to New Orleans, Louisiana in 1972 to work for the National Finance Center. She remained in New Orleans for six years. However, with her children married or away at college, Frances longed for the familiarity of Lincoln and old friends, so in 1978 she returned to Lincoln and the NRCS. She retired in 1988.

**Bill Hance** announced that they have opened up the Lincoln prison so he could begin teaching classes again. **Keith Sheets** and wife did not travel to Texas this year because of COVID-19. **Arnold Mendenhall** reported that he is still working with the Audubon Society. **Harold Klaege** said his wife came down with severe sepsis and has been in and out of the hospital but is doing better and currently in physical therapy. Harold himself is doing better with his hemoglobin.

**Jim Harder** received a note from **Marvin Brown** which said he was doing fine, but his wife has been diagnosed with dementia. **Tom Reinsch** is in Arizona at this time and is still cycling. He has children and other family who live in Arizona. **Doug Christensen** said that employees at the Federal building were encouraged to stay home this week because of the Presidential inauguration and possible protests. **Harold Klaege** said that the AARP free program for taxes will be no-contact preparation starting in March. The tax information will be sent to the preparer. **Jim Culver** announced there will be a Zoom 76<sup>th</sup> SWCS International Annual Conference July 26–28.

There were numerous reminiscences about work experiences with SCS/NRCS. There were different ideas on how to conduct future meetings until COVID-19 vaccines are received, and conditions go somewhere back to normal. Of course, most members were anxious to get back to Stauffer's for the breakfast and meeting. It was also suggested that a topic be assigned for each meeting which members could discuss.

There was a discussion of the Lancaster County website for registering for the COVID-19 vaccination. The majority said they have tried to register for the vaccine but have had no luck so far. They will continue trying.



The Nebraska SWCS will host the 38<sup>th</sup> Legislative Meeting Feb. 8<sup>th</sup>, Noon Zoom Lunch. The topic will be Soil Health for Nebraska Wealth—the Healthy Soils Task Force Report. An e-mail will be sent to our membership on the Zoom link for this meeting.

The February 15<sup>th</sup> meeting was held via Zoom. Those attending were **Jim Culver, Gus and Donna Dornbusch, Bill Hance, Jim Harder, Norm Helzer, Harold Klaege, Gary Muckel, Tom Reinsch, Steve Scheinost, Ken Noonan, Roger Hammer, Clint Johnson, Steve Stover, Norm Kempf, Craig Derickson, Marc Crouch, and Doug Christensen**. Also present was guest, **Claudia Stevenson**, who recently retired from NRCS. She had worked as a Resource Conservationist in the Grant, NE, office, before retiring but currently lives in Ogallala, NE.

**Jim Harder** reported on **Kay Westerman**. She is currently at Gateway Manor for recuperation after spending several days in the hospital. She will then be returning to her assisted living apartment at Legacy Estates.

**Roger Hammer** went to Valentine, NE, last month to visit family. **Tom Reinsch** is back in Lincoln after visiting family in Arizona. Our guest **Claudia Stevenson** introduced herself and related her work experiences with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She had worked in Kansas and North Carolina before coming to Nebraska and working in the Grant office for 28 years.

## NEW YORK

**Nancy Lee, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [mlee0006@rochester.rr.com](mailto:mlee0006@rochester.rr.com)

**Mel** and I have received our two COVID vaccine shots, with little or no side effects. Mask wearing is still required but at least we feel a little safer. The weather here in central New York is typical—snow, cold and wind—but at least the crews are used to this type of weather, not like the southern states.

Sad news to report: **Deborah Gillette**, wife of former NRCS RC **Doug Gillette**, passed away on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021, from COVID 19 complications. Doug was able to speak by phone with Deborah but not able to visit her in the nursing home for several months.

## OHIO

**Jon Gerken, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [jgerken47@gmail.com](mailto:jgerken47@gmail.com)

We sadly share with you the news that **Rosemary Atherton**, the wife of former Ohio NRCS State Conservation Engineer, **Bruce Atherton**, passed away February 15<sup>th</sup> after a short illness. See the In Memoriam section for more details.

## OREGON

**Don Stettler, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [don.stettler@comcast.net](mailto:don.stettler@comcast.net)

Those of us who endured the disbanding of the National Technical Centers (NTCs) following the creation of the Natural Resources Conservation Service in October 1994 will remember it as a very stressful time. Although we were promised continued employment, it had the caveat that a transfer might be required. For most of a year, many of us had a long fretful wait to learn our fate. In the end, many transferred to other locations, some retired, and a few were given a position without a transfer.

Part of the stress of all this was the ending of longtime close working relationships within the various staffs at the NTCs. Most likely there were others, but a concerted effort was made by the engineering staff at the WNTC to stay in touch, despite being scattered. **Pat Straka**, the engineering staff secretary, took it upon herself to set in motion the collecting of a yearly update from



**WNTC Engineering Staff (excluding design), November 1989. Pat Straka front right**

all thirty who were on the engineering staff before it was disbanded. **Lamont Robbins** then took on the task of consolidating the update letters and distributing them. This annual update happened again last month—twenty-five years since disbanding. Several have passed away, and some find it difficult to participate; but it is nice to learn about the adventures and families of those who do provide an update.

## PENNSYLVANIA

**Bill Bowers, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [wbowers@comcast.net](mailto:wbowers@comcast.net)

The following is from the PA Bugle, edited by Tim Murphy.

The Presidential election is over and we now have some COVID19 vaccines available. Wearing masks, social distancing, washing hands, and avoiding crowds are the new “normal” for now. Certainly, we miss the regular hugs and frequent visits of family and friends, but we will get through this! Keep September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> on your calendar. As things unfold, we will get you the details, but the plan is to do a rerun of our State College gathering, highlighting visits to the Weather World studio and Penn State Weather station, a visit to the Berkey Creamery, and of course the Sunday evening gathering. We will do this only if all in-place safety measures can happen.

In the meantime, please practice the actions which protect you and those around you. Be safe. —Bill

After their quarantine, **Alan and Judy Wood** drove out to their son’s Breckenridge, CO home for Thanksgiving. Besides hiking through the woods for a Christmas tree with their grandson, **Rush**, they had fox and moose visit their house.

This has been a challenging month for **Bill and Mary Ann Bowers**: “The loss of brother **Don** has been difficult for me. Your support in the form of cards, calls, emails, texts, thoughts, and prayers have been most uplifting. Your support has been tremendous. This quote from a card exemplifies this support. ‘Hope you can smile even through your tears, when you think about how lucky you were to have him for a brother, and all he means to you—now and forever.’ What a good guy, and he was my brother! Thank you all!”

**Tim and Gina Murphy** have been doing a lot of hiking, and have cross country skied a couple times after the December snowfall. As I type this, snow is falling, so we will get out again this week. The holidays were relatively quiet, as for most people. Opening gifts with family via Facetime was not quite the same, but we made it work. I have been making wine from last fall’s local harvest and will start bottling this week. Income tax season starts soon, so I have been taking online training to get my annual IRS certification. Preparing returns should be a challenge under the COVID rules.

**Tax tip:** Even if you don’t itemize deductions, you can still claim an “above the line” \$300 charitable deduction on your 2020 Federal tax return. It goes on line 10b of the 1040 form.

**Frank Resides** still picks up outdated bakery items at Giant a day or two a week. He and **Jane** deliver them to where they are needed and are always appreciated. It gives us a chance to take an enjoyable ride in the F-250.

**Edgar L. Helmey** is writing a book: Life As I Remember It. Part one, 1928 to 1956, has been published and is available from Amazon. This part covers Ed’s childhood and school years while living on a farm in Georgia, his college years and military service in the USAF, and ends as he is to be married and joins the SCS in Georgia.

Frank met Ed a couple of years ago at the PA Retirees’ meeting in Hershey. He had given an interesting presentation about some of his experiences, military service, and about the several types of planes he has flown. After his talk he told me that when he worked at the NTC he had to do transoceanic flights from time to time to retain his flight credentials. He said that many times he left the office on Friday evening, drove to Middletown (Harrisburg Airport), got a plane and flew to Europe. After resting on Saturday, he flew back to Middletown on Sunday, drove home, and was back in the office on Monday morning—incredible dedication to career and country! Whether you know Ed or not, it is an interesting story by someone who has done it all.

**Hosea Latshaw** writes: In the last edition of the PA Bugle, I was quite interested in **Ed Brzostek**’s note about the Blizzard of January 1977. I had my own challenges on that Friday and Saturday in January 1977.

*John Zaginaylo and I were attending a two-week SCS engineering training in Lincoln, Nebraska that month. On the last Friday of the training, a major blizzard was brewing and would hit the Great Lakes and East Coast. The instructors let us leave early on Friday for the Lincoln airport, and by noon we had made the flight out of Lincoln heading for Chicago O’Hare. Upon landing, we found out that air travel mayhem was happening with flights in and out of Chicago canceled left and right. We joined many other folks trying to re-arrange flights.*

*Late that evening, a flight to Philadelphia was announced and I literally ran through the airport to get to the gate. I left John as he was trying to locate a flight to Scranton/Wilkes Barre. My flight into Philly was the last flight landing that night, as the snow was quickly accumulating. Upon landing about midnight, there was already 18” of snow on the ground, and all ground transportation was halted. There were no hotels within walking distance of the airport.*

*I locked my wallet in an airport locker and lay down to sleep for the night on the floor of the airport terminal, listening to the snow plows (and their backup beepers) working to clear the falling snow. I also tried to sleep on the airport row of chairs, but each seat had a metal arm rest to prevent people from sleeping in the terminal. The snow continued to fall through the night!*

*The next morning, ground transportation was just starting to get plowed out. I was able to get on a hotel shuttle that took me about 20 miles toward home and dropped me at a hotel in Valley Forge. From there I took a five-mile taxi ride to the Norristown train station where I caught a commuter train. The train took me about 10 miles to Spring City, my hometown. At the Spring City train station, I used the pay phone to call my dad to come to pick me up, but the local roads were not cleared yet. I started walking with my suitcase through the 24” of accumulated*

snow. After walking about ½ mile, I was met by my dad driving his 1968 Datsun pickup, and I was able to ride the last 2 miles home. I arrived home just after the noon hour on Saturday!

There was no overtime while being on travel status, and we had a very tough Area Clerk and Area Conservationist, so it was not even worth asking! **John Zaginaylo** later remarked that he thought it a very funny sight to see me—a tall, lanky fellow, with all elbows and knees, sprinting off into the distance in the crowded O'Hare airport that night before.

Prompted by **Mercedes Seman** to share his recollections of life during World War II, **Frank Resides** sent me the following story. This is the first of two parts that will appear in The PA Bugle:

### **WWII—The Homefront**

By **Frank E. Resides Jr.**, June 2010. The story of one boy and his family's efforts to help win the war.

I was at my grandparents' house on that evening in December of 1941 when word came on the news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Within a day or two, we were at war with Japan.

I lived just east of State College, PA, where my **Aunt Aileen** and **Uncle Russell Tressler**, my father and mother, **Frank Sr.** and **Helen**, and my grandparents, **Fred and Laura Resides** lived along the unpaved Whitehall Road. It was a rural area, with the homes being about a hundred yards apart. Aileen was my favorite aunt and my father's sister. My father's brother, **John**, and my **aunt Nina** also lived nearby. As a boy of six, and an only child, I spent about equal time among the three homes.

My father was too old to volunteer for military service. When the construction company for which he worked shut down, Dad took a job at the Philadelphia Navy Yard for the duration of the war. My parents moved to Philadelphia, and my mother worked at the Melrose Diner in south Philly.

I stayed in State College with my grandparents. Granddad was a fur dealer/buyer during the trapping seasons. He drove out each day to pick up the fur bearers from Centre County trappers. We then skinned them in the evenings and prepared the hides for a fur dealer who came each week to buy them. My granddad trimmed the fat from the raccoons, skunks and opossums and took it to a rendering plant near Lewistown, PA to be used in the war effort as a munitions component. There were several hundred pounds some weeks.

During the rest of the year, Granddad worked part-time at the Penn State poultry farm, raised chickens at home and built and sold lawn furniture. We had a wonderful relationship, and I loved to help skin the animals, feed the chickens, and do some carpentry work. At one time I could skin a muskrat in about a minute.

My grandmother did not drive or work away from home, but she was a super cook and kept our home in top shape. She saved all the empty food cans for me to flatten and turn in for scrap. The steel cans were heavy, and it took only four or five to weigh a pound. She and my Aunt Aileen did a lot of home canning of our garden produce in mason jars, which they boiled in a big copper boiler over an outdoor fireplace. Aunt Aileen also made dozens of small "G.I. Joey" puppy dogs that were sent to the troops through the USO or other Service organizations.

After the war started, everyone got "on board" to do what they could to help us win. My **uncle Russell** closed his Plumbing & Heating business and worked in an ordinance plant at White Deer, PA until the war ended. Mothers and wives went to work in defense plants and took other jobs vacated by those who went off to war, and children helped too.

I sold vegetable seeds for Victory Gardens. Food was expensive, so people grew what they could. Gardening became everybody's hobby during the war.

I went to most farms within a few miles of home on my bicycle and asked for broken plowshares and other wornout farm tools and equipment. Later, Granddad used our truck, and we hauled the scrap metal to a salvage company in Bellefonte, PA. I had the whole family, my aunts, uncles and cousins out on weekends picking milkweed pods for the Navy to make life preservers. There would usually be eight or 10 of us, and we picked 15 to 20 burlap bags full every week when the pods were in season. Back then there were a lot of pastures and abandoned fields that were full of milkweeds—many more than we see today.

It was a time when everyone pulled together. We listened to the news each evening to learn how the war was going. It was a long three years and nine months—and an apprehensive time, since we didn't know if we would win until near the end. A lot of people eagerly anticipated **President Roosevelt's** weekly Fireside Chats. These were like mini State of the Union messages. (To be continued)

### **A Black History Month Quiz:**

by Wes Gordon Who was the first African American employee of the Soil Conservation Service in Pennsylvania and in what year? Some of the readers probably know the answer or can take a guess and reply for the next PA Bugle. I don't know the answer, but I have a candidate. In the summer of 1966 I was a Student Trainee in the Lancaster, PA office. The WUC (DC) was **Orval Bass**, a great guy to work with. There were two Technicians and a Soil Conservationist. **Rueben Kesee** (not sure of the correct spelling) was the Soil Conservationist, a graduate in Agronomy from one of the historically black colleges in the south. He was a very nice fellow, extremely conscientious, very religious and rather shy. As I recall, one particular conservation practice didn't turn out correctly and he felt responsible. So Rueben, on his own time on a Saturday, at his OWN expense, hired a contractor to correct the problem. How many of us would do that?

## **TEXAS NORTH**

**Arnold King, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [arnolddking@hotmail.com](mailto:arnolddking@hotmail.com)

In addition to the Virus pandemic, we Texans are recovering from an energy pandemic. When the cold front hit Texas, we began to run low on energy. Within 24 hours, the energy commission sent out a warning that we would soon have a rotation system where neighborhoods would be without heat for a few hours each day. It soon evolved into a much more serious rollover system than they originally predicted. Many neighborhoods went 3–4 days without heat. As expected, pipes were frozen, and problems associated with that problem began to happen in homes all over the state. For some reason, Texas entered a contract with an out-of-state non-profit energy management organization that grossly underestimated the energy needs during the cold spell.



That whole thing smells to high heaven, and the Governor is thoroughly investigating the problem. We were apparently paying the organization millions to do nothing but pick up a paycheck. In addition to damage to structures, I think we will have tremendous losses to landscape plants.

The virus pandemic is on the downhill glide, and hopefully the death rolls will soon go away. The vaccination program is finally working, and most of the seniors have received at least one shot of vaccine. I just heard a report from **Senator Paul** who said there are now approximately 100 million people immunized against the virus. We should now experience daily improvements with the problems associated with the pandemic. I tend to be optimistic concerning the pandemic.

## WASHINGTON

**Ken Kaul, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [kenkaul@icloud.com](mailto:kenkaul@icloud.com)

**Paul Taylor Report**—We do have the first Moderna shot through MultiCare. Looking forward to a bright future. Glad to see that wheat prices and exports are up significantly.

**Stefan Fechter Report**—Not much new here. Lots of lawn bowling. I was on the first-place team for our club's Memorial Triples tournament. We've gotten our first Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination and have our appointments for the second dose. We're looking forward to the eventual return to normal for everyone.

On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 **Carl Vennes** and **Ken Kaul** did our happy dance, celebrating 20 years in retirement. Now we are looking forward to 20 more.

## WEST VIRGINIA

**Peg Reese, ARCSE Representative**

Email: [pegreesevw@gmail.com](mailto:pegreesevw@gmail.com)

**Jamey Darlington**, Soil Conservationist for Whitehall Service Center, retired on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Jamey was very active with the Soil and Water Conservation Society and served as Treasurer for many years. She was also very involved with the WV Grassland Evaluation Contest.

**Jeff McClure**, Regional Geologist with more than 17 years of NRCS West Virginia service, retired on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Jeff spent the majority of his NRCS career working on dam and dam rehabilitation projects and assisting with geology related conservation practice implementation throughout the Mid-Atlantic states.

West Virginia continues to lead the country in the number of people per capita who have been vaccinated against COVID-19. The state has administered 71.8% of the vaccine doses it has received, the highest percentage in the country, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

WV SCS/NRCS retirees and their families are some of the many citizens who have bared their arms to receive the vaccine. Here are a few of their stories.

***John Weller** shared that he and his wife **MaryAnn** got their first Moderna vaccine about three weeks ago at the Myers Clinic in Philippi and hope to be scheduled for the second in a week or so. "MaryAnn had a sore arm and some redness while I had nothing. We ate out at a restaurant on Monday for the first time in a LONG time. We plan to get out more and see family after the second shot + 2 weeks."*

***Doris Brackenrich** reported that "I am doing well but do not meet the age requirements for vaccinations yet. Molly and her fiancé, Chris, are both front line workers so have had both shots. Their primary side effect was a sore arm." Doris also shared that she finally received her first interim pension in January. This payment was delayed due to a snafu with the retirement counselor and OPM.*

*According to **Jim Piper**, "The last year has been "stay at home" for the most part, just like it has been for many others. Just working around the house on various projects and spending time in the shop making some improvements and doing some woodturning on the lathe. We will be getting our 2<sup>nd</sup> COVID shots soon, so hope to be starting to get back to normal soon—whatever the new normal will be for the year."*

***Peg Reese** received her first Pfizer shot at the WVU Medicine Clinic at the Morgantown Mall. It took less than five minutes to check in and get the shot. Her only side effect was a sore arm. Once full immunity is set in, she plans to schedule face-to-face visits with other friends who have gotten vaccinated.*

## SENIOR CONSERVATIONISTS

**Prepared by Marc Safley, Senior Conservationist Chronicler**

*They have reached the minimum age of 83 years and have completed the Senior Conservationist Questionnaire. See IN-MEMORIAM for the Senior Conservationists who have left us since the last Newsletter. Please help us identify retirees who should be named Senior Conservationists. Please provide their contact information to your ARCSE Representative or Regional Vice-President. Six new Senior Conservationists have been named as of this issue.*

<b>Rodney M. Alt</b>	Surprise, AZ
<b>Tommy A. George</b>	Portland, OR
<b>Randall Ward Giessler</b>	City of Faith, NC
<b>Duane Kenneth Setness</b>	Salem, OR
<b>K. Marsel Tingey</b>	Vancouver, WA
<b>Gerald w. (Gary) Yeumans</b>	Baker City, OR

## SENIOR CONSERVATIONIST CHRONICLE

### Senior Conservationist

#### Rodney M. Alt

**Rodney M. Alt (Rod)** was born and raised on a cattle and wheat ranch southwest of Akron, Colorado. The town of Akron is located about 120 miles northeast of Denver. He went to a one-room grade school through the eighth grade at High Point and Elba schools. He attended high school in Akron where he participated in football, basketball, baseball, and track. He graduated from high school in May, 1954. Rod then entered Colorado A&M and State University (now Colorado State University) in Ft. Collins. He graduated with a B.S. degree in agronomy in June, 1958.

Rod began his career with SCS immediately upon graduation from college. His first assignment was as Soil Scientist at Ft. Morgan, CO. He worked in that capacity until March, 1961 when he was made Soil Conservationist at Cortez, CO. In January, 1963 Rod transferred to Alamosa, CO, as Soil Conservationist. After two years at Alamosa, Rod joined the River Basin Staff at the State Office at Denver. He was Soil Conservationist on that staff until September 1966 when he was made District Conservationist at Cheyenne Wells, CO. Rod was located there until August 1969 when he moved to Springfield, CO, as District Conservationist. In October of 1972 he was made District Conservationist at Pueblo, CO, where he served until March 1974. He accepted the position of Area Conservationist for Sterling/Greeley, CO, in March, 1974, and served that area until March of 1981. Rod was promoted to State Resource Conservationist for Idaho at Boise. He served that state from March, 1981 until March, 1983 when he accepted the job of Soil Conservationist at SCS's National Office. He was at Headquarters from March, 1983 until March, 1986, when he was promoted to Deputy State Conservationist for Idaho at Boise. Rod retired in December, 1994.

After retirement, Rod worked as a starter/ranger at the Desert Highlands Golf Club in Scottsdale, AZ from October 1998 until May 2011. He and his wife **Sally** have traveled during retirement. Rod reports that they have been to Europe four times and have visited Scotland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain, Italy, England, Norway, and the Netherlands. They have lived in Surprise, Arizona, since September, 1997.

## OBITUARY INFORMATION

### Paul Benedict, Membership Chair

*When you receive word of someone passing, with little other information provided to you, obituaries can often be found by doing an advanced search using Google, using the full name of the deceased. If you do not have access to the web, Paul Benedict will be glad to do the search. PLEASE SEND DEATH NOTICES AND OBITUARY INFORMATION DIRECTLY TO PAUL AT [soilwarden@verizon.net](mailto:soilwarden@verizon.net). Always include the position or the spouse's position with SCS/NRCS.*

Surname	Year	<i>In-Memoriam</i> (Note: These are recent notices. For a complete list, please see <a href="http://www.arcse.org">www.arcse.org</a> )
Ahern	2021	<b>Maurice "Mike" Eugene Ahern</b> (91), of Salina, Kansas, passed away at his home surrounded by family on February 5, 2021. Mike was born on the family farm in Brookings, South Dakota on January 12, 1930 to <b>Francis</b> and <b>Evangeline (Phillips) Ahern</b> . He graduated from Brookings High School where he lettered in basketball and track, placed first in State in the mile, and was the bantamweight amateur boxing champion of Eastern South Dakota. After graduation, he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture from South Dakota State University. Mike took R.O.T.C. training while attending college, then served in the military in Korea and was promoted to First Lieutenant. Following his military service, he taught Agriculture in Doland, SD. He began his career for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in 1956. Mike married the love of his life, <b>Margery (Levins)</b> in Clear Lake, SD on June 9, 1956. He worked in Yankton, South Dakota; Plankinton, South Dakota; Huron, South Dakota; and eventually Salina, Kansas where he worked until his retirement. After retirement, Mike enjoyed spending his free time on the golf course. Mike is survived by his beloved wife of 64 years, Margery; five children, <b>Michael (Patty) Ahern</b> , Lawrence, Kansas; <b>James Ahern</b> , Rapid City, South Dakota; <b>Tricia Wilcox</b> , Wichita, Kansas; <b>Terry (Nikki) Ahern</b> , Lee's Summit, Missouri; and <b>Mary Ann (Ryan) Foxhoven</b> , Topeka, Kansas; and nine grandchildren that he adored.
Atherton	2021	<b>Rosemary Ruth Atherton</b> (71) of Marysville, Ohio passed away unexpectedly February 15, 2021 following a short illness. She was the wife of retired USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service State Conservation Engineer <b>Bruce Atherton</b> . Rosemary was born September 16, 1949 to <b>Reverend Lemoyne Thomas (Tom) Collum</b> and <b>Grace Turner Collum</b> . She attended Ohio State University and later completed her degree from Mt. Vernon Nazarene University. She worked at several banks and other businesses and was secretary at the Huron Soil and Water Conservation District in Norwalk, Ohio, for 13 years. In addition to her husband Bruce, Rosemary is survived by daughter <b>Gwen Adkins</b> of St. Joseph, Michigan.
Badger	2020	<b>Laura Elaine (Smith) Badger</b> (76) passed away October 23, 2020 at the Healthcare Resort in Topeka, Kansas. She was the wife of ARCSE Life Member <b>Tom Badger</b> whom she married on June 5, 1965. Tom was the Area Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service in Manhattan, Kansas before he retired in 2001. Elaine, as she was known to all, was born March 11, 1944 in Topeka, Kansas, the daughter of <b>Walter</b> and <b>Eleanor (Phelon) Smith</b> . She worked as a Registered Nurse in hospitals across Kansas. Elaine was preceded in death by an infant daughter, <b>Tracy Badger</b> . In addition to her husband Tom, she is survived by son, <b>Todd Badger</b> of Stuart, Florida and daughter, <b>Tara Phillips</b> of Wichita, Kansas.
Bohl	2021	<b>Jack Laverne Bohl</b> (87) of Edmond, Oklahoma passed away February 4, 2021 in Bethany, Oklahoma. Jack was born on November 14, 1933 in Chattanooga, Oklahoma to <b>George Frederick</b> and <b>Medreith Myrtle (Angel) Bohl</b> . He earned a scholarship from Oklahoma A&M in baseball and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Agronomy in 1956. Jack was united in marriage to <b>Shirley Jean Williams</b> on February 27, 1954 in Stillwater, Oklahoma. She preceded him in death on May 1, 2012. He served in the United States Army National Guard. Jack worked as a Soil Conservationist for the USDA Soil Conservation Service in Frederick, Oklahoma for 35 years before retiring in 1989 as District Conservationist. He also

		farmed in Comanche and Tillman Counties for many years. Jack enjoyed fishing, hunting, golfing, and watching sports. His grandchildren were his pride and joy. He is survived by his children, <b>Rusty Bohl</b> of Flower Mound, Texas, <b>YeVon Gosa (Mike)</b> of Tipton, Oklahoma, <b>Richie Bohl (Susan)</b> of Edmond, Oklahoma and <b>Sherri Green (Tim)</b> of West Lake; eleven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. In addition to his wife Shirley, he was also preceded in death by a granddaughter.
<b>Bollinger</b>	2021	<b>Charles Eugene "Gene" Bollinger</b> (84) of Tulsa, Oklahoma (formerly of Perry, Oklahoma) passed away from multiple health conditions on January 22, 2021. Gene was born to parents <b>John</b> and <b>Rachel Brown Bollinger</b> on April 23, 1936, in Perkins, Oklahoma. He graduated from Oklahoma State University on August 2, 1958. Gene married high school sweetheart <b>Billie Faye Scott</b> on December 20, 1958. He worked for the USDA Soil Conservation Service in offices across Oklahoma for 32 years, retiring as Assistant State Conservation Engineer on November 30, 1990. He started a second career as the Program Engineer for the Oklahoma Conservation Commission's Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation division in 1991 until his retirement in 2009. Gene was a good leader and was always confident about his work. He was always gracious and calm under fire. Gene was a mentor to others regarding construction projects and practices as well as dealing with contractors. He was a true professional in every sense of the word. Gene and Billie lived in Perry, Oklahoma, and enjoyed playing golf, traveling with friends, cheering on the Oklahoma State University Cowboys and spending time with their two daughters and two grandchildren. They remained married until Billie passed away unexpectedly from a brain tumor on April 24, 2008. Gene was a member of the First Baptist Church in Perry and was involved in various civic and professional organizations throughout his life. He lived in Perry until March 2019, when he moved to Tulsa to be near his daughters and grandchildren. Gene is survived by daughters <b>Sherrie Bollinger (Ken Wehmeyer)</b> and <b>Susan Bollinger (Perry Terronez)</b> , granddaughter <b>Jordan Henry</b> , grandson <b>Cody Key</b> , all of Tulsa.
<b>Bowers</b>	2021	ARCSE Member <b>Donald Ray Bowers</b> (67) of Indiana, Pennsylvania passed away peacefully at his home on January 22, 2021. He was the son of <b>John William Bowers</b> and <b>Ruth A. (Trimpey) Bowers</b> , born January 18, 1954 in Somerset, Pennsylvania. Don was a 1975 graduate of Penn State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy. He retired from the US. Department of Agricultural-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), formerly Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in 2010. He spent over 35 years serving the farming community with conservation practices. Over his career as a Soil Conservationist and District Conservationist in Pennsylvania he served Washington, Lancaster, Crawford, and Indiana Counties. He was also the brother of ARCSE Member <b>William "Bill" Bowers</b> , retired State Conservation Engineer in Pennsylvania. Don attended Calvary Presbyterian Church, Indiana. Donald's hobbies included fishing, especially fly fishing, fly tying, golfing, wood working, and traveling with his family. He is survived by his loving wife of 45 years <b>Susan Bowman Bowers</b> . They were married in Lewistown, PA on August 23, 1975. Don is dearly remembered by his two children <b>Heather Bowers-Wivell</b> (Dennis) of Taneytown, Maryland and <b>Ryan Bowers</b> of Archbald, Pennsylvania, and grandson <b>Garrett Lewis Wivell</b> , his brother <b>William Bowers (MaryAnn)</b> of Enola, Pennsylvania and a brother-in-law <b>Brian Bowman</b> (Ramona) of Springfield, VA.
<b>Cheshier</b>	2020	<b>Debra Cheshier</b> (68) of Harrisburg, Missouri, passed away December 23, 2020 at University of Missouri Hospital. Debra was the wife of <b>Rob Cheshier</b> , former State Geologist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service at the Missouri State Office. Expressions of sympathy can be sent to Rob Cheshier, 9150 Route E, Harrisburg, MO 65256.
<b>Churchman</b>	2020	<b>Karen Frances Churchman</b> (72) of Salina, Kansas, passed away December 31, 2020. Karen was born in Great Bend, Kansas on August 6, 1948, a daughter of the late <b>Christine Marie (Mauler)</b> and <b>John Raymond Lichter</b> . She graduated from Brown Mackie College in 1967. On October 21, 1967, Karen married <b>Ralph Churchman</b> in Olmitz, Kansas. She was the Secretary to the State Conservationist at the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and retired in 2010 after 41 ½ years of service. Survivors include daughters, <b>Kimberly Mick, (John)</b> of Salina, Kansas, <b>Debie Nickelson, (Troy)</b> of Assaria, Kansas; and 4 grandchildren, <b>Madison, Kennedy, Evan</b> , and <b>Ian</b> . She is preceded in death by her husband, Ralph Churchman.
<b>Cook</b>	2021	<b>Sandra Kay Cook</b> (72) of Lugoff, South Carolina passed away January 9, 2021. Sandra was born in Cumberland, Maryland, the daughter of <b>William Russell Haese</b> and <b>Dorothy Bennett Haese</b> . Mrs. Cook worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service and other federal agricultural agencies for over 48 years. She was a member of Lugoff Church of God where she enjoyed going to the senior socials. Mrs. Cook loved spending time with her family, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, and she loved watching her University of South Carolina Gamecocks and Washington Redskins. She also enjoyed camping, especially at the beach, and boating on Lake Wateree. Surviving are her children, <b>Laura Branham (Mike)</b> , <b>Susan Challender (Bob)</b> , and <b>Kay Cook</b> ; 11 grandchildren; and 16 great grandchildren. She was predeceased by her husband <b>Ben Cook</b> and children, <b>Dona LeGrand</b> , and <b>Van Cook</b> .
<b>Cyre</b>	2020	<b>Thomas D. Cyre</b> (65) passed away December 27, 2020 at Mount Joseph Senior Village, Concordia, Kansas. He was born November 10, 1955 in Newton, Kansas to <b>Bernard</b> and <b>Loretta (Dallen) Cyre</b> . He received his Associate Degree from Cloud County Community College and later earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Geology at Ft. Hays State University, Hays, Kansas. On August 20, 1976 he married <b>Sandra Estes</b> at St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Clay Center, Kansas. Thomas worked for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service as a Geologist. He is survived by his wife <b>Sandra Cyre</b> , Concordia, Kansas; son, <b>Vaughan Cyre</b> , Concordia, Kansas; mother, <b>Loretta Cyre</b> , Clay Center, Kansas; and several brothers and sisters. Memorial contributions may be given to Meadowlark Hospice in care of Chaput-Buoy Funeral Home, PO Box 606, Concordia, KS.
<b>Dassel-Stuke</b>	2021	<b>Michael Charles Dassel-Stuke</b> (69) of Seneca, Kansas passed away January 28, 2021, after battling lung cancer, at Advent Health Hospital of Shawnee Mission. Michael was born on November 20, 1951, to <b>Leonard "Bud"</b> and <b>Cecila "Cedar" Marie Lehn Stuke</b> . He attended Highland Community college, achieving his Associate's Degree, then transferring to Kansas State University in Manhattan. Michael helped on the family farm during his teenage years. After graduating, he purchased a rock truck and went to work for Bennett Trucking in Seneca until 1984. He was a testing supervisor for Landoll for a year, before being employed for 26 years at NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) as a soil conservation technician, before retiring. Michael and his son, <b>Travis</b> , farmed up until his death. He truly loved farming. Even as his illness progressed, he continued to farm, still driving the combine last fall. Michael married <b>Donna Dassel</b> on July 7, 1985, at Chandler, Indiana. Michael enjoyed farming, music, coyote hunting, and all sports, especially football and NASCAR races. He is survived by his wife, Donna; his mother, <b>Cedar Stuke</b> of Seneca; two sons, <b>Travis (BranDee) Stuke</b> of Seneca and <b>James (Amanda) Stuke</b> of Agency, Missouri; six grandchildren and another on the way.



<b>Florenzen</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Joel Makelin Florenzen</b> (83) of Hermiston, Oregon passed away peacefully at his home on December 17, 2020. Joel was born May 8, 1937, in Fort Bragg, California to parents <b>Manuel Florenzen</b> and <b>Josephine "Josie" (Gollnick) Florenzen</b> . He grew up in Fort Bragg, California, working at the lumber mill with his Dad during summers and after high school, saving money for college. Joel enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in May 1957 and was on active duty until May 1962. He was in the Air Force Reserves through 1963 and was honorably discharged. He completed his basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. He became a radar operator and was stationed in Keesler AFB in Biloxi, Mississippi; the Othello Radar Station in Othello, Washington; and then a radar site in Germany. After the Air Force he attended Oregon Technical Institute in Klamath Falls, Oregon, in 1963 where he met his future wife <b>Trish</b> . They married on Oct. 3, 1964, in Carson City, Nevada. In 1966 Joel graduated on the Dean's list with an Associate's Degree in Engineering in Survey Technology and an Associate's Degree in Engineering in Highway Technology. Joel worked for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as an Engineering Technician in Ontario, Oregon from 1967 until he retired in 1993. He received numerous Merits of Performance Awards. Joel and Trish moved to Hermiston in 2017 to be closer to their kids in his later years. He had a special nostalgia for the Redwoods and enjoyed visiting his childhood home on the Northern California Coast, but his heart always remained in Vale and the Treasure Valley. He is survived by his spouse, <b>Patricia "Trish" Ann Florenzen</b> ; daughters <b>Heidi Florenzen</b> of Hermiston, and <b>Jennifer (Jonathon) Gilbert</b> of Selah, Washington. Donations in his memory can be made to the Vale Oregon Food Pantry in care of City of Vale, 150 Longfellow St. N., Vale, Oregon 97918.
<b>Gillespie</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Morris Sullins Gillespie</b> (93) of Auburn, Alabama, passed away on February 21, 2021. Morris was born February 7, 1928, in Parrottsville, Tennessee. He attended the University of Tennessee where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. Following college, Morris served four years in the U.S. Air Force in the Veterinary Corps. After his military service, Morris returned to the University of Tennessee and earned his Master's degree in Agronomy. In 1956, he began a career with the USDA Soil Conservation Service as the Work Unit Conservationist (later District Conservationist) in Hamblen County, Tennessee. In 1969, he moved to Auburn, Alabama, as Public Information Officer with the Soil Conservation Service/Natural Resources Conservation Service. He retired in 1994. Morris was a lifelong member of the Methodist Church. In Auburn, he was an active member of the Auburn United Methodist Church, Osher Lifelong Learners Institute (OLLI) and the Kiwanis Club of Auburn. Morris is survived by his wife of 60 years, <b>Geraldine Flowers Gillespie</b> , and his children: <b>Sharon Gillespie Williams (Bryan)</b> of Olive Branch, Mississippi; <b>Jeffrey Gillespie (Michelle)</b> of Arlington, Virginia; <b>Linda Gillespie</b> of Auburn, Alabama; and <b>Kathy Gillespie Humphrey (Larry)</b> of Opelika, Alabama, and six grandchildren. A family graveside service was held at the Town Creek Cemetery in Auburn, Alabama.
<b>Gillette</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Deborah Ann Gillette</b> (70) of Farmington, New York passed away January 31, 2021 due to complications of COVID-19. She was the wife of former Natural Resources Conservation Service Resource Conservationist <b>Douglas Gillette</b> . Deborah was born on November 9, 1950 in Rochester, New York, the daughter of <b>Henry</b> and <b>Lois O'Boyle</b> . Deborah entered Eastside Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in April of 2018. Before this she had entered Strong Memorial Hospital for cancer treatment that was successfully remediated. Other health complications prevented Deborah from coming home. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, Doug was able to speak by phone with Deborah but not able to visit her in the nursing home for several months. But he was grateful that he could comfort her in the final hours. Surviving is her mother, son <b>Aaron</b> , and husband <b>Douglas</b> .
<b>Googins</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Richard "Dick" Googins</b> (95) of Mechanicsville, Virginia, passed away peacefully at Lakewood Retirement Community in Richmond, Virginia on January 18, 2021. Dick was born in Kansas on November 23, 1925. He served in the Navy in WWII. He graduated from University of Maryland specializing in soil science. Upon graduation, Dick lived with his family on a farm in Kansas before joining the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as a soil scientist. He retired as the State Soil Scientist for Virginia. Dick married <b>Mary Ann</b> in 1982 and lived in Hanover, VA as well as multiple cities in Oregon, before returning to Virginia. Dick enjoyed the outdoors, to include pulling weeds, rock hounding, archeology digs, and cross country skiing. Dick is survived by his wife of 38 years, <b>Mary Ann Gill Googins</b> ; children <b>Richard Googins</b> , <b>Christine (Bob) Scott</b> , <b>Dan (Kim) Googins</b> , and <b>Nancy (Bruce) Downs</b> ; step children <b>Laura (Richard) Wingold</b> and <b>Bryan (Tracey) Wingold</b> ; and grandchildren <b>Rachel Shields</b> , <b>Ruthie Taylor</b> , <b>Christopher Downs</b> , <b>Blaise Wingold</b> , <b>Maya Wingold</b> and <b>Sean Wingold</b> ; and five great grandchildren.
<b>Haefner</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Ernest Otto Haefner</b> (88) of Wheaton, Kansas, passed away December 27, 2020, at Onaga Health and Rehab in Onaga, Kansas. Ernie was born on October 17, 1932, in Blaine, Kansas, the son of <b>Ernest</b> and <b>Ruth Paxton Haefner</b> . Ernie served in the United States Army during the Korean War. He then graduated in 1961 from Kansas State University with a degree in Agriculture and Applied Science. Ernie worked for six years for Gulf Oil Spencer Fertilizer. He then worked for thirteen years for Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. Ernie then began working for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service and retired as a District Conservationist in 1995. After his retirement, he did crop adjusting part-time for a rain and hail insurance company. In the years between Gulf Oil and Goodyear, Ernie broke, trained, bred, and raced quarter horses. Ernie enjoyed card games, woodworking, and hunting. He was accomplished at sign language for the deaf and was often called upon to do translating. Ernie married <b>Nila Elaine Kufahl</b> on June 2, 1957, in Wheaton. She preceded him in death in 2019. Ernie is survived by his children; <b>Curtis Haefner (Lori)</b> , Wheaton, <b>Kari Kufahl (Randy)</b> , Wheaton, and <b>Kevin Haefner (Lisa)</b> , DeSoto, Kansas; six grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, five step-grandchildren, and seven step-great-grandchildren.
<b>Hanson</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Clyde F. Hanson</b> (88) of Grangeville, Idaho passed away December 22, 2020, at St. Alphonsus Medical Center in Boise, Idaho. Clyde was born April 21, 1932, at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, a son of <b>Frans</b> and <b>Sarah (Snead) Hanson</b> . He lived the last 60 years in Grangeville. He retired from the U.S. Army Reserve as a lieutenant colonel. He worked as a Conservation Technician for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. He was known in the area for his volunteer work with many organizations and groups. He was a volunteer fireman. He spent many years teaching EMS and CPR classes all around the area. Clyde is survived by his wife of 67 years, <b>Marietta</b> ; sons <b>Bruce Hanson</b> of Spokane Valley, Washington, and <b>David Hanson</b> of Juneau, Alaska; daughter <b>Joyce Hanson</b> of Windsor, Wisconsin; seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.
<b>Huneycutt</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Robert Carl "Bob" Huneycutt</b> (87) passed away peacefully on his birthday, January 9, 2021 in Stillwater, Oklahoma, where he had lived since 1972. He was enjoying his new home in Legacy Village, a local retirement community. Bob (also known as "Carl" by his parents and siblings) was born to <b>Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. and Edna V. (Crossley) Huneycutt</b> on January 9, 1934 in Sparkman, Arkansas. After high school Bob joined the US Air Force and became an Airman Second Class serving as an Aircraft Electrical Systems Instructor during the Korean War. After graduating from the University of Arkansas in 1958, his entire professional career was devoted to the USDA-Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Bob retired

		at age 55 from his position as the SCS State Administrative Officer for Oklahoma in 1988. After retiring, he became an accomplished investment counselor, actively leading and participating in both The Emeriti and Dollars & Sense Investment Clubs. He was a pilot and loved family history, American history, and fishing. He was active in First United Methodist Church in Stillwater. He was preceded in death by his former spouse and loving mother of his sons, <b>Willene Kroutil</b> , and his oldest son <b>Greg Huneycutt</b> . Bob is survived by his devoted friend and cherished companion, <b>Tana Rutan</b> ; sons <b>Tim (Sherri) Huneycutt</b> of Perry, Oklahoma, <b>Stan (Christy) Huneycutt</b> of Atlanta, Georgia, and <b>Russell (Leann) Huneycutt</b> of Owasso, Oklahoma; and grandchildren <b>McKenzie</b> , of San Antonio, Texas, <b>Alex (Sierra)</b> , of Kansas City, Kansas, and <b>Chloe' Huneycutt</b> , of Atlanta Georgia.
<b>Johnson</b>	<b>2021</b>	Life Member of ARCSE and retired Chief of the USDA-SCS/NRCS, <b>Paul W. Johnson</b> (79) of Decorah, Iowa, passed away February 15, 2021. The full obituary can be viewed on Fjelstul Funeral Home's website: <a href="https://www.fjelstul.com/obituary/paul-johnson">https://www.fjelstul.com/obituary/paul-johnson</a> . Paul was born in Oakland, California on June 10, 1941 to <b>Wallace Johnson</b> (a minister) and <b>Rachel Oslund</b> (a homemaker) and grew up in Beresford, South Dakota and Oak Lawn, Illinois. Paul left the Illinois Institute of Aviation to join one of the very first Peace Corps groups in 1962 and served in Ghana. By the time he returned to the United States two years later, he had heard the call of the wild and began studying at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources, where he would eventually earn his master's degree in forestry. To support himself, he interviewed to wash dishes for a group of women at the International House dormitory. The dorm director, <b>Pat</b> , who was also just back from the Peace Corps in the Philippines, judged his housekeeping skills adequate enough to marry him in 1965. After a stint in the US Forest Service, Paul and Pat returned to Africa, with both teaching at Ghana's School of Forestry in Sunyani while Pat birthed their first child, <b>Eric Kweku</b> , in Berekum. After doctoral studies took them to Costa Rica, they returned to the University of Michigan and used its library to divine that the best place in the world to live is The Driftless Area of southwestern Wisconsin. When the right farm became available in Winneshiek County in 1974, friends and family pitched in to help them make the down payment. Paul milked Jerseys, while Pat taught social work, taking a year off to manage Luther College's study-abroad program in Nottingham in 1981. While they coaxed from the land a variety of flora and fauna—Christmas trees, soybeans, sweet corn, grapes, apples, eggs, lambs, and trees (everywhere!)—when asked what they raised on the farm, Paul's reply was always "kids!" Paul became involved in politics and served three Iowa House terms where he led bipartisan support for groundbreaking sustainable agriculture and conservation legislation. Landmark achievements of Paul and his colleagues included the 1987 Groundwater Protection Act (including creation of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at ISU); the 1989 Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Act; and the 1990 Iowa Energy Act. That work gained national attention, resulting in Paul's 1988 invitation to join the National Academy of Sciences' Board on Agriculture and then to President Bill Clinton appointing him in 1994 to run the 13,000-employee Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Washington, DC. He reinvigorated the agency's culture, thanked employees continually for serving the nation's farmers and ranchers, and appointed many women and minorities to positions of leadership. He worked with colleagues to rename the SCS the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and reminded all that the agency's mission included the entire community: soil, water, air, plants, animals, and humans (SWAPA+H!). During his tenure, NRCS programs became more holistic, including the flagship Environmental Quality Incentives Program and the National Conservation Buffer Initiative. In the landmark publication "Geography of Hope," Paul called on Americans to understand the nation's working lands as the foundation of our economic and environmental health. After leaving the NRCS, Paul ran the Iowa Department of Natural Resources for Governor Vilsack in the early 2000s. After an unsuccessful run for the US House of Representatives in 2004, he retired to Decorah to share his experiences and networks by advising and mentoring environmental advocates and policymakers throughout the US, serving on various boards and commissions, giving inspiring speeches, writing book introductions and editorials, visiting his kids in Nicaragua, Sweden, France, China, and Australia, and watching his six granddaughters grow. In his later years he enjoyed weaving music into his essays for progressive Iowa "town hall" web site, Bleeding Heartland. Paul is survived by his wife, their three children— <b>Eric (Brenda Horrigan)</b> in Sydney, Australia, <b>Andy (Emily Young)</b> on the farm outside of Decorah, and <b>Annika</b> in Gothenburg, Sweden; six granddaughters: <b>Alissa</b> (New York) and <b>Kiara</b> (Carleton College); <b>Helen</b> (Vassar College), <b>Leila</b> , and <b>Elsa</b> (Decorah); and <b>Linnea</b> (Luther).
<b>Jorgensen</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Charlene Vance Jorgensen</b> (89) of Troy, Kansas, passed away June 10, 2020. Charlene was the widow of ARCSE Member and Senior Conservationist George N. Jorgensen Jr. who passed away in 2015. George retired as the District Conservationist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service in 1984. In addition to her husband George, she was preceded in death by her sons <b>Eric</b> and <b>Dennis Jorgensen</b> and her grandchild <b>Jesse Lee Jorgensen</b> . She is survived by her son <b>Mark Jorgensen (Loretta)</b> of Leavenworth, Kansas, her daughter-in-law <b>Carol Jorgensen</b> of Troy; 3 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandson.
<b>King</b>	<b>2020</b>	Senior Conservationist <b>Frances Elizabeth King</b> (99) of Lincoln, Nebraska passed away December 30, 2020, one day short of her 100 <sup>th</sup> birthday. She was born around supertime on a cold evening at her paternal grandparents' home in Plains, Kansas on December 31, 1920. When Frances was eleven, the King family moved to Alliance, Nebraska. Frances blossomed into a responsible and industrious young woman who took her first job at fifteen ironing shirts for three dollars a week. She attended Alliance High School and excelled in gymnastics, yet she was barred from state-wide competitions due to the discrimination against African American athletes at that time. She graduated from high school in 1939. Seven days before her nineteenth birthday, Frances married her high school sweetheart, bearing her first child, <b>Robert Eugene</b> , followed by <b>Barbara Frances</b> two year later. The family left Alliance and settled in Denver, Colorado where Frances worked and raised her children. Unfortunately, after ten years, her marriage ended in divorce. A five-year second marriage followed. Her third marriage, which also ended in divorce after three years, produced her daughter <b>Annette Louise</b> . Unlucky in love, Frances focused her life on raising her children, developing her skills to advance her career with the Federal Government, and living her Christian faith through stewardship. In 1969, Frances moved to Lincoln to care for her ailing parents. Upon their passing, Frances left her job at the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to relocate to New Orleans, Louisiana in 1972 to work for the National Finance Center. She remained in New Orleans for six years, during which time she developed a taste for soft-shelled crab, gumbo, and down-home, southern gospel music. However, with her children married or away at college, Frances longed for the familiarity of Lincoln and old friends, so in 1978 she returned to the Star City where she remained these past forty-two years. Frances enjoyed a happy, busy, and fulfilled life, rich in good friends and family. A member of Mount Zion Baptist Church since she returned to Lincoln, Frances served as Sunday School Superintendent for nine years, treasurer for twenty years, and Trustee. She retired from SCS in 1988. For the past 33 years, Frances made a home with her daughter <b>Annette</b> and grandson, <b>Lathan Murrell</b> . Besides Lathan, Frances was also the beloved

		grandmother of <b>Christopher Lewis, Donnis (Cox) Hurd, and Ronneka Cox</b> . To her delight, Frances also had four great-grandchildren: <b>Christopher Lewis, Jr., Jonathan Lewis, Jeremy Lewis and Jaxson Hurd</b> .
<b>Mumford</b>	<b>2021</b>	USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee <b>Payton "Pate" Lee Mumford</b> (32) of Pruitt City, Oklahoma passed away in an automobile accident on January 17, 2021. Another NRCS employee, Soil Conservationist <b>Fred Norman</b> , was injured in the accident. Pate was born March 29, 1988 in Ardmore, Oklahoma to <b>Jimmy Lee Mumford</b> and <b>Darla Jayne (Bolles) Mumford</b> . Pate attended Redlands Community College where he was on a judging team and received his Associate's degree. He then furthered his education at Oklahoma State University where he graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Range Management. Pate returned to this area and served an internship at the Noble Foundation before becoming employed with the NRCS as a Resource Conservationist. He was currently working in the Sulphur Field Office. Pate always loved being a caretaker of the land and enjoyed farming. He had a passion for restoring old things new, especially old tractors and guns. Pate was a member of the Fox Baptist Church. Survivors include his parents, <b>Jim and Darla Mumford</b> of Pruitt City; brother, <b>Dillon Mumford (Carson)</b> of Fox, Oklahoma; and grandmother, <b>Louise Mumford</b> also of Fox.
<b>Philp</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Lorna Rae Philp</b> , 50, of Hilger (Winifred), Montana passed away at home surrounded by her husband Tom and loving family and friends on January 28, 2021 after a valiant fight against cancer. Lorna was the Supervisory District Conservationist for the Lewistown Work Unit for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Lorna was born June 27, 1970 in Glasgow, Montana, the daughter of <b>John A. and Ella Mae (Heser) Stolen</b> . The family lived on a farm south of Wolf Point, Montana. She began her college program in North Dakota and transferred to Montana State University in Bozeman where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture degree in 1992. In 1989 she was hired as a co-op student with the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. In 1995 she joined Malta Field Office staff as a soil conservationist. Lorna met <b>Willy "Tom" Philp</b> in Malta on the dance floor in 1996 and never looked back. They were united in marriage on Sept. 19, 1998 in Malta and were soul mates for life. In 1997 she became district conservationist in the Malta Field Office, in May 2008 she transferred from Malta to Lewistown as the district conservationist and in February 2019, she was promoted to the supervisory district conservationist for the Lewistown Work Unit, including Stanford and Winnett. Lorna lived passionately. She loved to dance and watching her whirling around a room with Tom was breathtaking. She took full advantage of our beautiful Montana setting and brought beauty to her surroundings with her gardening and soil conservation knowledge. She also enjoyed hunting, fishing, and camping. Lorna had 100% commitment to her many friends and family, on an individual basis and through her involvement in her community. She was a Winifred Ambulance EMT and a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. She advocated for HPV testing and vaccination to help young people avoid spreading the virus that can lead to cervical cancer. Lorna is survived by her husband Tom (William T.) of Winifred, daughter <b>Kimberly (Chad) McNeil</b> , and two grandsons, whom she greatly adored, <b>Wyatt and Easton</b> of Gillette, Wyoming; along with a large family of sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who will miss her infectious smile and positive personality. Lorna and Tom were involved in the foreign exchange program and were parents to six boys who call them Mom and Dad and remain in close contact: <b>Victor Acero</b> (Venezuela), <b>Frederik Nielsen</b> (Sweden), <b>Nate Stordahl</b> (Norway), <b>Sebastian Cevallos</b> (Ecuador), <b>Gabrielle (Bobo) Adorni</b> (Italy), and <b>Jesper Perden</b> (Finland).
<b>Robbins</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Sharon Lea Robbins</b> (81) of Scottsburg, Indiana passed away February 1, 2021, in Louisville, Kentucky. Sharon was the wife of ARCSE Member <b>John M. Robbins</b> , retired Assistant State Soil Scientist for the USDA-Soil Conservation Service. They were married for 62 years. Sharon attended colleges and received degrees from Indiana State University, Indiana DePauw University and University of Kentucky. She retired from teaching elementary school for 30 years, was co-owner and manager of Leota Christmas Tree Farm, a longtime volunteer with Southern Indiana Hospice having received the Presidential Award for Volunteers, and a longtime volunteer with Scott County Relay for Life. She was a member of Bethel Baptist Church of Leota and Retired Teachers Association. Besides her husband John, other survivors include two daughters, <b>Jennifer Donnell (Mike) Medina</b> of Waldorf, Maryland, and <b>Lea Ann (Ed) Callico</b> of Nabb, Indiana; three grandchildren and a great-granddaughter.
<b>Sherraden</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>Kenneth Sherraden</b> , (73) of Chapman, Kansas, passed away December 17, 2020, at Geary Community Hospital in Junction City, Kansas. Ken was born in Salina, Kansas on August 17, 1947, the son of <b>Eythel Evelyn "Teed" (Freeman) Sherraden</b> and <b>William Eugene "Bill" Sherraden</b> . Ken joined the Navy after high school and served as a radioman in the Vietnam War. Upon completion of military service, he graduated from Fort Hays State University with a degree in Zoology. He was married to <b>Janet Lorraine (Drinen) Sherraden</b> on March 22, 1967. He worked as a Natural and Cultural Resources Specialist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Ken is survived by his wife Janet; four children, <b>Scott (Cindy) Sherraden</b> of Hutchinson, Kansas, <b>Staci (Jeff) Rice</b> of Hutchinson, <b>Stephanie ("Brandon") Chance</b> of Tennessee, and <b>Shawn (Melissa) Sherraden</b> of Chapman; and 5 grandchildren.
<b>Staggs</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>John W. "Bill" Staggs</b> (96) of Moberly, Missouri, passed away January 7, 2021 in Moberly. He was born February 1, 1924 in Shelbyville, Missouri to <b>Lee V. and Violet Frances Inman Staggs</b> . He attended Culver Stockton College in Canton, Missouri. Bill entered the United States Army on February 1, 1943 and trained as a medical NCO for the 86th Infantry Black Hawk Division Medical Battalion. In March of 1945, the 86th Infantry began a campaign to take the Ruhr pocket located north of Cologne, Germany. During this operation, Bill was assigned as a driver for the company commander and came in contact with both <b>Generals Eisenhower and Patton</b> . His division was redeployed to the United States, was retrained, and left in August of 1943 for the Asiatic Pacific Theatre of Operation. They were sent to Luzon in the Philippines where the allies were preparing for the invasion of Japan. Bill was recalled into the service in 1950 during the Korean War. Bill married <b>Hettie Nadine Johnson</b> on April 5, 1963. In 2009 Bill attended the Mid-Missouri Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. Bill farmed, enjoyed raising cattle, and in 1971 was employed by the USDA-Soil Conservation Service as a Conservation Technician in Shelby County. He was transferred to Moberly in Randolph County in 1973. Bill enjoyed golfing, hunting, and spending time with his family and friends. Bill's wife Nadine passed away in 2019. Among his survivors are his brother, <b>Jim Staggs</b> , his step daughter-in-law, <b>Susan Johnson</b> , stepdaughter, <b>Donna Jean Purvis</b> , eight step grandchildren, and one great-great grandson. Memorials may be made to Shriners Hospital for Children.
<b>Vongkamdy</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Souksady "Sue" Vongkamdy</b> (58) of Coventry, Rhode Island passed away several days after suffering a severe stroke on January 1, 2021. Sue was the wife of ARCSE Affiliate Member <b>Phou Vongkamdy</b> , who is the Rhode Island State Conservationist for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Because of COVID-19 restrictions a private family ceremony was conducted. Cards of condolence may be sent to Phou, <b>Abe and Angela</b> at 31 Lydia Road, Coventry, RI 02816.



<b>Wilton</b>	<b>2020</b>	<p>ARCSE Member <b>Neil Douglas Wilton</b> (78) of Eagle, Idaho passed away December 24, 2020. Neil was born January 5, 1943 in Lowell, Massachusetts to <b>Eric</b> and <b>Pauline Wilton</b> of Billerica, Massachusetts. After high school he enlisted in the United States Airforce. He graduated from New England College with honors in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering and then graduated from the University of New Hampshire with another Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering. Neil also studied Soil Mechanics at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In 1965 Neil married Susan Hicks Wolf. Within a few years, they were joined by five children. Neil's engineering career with the USDA took the family from Concord, New Hampshire, with many layovers ending in Boise, Idaho. He retired in 1995 while an Irrigation Engineer. Sue passed away in 2002. Neil was once again blessed with love and married Janet Kurland of Boise on January 21, 2006 and added two children to his family. Neil enjoyed reading, traveling and being outdoors: Neil is survived by his wife Janet; and children <b>Kristin Scott (Rick)</b> of Meridian, Idaho; <b>Jana Miranda (David)</b> of Phoenix, Arizona; <b>Heidi Mansfield (Ken)</b> of Boise, Idaho; <b>Noel Wilton (Tracy)</b> of Hayden, Idaho; <b>Jennifer Hollis (David)</b> of Oceanside, California, <b>Antoinette Wilton</b> of Post Falls, Idaho, <b>Michael Delaney (Jen)</b> of San Diego, California; and 8 grandchildren. Neil is preceded in death by his first wife Susan and his son <b>Jim Wilton</b>.</p>
---------------	-------------	--

